

THE CAMBRIDGE HISTORY OF CHINA

Volume 2
The Six Dynasties, 220–589

Edited by

ALBERT E. DIEN

Professor Emeritus, Stanford University

KEITH N. KNAPP

The Citadel, The Military College of South Carolina



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PREFACE

We both knew that assembling the second volume of the *Cambridge history of China* would be a formidable task. Denis Twitchett had already endeavored to do so in the mid-1980s, but was unable to for a variety of reasons. The lack of a *Cambridge history of China* volume for the Six Dynasties period meant that there was no way that a reader could acquire by reading just one book a sound feeling for the period and all of its political and social complexities, as well as an appreciation for its wide range of cultural achievements. Over the years, we have both heard many fellow scholars lamenting the fact of the non-existence of a Six Dynasties volume. Since there are now many excellent specialists writing about the history and culture of early medieval China, we decided to take on the challenge, but the project was far more complicated and time-consuming than either of us anticipated.

Completing this volume would not have been possible without the help of numerous institutions and individuals. To start off the process of writing the chapters, we had hoped to invite all of the contributors to a conference. Unfortunately, the costs of doing so were prohibitive. Due to the generosity of two universities, we were instead able to hold two smaller meetings. The first was the “Six Dynasties Material Culture, Arts, Literature, and Ritual Workshop,” which took place at the University of Chicago on May 26–27, 2012. The workshop was generously sponsored by the China Committee of the Center for East Asian Studies and the Adelyn Russell Bogert Fund of the Franke Institute for the Humanities, University of Chicago, and was organized by the University of Chicago’s Center for the Art of East Asia, Department of Art History. The workshop included all of the contributors who were working on topics related to material culture and the arts. We owe much to Professors Wu Hung and Katherine Tsiang, who played a large role in organizing and making this meeting possible. The second workshop took place at the exquisite Stanford Center at Peking University. This meeting with some of our East Asian contributors was made possible through the arrangements provided by the executive director of the center, Dr. Andrew J. Andreasen. We also wish to

thank Professor Tu Wei-ming for his active and informative participation at the workshop. Many thanks too to Peking University for assisting with the logistics of this meeting.

The Citadel, the Military College of South Carolina, generously provided the support for much of this work. For the duration of this project, the college supplied us with a graduate assistantship. Through this funding, Victoria Musheff served as a superb internal editor who polished the chapters' prose and made sure that the information within was intelligible to nonspecialists. Isabelle Bailey Knight, another graduate assistant, helped us put our bibliography in good order. The History Department's Henry and Jenny Johnson Endowment Fund and the Citadel's School of Humanities and Social Sciences funded honorariums for the translators of the "Western Jin" and "Local Society" chapters.

Many thanks to Professors Joelle Neulander for translating the "Western Jin" chapter from French and Jon Felt for translating the "Local Society" chapter from Chinese. Albert Dien translated from Chinese both the chapters on the Sogdians and on the southern economy.

Many thanks to our contributors as well. They not only contributed their expertise through the writing of their chapters; they also patiently endured the editors' requests to adjust their chapter's contents for readability and clarity. Charles Holcombe and Albert Dien are especially to be commended for taking on the burden of writing more than one chapter.

Working with the dedicated and talented staff of Cambridge University Press has been a joy. Marigold Acland, our first editor, recruited us to do the volume. After Marigold's retirement, our new editor, Lucy Rhymer, turned out to be every bit as helpful and encouraging. Heather Lings took on the difficult role of preparing the Glossary–Index, and John Gaunt performed the Herculean task of making the text readable. Natasha Whelan and Lisa Carter greatly helped us get the final manuscript in order.

Finally, we need to acknowledge each of our family's patience and assistance. With no say in the matter, Dora and Joseph Dien and Jade and Melissa Knapp were swept into the project in ways big and small. Their help ranged from technical assistance to listening to endless worries and complaints. Their support, although usually indirect, was essential to the project's completion.

GUIDELINES FOR READERS

Following the precedent set by *The Cambridge history of ancient China: From the origins of civilization to 221 B.C.*, for the romanization of Chinese words, we have decided to use the Pinyin system rather than the Wade–Giles system, which has been employed in previous volumes of the *Cambridge history of*

China. We do this in recognition that the Pinyin system is now the most popular romanization system of Chinese—it is used by nearly all English-language newspapers and academic journals and books. By now, only specialists are still acquainted with the Wade–Giles system.

Unlike prior volumes of the *Cambridge history of China*, this work will employ the BCE (before common era) and CE (common era) dating system, rather than BC (before Christ) and AD (anno domini) one. This has been done to be more in line with current academic conventions and to regard time in a more secular manner.

Chinese characters have been used sparingly in the text of the chapters. For the most part, characters are inserted after the few sentence-length passages that occur in some chapters. This has been done to facilitate specialists' understanding of the quoted romanized sentence. These Chinese sentences are not indexed. The Chinese characters for any term, person, or place will be found in the index.

SIX DYNASTIES CHRONOLOGY

Three Kingdoms

Wei (220–265)

Shu (221–263)

Wu (220–280)

Western Jin (265–317)

Sixteen States 304–439

Eastern Jin (318–420)

Northern Wei (386–534)

Liu-Song (420–479)

Western Wei (535–557) Eastern Wei (534–550) Southern Qi (479–502)

Northern Zhou (557–581) Northern Qi (550–577) Liang (502–557)

Chen (557–589)

Sui (581–618)

Table 0.1 *Sixteen States by area*

Name	Dates	Founder	Ethnicity	Capital	Conqueror
Former Zhao 前趙	304–329	Liu Yuan 劉淵	Xiongnu	Pingyang 平陽	Later Zhao 後趙
Later Zhao 後趙	319–351	Shi Le 石勒	Jie	Linzhang 臨漳	Former Yan 前燕
Former Qin 前秦	351–384	Fu Jian 苻健	Di	Chang'an 長安	Western Qin 西秦
Later Qin 後秦	384–417	Yao Chang 姚萇	Qiang	Chang'an 長安	Eastern Jin 東晉
Western Qin 西秦	385–431	Qifu Guoren 乞伏國仁	Xianbei	Jincheng 金城	Xia 夏
Xia 夏	407–431	Helian Bobo 赫連勃勃	Xiongnu	Tongwan 統萬	Northern Wei 北魏
Cheng Han 成漢	304–347	Li Xiong 李雄	Di	Chengdu 成都	Eastern Jin 東晉
Former Yan 前燕	349–370	Murong Jun 慕容俊	Xianbei	Yedu 鄴都	Former Qin 前秦
Later Yan 後燕	384–409	Murong Chui 慕容垂	Xianbei	Zhongshan 中山	Northern Yan 北燕
Southern Yan 南燕	400–410	Murong De 慕容德	Xianbei	Guanggu 廣固	Eastern Jin 東晉
Northern Yan 北燕	409–436	Feng Ba 馮跋	Han	Changli 昌黎	Northern Wei 北魏
Former Liang 前涼	314–376	Zhang Mao 張茂	Han	Guzang 姑臧	Former Qin 前秦
Later Liang 後涼	386–403	Lü Guang 呂光	Di	Guzang 姑臧	Later Qin 後秦
Southern Liang 南涼	397–414	Tufa Wugu 秃髮烏孤	Xianbei	Ledu 樂都	Western Qin 西秦
Northern Liang 北涼	401–439	Juqu Mengsun 沮渠蒙遜	Xiongnu	Zhangyi 張掖	Northern Wei 北魏
Western Liang 西涼	400–422	Li Hao 李暠	Han	Jiuquan 酒泉	Northern Liang 北涼

SIX DYNASTIES CHRONOLOGY

Three Kingdoms

Wei (220–265)

Shu (221–263)

Wu (220–280)

Western Jin (265–317)

Sixteen States 304–439

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Western Liang 西涼	400–422	Li Hao 李暠	Han	Jiuquan 酒泉	Northern Liang 北涼

INTRODUCTION

Periods of disunity in Chinese history do not usually receive the attention they deserve, yet it is just in those years of apparent disorder and even chaos that important developments, social, cultural, artistic, and even institutional, often find their earliest expression. The Six Dynasties period (220–589 CE) was just such a time of momentous changes in many aspects of the society. But it is precisely the confusing tumult and disorder of the political events of those four centuries that create the strongest impression. We find this perception mirrored in the reaction of the put-upon Gao Laoshi, the middle-school schoolmaster described by Lu Xun in one of his stories, who was so dejected when he had been assigned to teach a course on the Six Dynasties. All he remembered about the subject was how very confusing it was, a time of much warfare and turmoil; no doubt what would have come to his mind was the common saying *wu Hu luan Hua* 五胡亂華 “the Five Barbarians brought disorder to China.” He felt that he could do a creditable job with the great Han and Three Kingdoms that came before or the glorious Tang after it, but what could he say about those miserable years in between?¹ The very nomenclature reflects its apparent disjointed nature. Yet it was that very disorder, a collapse of central authority, that provided the conditions enabling such important advances which make the Six Dynasties period such a significant one in Chinese history.

The period covered in this volume suffers from what might be called an identity problem; that is, one of definition. In historical terms, identity defines the qualities and characteristics associated with it, and what role, so to speak, that period played in the course of events that made up the history under consideration. The name applied to the period encapsulated that identity and thus deserves some attention. In Chinese terminology this poses no problem,

¹ Lu Xun, “Gao Laofuzi,” in *Lu Xun zhuyi biannian quanji*, ed. Wang Shijia and Zhi Yan (Beijing, 2009), 6.198–205; William A. Lyell, trans., “The venerable schoolmaster Gao,” in Lu Xun, *Diary of a madman and other stories* (Honolulu, 1990), p. 298.

since the usual list is a factual one. It is generally called most expansively “Sanguo liang Jin Nanbeichao” 三國兩晉南北朝; that is, the Three Kingdoms, two Jin, and Southern and Northern courts, or, a bit shorter, “Wei Jin Nanbeichao” 魏晉南北朝, with the Wei state standing for the Three Kingdoms; similarly Japanese scholars call it “Gi-Shin Nambokuchō.” Another term is “Liuchao” 六朝 (Japanese “Rikuchō”), the Six Kingdoms, since Jiankang (modern Nanjing) in this period served as the capital of six dynasties (Wu 吳, Eastern Jin 東晉, Song 宋, Qi 齊, Liang 梁 and Chen 陳); thus while the reference is to the southern states, the sense of the term generally covers the whole of China, north and south.² However, “Liuchao” may be ambiguous, as some modern writers (usually southerners) use it to refer only to the area of the Southern Dynasties that made Jiankang their capital. A more descriptive label sometimes used is the “Period of Disunity,” but while it has the virtue of underlining a salient political characteristic of the period, it has the drawback of being applicable also to that of the Five Dynasties (907–960).

The Han and Sui–Tang dynasties are usually recognized as among the high points of early Chinese power and cultural achievement; as a consequence, the period between them, the years 220 to 589, is often held in low esteem—the Dark Age of Chinese history—and at most viewed simply as a transitional span of time. Calling it China’s Middle Age, and its derivation “medieval” on the model of European history, for many scholars carries with it a pejorative import.³ Arnold Toynbee, in his *Study of history*, found a striking parallel between the European and Chinese cases, seeing that in both there was a period of state decline followed by a time of trouble; that is, external/barbarians and internal/proletariat, resolving itself into a new stage of the “universal state,” which is to say, in China, the Sui–Tang.⁴ No doubt Toynbee’s paradigm of historical analysis of challenge and response deservedly no longer is felt to have any explanatory usefulness.⁵ However, the term “medieval” can still be viewed

² The term “Six Dynasties” was applied to this period as early as the Song by Zhang Shou (1084–1145) and Zhang Dunyi (active twelfth century), the latter the author of the *Liuchao shiji bianlei*, ed. Zhang Chenshi (Beijing, 2012), a work primarily focused on the history and landmarks of Jiankang when it served as capital during the Six Dynasties period. The Yuan dynasty *Songsbi* 宋史 (compiled in 1345) provides an example (56.3933) where the term “Six Dynasties” is used to designate both the northern and southern dynasties.

³ T. H. Barrett, “China and the redundancy of the medieval,” *Medieval history journal* 1.1 (1998), pp. 73–89; and Timothy Brook, “Medievallity and the Chinese sense of history,” *Medieval history journal* 1.1 (1998), pp. 145–164.

⁴ Arnold Toynbee, *A study of history* (London, revised edn, 1972).

⁵ Charles Holcombe rightly observes that the term “medieval,” if only defined in terms of European-style feudalism, is not applicable to China from the third to the eighth centuries. See his “Was medieval China medieval? (Post-Han to mid-Tang),” in *A companion to Chinese history*, ed. Michael Szonyi (Chichester, 2017), p. 114.

as a useful descriptor if broadly defined, which is why many Western scholars refer to this period as early medieval China. Scholars of global history have become more cognizant that to understand the historical commonalities of civilizations across the world there is a need for general descriptive labels, such as “medieval,” that can be applied cross-culturally. The similarities between Europe from the sixth through tenth centuries, the early Arab empires (Umayyad, 661–749, and Abbasid, 750–1258), and China from the third through the sixth centuries are striking: we see a decentralized polity, a hybrid ruling elite, the appearance of a manorial type of economy, the emergence of organized religion, and a heavy reliance on close patron–client ties between upper-class men. Hence, applying the word “medieval” to China from the third to sixth centuries still has hermeneutic value.⁶

All of the other volumes in the *Cambridge history of China* series are named after political dynasties, but the term “Wei–Jin–Northern and Southern Dynasties” is much too cumbersome, true perhaps even for the more simplified “Northern and Southern Dynasties.” Alternatives such as the “Han–Tang Interim,” or, perhaps more meaningfully, the “Transition between the Han and Tang,” may be useful as chapter headings, but not as tags within written narratives, and in most contexts do not give the period its due importance. The fallback solution used in this volume, and more generally elsewhere, is to simply use as its title the term “Six Dynasties,” referring broadly to this interim between the Han and Sui–Tang. The number is not fully accurate since it encompasses the short-lived regimes in the North succeeding the fall of the Western Jin and leading up to the Northern Wei, what is called the “Shiliuguo” 十六國, or in English, the “Sixteen States.” Nevertheless, keeping all these restraints in mind, Six Dynasties serves quite well.

The terminology related to this period clearly points to the enduring fragmentation of the previously united Han realm. As Helena Motoh has described it, in the post-Han period there emerged “a series of different constellations of power (parallel rule of three states, or two states, etc.),” roughly divided in a north–south formation, one north of the Yellow River and the other south of the Yangzi, with the area between the scene of continuing competition.⁷ As Motoh further notes,

⁶ Keith N. Knapp, “Did the Middle Kingdom have a middle period? The problem of ‘medieval’ in China’s history,” *Education about Asia* 12.2 (2007), pp. 8–13.

⁷ Helena Motoh, “The noble eclecticism: Example of Tao Yuanming’s *Xing Ying Shen*,” in *The yields of transition: Literature, art and philosophy in early medieval China*, ed. Jana S. Rošker and Nataša Vampelj Suhadolnik (Newcastle upon Tyne, 2011), pp. 227–239; see esp. p. 228, n. 1, that directs the reader to Billy K. L. So and Gungwu Wang, *Power and identity in the Chinese world order* (Hong Kong, 2003); and Nicola Di Cosmo and Don J. Wyatt, *Political frontiers, ethnic boundaries, and human geographies in Chinese history* (New York, 2003). Yang Anqing, “Liang Wei Zhongli zhi zhan yi qi yingxiang,” *Huaibei shifan daxue xuebao* (zhexue shehui kexueben) 36.1 (2015), pp. 17–21, insightfully goes beyond the

The division is also ethnic, since the North was mostly ruled by the dynastic families of non-Han origin, while the South was ruled by Han Chinese dynasties, first by the Eastern Jin and then by the so-called Southern Dynasties. Political disunity is thus also seen in cultural terms, as a loss of parts of the territory to the rule of the non-Han peoples.

A salient feature of the Six Dynasties period is the dominant role taken by the non-Han peoples who entered northern China, some by slowly permeating into the borderlands or by storming the frontier. The historical records list a number of tribal names: Xiongnu, Xianbei, Tuoba, Jie, Murong, and so forth, but there was little discussion at the time of the actual composition of these entities, nor has modern research made much analytical headway. In his chapter on the Northern Wei, Scott Pearce draws on the opening of the *Weishu* (*History of the Northern Wei*) to trace the origins of the Tuoba, the founders of that dynasty. Their traditional account of the various encounters as these people made their way from their distant northern habitat to the Chinese frontier, telling of a hybrid, horse-like animal that served as guide for a time, and the “heavenly maiden” who presented one of the leaders with an heir, may well have been the stuff of myths. But as Pearce suggests, these legends of the difficult journey, no doubt recounted with some license, may still reflect some reality. What this account calls to mind is the similar origin accounts associated with the various “barbarian” peoples who appeared on the Roman frontier in medieval Europe.

There is a rich literature on the nature of the “barbarian migrations” in Europe at roughly the same period as that in China, which to a certain extent may suggest parallel developments, but the Western historians still struggle with how to frame the material. The current favored term, “ethnogenesis,” emphasizes that the various barbarian groups under discussion were not biological or ethnic communities as such but, as Michael Kulikowski has it, were unstable and fissiparous groups, and that the earlier racial conceptions of barbarian ethnicity must give way to constructed ethnicities, however that is perceived by the modern scholarly factions now debating the issue—a highly contentious subject.⁸ In ethnogenesis’s early model, Reinhard Wenskus proposed that there was a nucleus tradition, a *complex*, that was able to confer an identity on a population. This involved a process of *Stammesbildung* or

account of a particular struggle to suggest that there were significant internal social and political ends served by such contending campaigns.

⁸ Michael Kulikowski, “Nation versus army: A necessary contrast?”, in *On barbarian identity: Critical approaches to ethnicity in the Early Middle Ages*, ed. Andrew Gillett (Turnhout, 2002), pp. 71–72. Kulikowski, p. 70, n. 2: “One of the great virtues of recent studies of ethnogenesis has been to show the malleability of early medieval ethnicity and, consequently, to force us to regard with skepticism all claims to natural ethnic community while looking for the strategies by which such communities are socially constructed.”

ethnogenesis, that drew together disparate people into a community that on the basis of ancient and orally transmitted traditions came to believe they shared a common origin. While the belief in such ancient origins can be said to be ideological, such elements cannot be entirely discounted, and amid such memories, myths, and traditions there is still the strong possibility that they were not entirely invented.⁹

Walter Pohl, in defense of the term “ethnogenesis,” suggested that ethnic formation processes were complex, long-term developments, and that the term suggests an origin of the *ethnos* in a limited initial stage. The ethnic formation of a group could fail, and the group disappear. Success or failure are just descriptive terms; the methodology is to attempt a reconstruction of the ethnic processes, political contexts, and perception in the sources. The analysis of origin legends and ethnic discourse is just a tool in what is a bricolage, trying to bring together a variety of elements.¹⁰

For example, Charles R. Bowlus, in his article on “ethnogenesis” also in Gillett’s volume, reviews recent studies and speaks of “misleading concepts.”¹¹ Such terms as “Goths” or “Franks” referred to peoples, or tribes, of diverse origins, languages, and cultures, who had coalesced into larger confederations. According to Bowlus, the ethnogenetic theory is best seen as probes into the makeup of these confederations, and he holds that such a core was basically a confederation of groups of warriors each with its own leaders, and that they are best seen as an army, not a people on the move. At the center was an elite military band whose language, culture, and traditions came to be adopted by the confederation as a whole, leading to acceptance of an identity of common descent. He also points out that ethnogenesis models share a common sequence of events, including a primordial deed, such as crossing a sea or mighty river or victory over odds, and throughout the process there must be an ancestral enemy whose existence holds the *Grossstamm* or confederation together. Bowlus concludes that the ethnogenesis construct is a paradigm that may be suited only to handling data in modern research but of little utility in dealing with the scant sources of the past. As Walter Pohl says, “Whether invented or only partly invented, such traditions could play an analogous role: the world in which the barbarians had settled on Roman soil

⁹ Reinhard Wenskus, *Stammesbildung und Verfassung: Das Werden der frühmittelalterlichen gentes* (Cologne, 1961; reprint, 2016), pp. 75 ff.; see also Walter Goffart, “Does the distant past impinge on the invasion age Germans?” in *On barbarian identity*, ed. Gillett, p. 31.

¹⁰ Walter Pohl, “Ethnicity, theory, and the tradition: A response,” in *On barbarian identity*, ed. Gillett, p. 239. See also his “Conceptions of ethnicity in early medieval studies,” in *Debating the Middle Ages: Issues and readings*, ed. Lester K. Little and Barbara H. Rosenwein (Oxford, 1998), pp. 13–24.

¹¹ Charles R. Bowlus, “Ethnogenesis: The tyranny of a concept,” in *On barbarian identity*, ed. Gillett, pp. 241–256.

presented high risks, challenges, and problems of adaptation; narratives could give a meaning to this difficult situation.”¹² The same might be said of those who, *mutatis mutandis*, pressed on to Chinese soil.

Despite some uncertainty, and even misgivings concerning how the ethno-genesis construct may be utilized for historical research in the European case, it does seem to offer insight into that of the East Asian area. The similarity with the Tuoba legend is striking. In the case of the Tuoba, as Pearce points out in his chapter on the Northern Wei, the *Weishu* records the reaction of Emperor Taiwu, not that long after the fact, when he was presented with the opportunity to lay claim to evidence of that arduous trek, as tenuous as that evidence might have been, and to send envoys to authenticate it, thus using the opportunity to strengthen the ties that held his compatriots together.

Wang Junjie has written an important article which bears on this very question: how the Xianbei, originally the name of a small tribe, came to be that of a powerful confederation and, indeed, joined to the identity of those who dwelled in the Northern Wei state.¹³ He traces the earliest mention of the Xianbei to some tribesmen located on the far northeastern Liaodong borders in the pre-Han and Han periods. They moved into the area abandoned by the flight of the Xiongnu after these latter were defeated by Han forces in 89 CE. Various other groups who had been subordinate to the Xiongnu but who had remained in the area then took on the Xianbei name, which from that time came to be a potent umbrella designation for those joining the confederation while retaining their original identity. Among the various other components were the Murong in Liaodong, the Duan in Liaoxi, the Yuwen to the north, the Tuoba even further north, the Qifu at Longxi, and the Toufa at Hexi, each dominant in their separate areas. The Tuoba emerged as the victorious aggregate among others and established their state. They then began, perhaps driven by a sense of necessity, to create an ancestry that legitimated their primary claim to the Xianbei name, one which continued to be the traditional mantle incorporating all the conquered groups, diverse as they were in customs, language, and so forth. Thus, as the *Weishu* recounted, the Tuoba claimed to be descended from the Yellow Emperor and had been allotted the northern regions, where they took their name from the Xianbei mountain there. As Wang Junjie points out, that legend is recorded in the *Weishu*, which itself was compiled after the fall of the dynasty, but there is contemporary evidence of the acceptance earlier by the Northern Wei subjects of their being Xianbei and the self-referential use of the term “Xianbei.” In 450, during

¹² Walter Pohl, “Ethnicity, theory, and tradition: A response,” in *On barbarian identity*, ed. Gillett, p. 233.

¹³ Wang Junjie, “Wei Jin Nanbeichao de Xianbei shibushi yige minzu,” *Xibei shifan xuebao (shehui kexue bao)* 1985.3, pp. 63–72.

a campaign by the Northern Wei against the southern Liu-Song state, representatives of the two forces faced each other to negotiate a settlement. When the southern envoy asked his adversary, the distinguished Han Chinese literatus Li Xiaobo, for his name, the answer was, “I am a Xianbei and have no surname.” Asked about his rank, he replied, “The Xianbei official ranks are different [from yours] and cannot be briefly explained; still it is adequate to match yours, Sir.”¹⁴ We may well doubt that Li really saw himself as a Xianbei tribesman, but he could identify himself as such in his role as an agent of that state.

Turning now to the field of Six Dynasties studies, the traditional approach by those writing on China’s past, and that includes the Six Dynasties period, was textually oriented, based on a wide knowledge of the literary tradition and a rigorous methodology, an adherence to what in Japan was called *jisōshugi*, or “historical positivism.” In that long tradition, it was rare to find someone like Zhang Xuecheng (1738–1801) who combined that strict adherence to the principles of historical accuracy with a theoretical discussion of the significance of research.¹⁵ These views are also reflected in the important historical research of his contemporary Zhao Yi (1727–1814), who held that while the classics contained the principles of government, the histories recorded the government’s activities, and thus, according to Robert J. Smith, were seen as a guide for “proper conduct for the present and future.”¹⁶ The rigor with which the research was conducted by these men and others was of the highest degree, but the purposes to be served by their efforts came to undergo a conceptual transformation.

It may be argued that the modern study of the Six Dynasties period began with Japanese sinologists, and in particular with Naitō Torajiro, more commonly known as Naitō Konan (1866–1934), a journalist and later professor at Kyoto University, whose work had an important and lasting influence not just on Japanese scholarship, but internationally as well. He is primarily known for his delineation of a broad-stroked periodization in Chinese history. In general, these stages consisted of rule by great clans in the Zhou and Han, then succeeded by a medieval period, defined as the Six Dynasties and the Tang, marked by the dominance of an aristocracy, before giving way in the Song to what he termed China’s modern age, characterized by a strong autocracy served by a bureaucracy staffed by those chosen on the basis of civil service

¹⁴ *SaS* 59.1600. See also Albert Dien, “The disputation at Pengcheng: Accounts from the *Wei shu* and the *Song shu*,” in *Early medieval China: A sourcebook*, ed. Wendy Swartz et al. (New York, 2014), p. 42.

¹⁵ Chapter 7, “The historian’s craft,” in David Nivison, *The life and thought of Chang Hsiieh-ch’eng, 1738–1801* (Stanford, 1966), pp. 191–212.

¹⁶ Robert J. Smith, *China’s cultural heritage: The Qing dynasty, 1644–1912* (Boulder, CO, 1983), p. 136.

examinations.¹⁷ It is a measure of Naitō's influence that such standard Western works as John K. Fairbank et al., *East Asia: Tradition and transformation* (Boston, 1973), and Jacques Gernet, *La Chine ancienne, des origines à l'empire* (Paris, 1964), adopted Naitō's periodization.¹⁸

In Naitō's analysis, the Six Dynasties era was characterized by powerful clans that emerged from scholarly lineages of the end of the Later Han. These locally powerful clans, or lineages as they are sometimes called, became the basis of an aristocracy defined by a system of categories called the *liupin* 六品, or "Six Grades." Members of the top echelons (*shidaifu* 士大夫) were appointed as officials who virtually controlled the state, beyond any threat from the imperial court. The status of these aristocratic entities (termed *kizoku* 貴族 in Japanese) was strengthened by intermarriage and matches made with the imperial family. Naitō's schema met with much criticism but was taken up and developed by many followers, such as Kawakatsu Yoshio (1922–1984) and Tanigawa Michio (1925–2013), and is generally known as the Kyoto school.¹⁹ Kawakatsu, in an article published in French, persuasively traces the history and decline of the southern "aristocracy" in the latter part of the Southern Dynasties.²⁰ Tanigawa, on the other hand, focused on the interrelationship of the elite with their community, what he termed *kyōdōitai* 共同体 (from the German *Gemeinde*). This relationship, an idealistic one, was based on Confucian morality, supplying an ethical–moral basis to the help extended to the community in troubled times by its cultured and intellectual elite. Needless to say, Tanigawa's met with much criticism, especially from the Marxists because he made no mention of any class struggle.²¹

¹⁷ Hisayuki Miyakawa, "An outline of the Naitō hypothesis and its effects on Japanese studies of China," *FEQ* 14.4 (1955), pp. 533–552. More recently Joshua Fogel has written extensively on Naitō. Among the works consulted here are his *Politics and sinology: The case of Naitō Konan (1866–1934)* (Cambridge, MA, 1984); "Naitō Konan and his historiography: A reconsideration in the early twenty-first century," in *Riben Hanxue yanjiu xutan, sixiang wenhua pian*, ed. Zhang Baosan and Yang Rubin (Taipei, 2005), pp. 343–370; and "Naitō Konan (1866–1934) and Chinese historiography," *HEW* 1 (January 2003), pp. 117–131. See also the important discussion by Harriet T. Zurndorfer, *China bibliography: A research guide to reference works about China past and present* (Leiden, 1995), pp. 4–44.

¹⁸ Fogel, *Politics and sinology*, pp. xv–xvi.

¹⁹ For a discussion of these developments and their debates with the Marxist-oriented Tokyo school, see Fogel's review in *HJAS* 44.1 (1984), pp. 228–247, of Tanigawa Michio, *Chūgoku shitaifu kaikyū to chūki to no kankei ni tsuite no sōōteki kenkyū* (Kyoto, 1983). Miyakawa, "An outline of the Naitō hypothesis," is also an important study of the process of Naitō's development of his ideas and a review of the range of support, or not, which his proposal elicited.

²⁰ Kawakatsu Yoshio, "La décadence de l'aristocratie chinoise sous les Dynasties du Sud," *AcA* 21 (1971), pp. 13–38. See also his "L'aristocratie et la société féodale au début des Six Dynasties," *Zinbun* 17 (1981), pp. 107–160.

²¹ For the exposition of this concept, see Tanigawa Michio, translated with an introduction by Joshua A. Fogel, *Medieval Chinese society and the local "community"* (Berkeley, 1985). See also the review of this book by John Lee, *JAS* 46.1 (1987), pp. 132–134.

Naitō's analysis has served to stimulate an enormous richness of scholarly research.²² After the great debates over periodization subsided in the 1980s, Japanese scholarship on early medieval China shifted its focus to smaller but more tangible issues. In a 1999 essay, Tanigawa Michio noted that one of the largest challenges facing Japanese scholars of early medieval China was determining the nature of the ruling class: to what degree were the "aristocratic" families autonomous?²³ The study of the nature of government and its relationship with elite families has continued to draw the attention of many scholars.²⁴ Kawamoto Yoshiaki notes that a major question for many historians studying the period is to what extent regimes were established in northern China by non-Han people non-Han in nature. More specifically, were Northern Dynasties' institutional innovations, such as the equal-field system (*juntian zhi*), the division of subjects into free and subordinated people (*liangjian zhi* 良賤制), and the garrison militia system (*fubing zhi*), inspired by Chinese or non-Han traditions?²⁵ A number of Japanese scholars have explored the nature of northern polities often with insights gained from the use of newly discovered entombed tomb inscriptions (*muzhiming*).²⁶ A new area of research has been the study of cities and regions; these studies are deeply informed by archaeological discoveries.²⁷ Another emerging avenue of

²² Kubozoe Yoshufumi, "Japanese research in recent years on the history of Wei, Chin and the Northern and Southern Dynasties," *Acta* 60 (1991), pp. 104–134, for the years 1970 to 1989, has an extensive list of publications under the rubric of the periodization debate, social stratification, the aristocratic system in the north and in the south, landholding, agriculture, international relations, and historical materials. This issue of *Acta Asiatica* is dedicated to Six Dynasties history and includes articles by four major Japanese scholars of the period: Yoshikawa Tadao, Yasuda Jirō, Ochi Shigeaki, and Tanigawa Michio.

²³ Tanigawa Michio, "Sōsetsu," in *Gi Shin Nanbokuchō Zui-Tō jidai shi no kibon mondai*, ed. Gi Shin Nanbokuchō Zui Tō jidai shi no kihon mondai henshū i-inakai (Tokyo, 1999).

²⁴ Such as Kubozoe Yoshufumi, *Gi Shin Nanbokuchō kanryōsei kenkyū* (Tokyo, 2003); Yasuda Jirō, *Rikuchō seijishi no kenkyū* (Kyoto, 2003); Kawai Yasushi, *Nanchō kizokusei no kenkyū* (Tokyo, 2015); Nakamura Keiji, *Rikuchō kizokusei kenkyū* (Tokyo, 1987), and *Rikuchō seiji shakai shi kenkū* (Tokyo, 2013); Watanabe Yoshihiro, *Sangoku seiken no kōzō to "meishi"* (Kyoto, 2004), and *Seishin "jukyō kokka" to kizokusei* (Tokyo, 2010); Fukuhara Akirō, *Gi Shin seiji shakaishi kenkyū* (Kyoto, 2012); and Okabe Takeshi, *Gi Shin nanbokuchō kanjin mibunsei kenkyū* (Tokyo, 2017).

²⁵ Kawamoto Yoshiaki, "Gozoku kokka," in *Gi Shin Nanbokuchō Zui-Tō jidai shi no kibon mondai*, ed. Tanigawa Michio et al. (Tokyo, 1999), 98–115.

²⁶ See Kawamoto Yoshiaki, *Gi Shin Nanbokuchō jidai minzoku mondai* (Tokyo, 1998); Kegasawa Yasunori, *Fubeisei no kenkyū: fubei beishi to sono shakai* (Kyoto, 1999), and *Chūgoku sekkoku shiryō to sono shakai: bokuchō zuitōki o chūshin ni* (Tokyo, 2007); Matsushita Ken'ichi, *Hokugi kozoku taiseiron* (Sapporo, 2007); Maejima Yoshitaka, *Seigi, Hokushū seikenshi no kenkyū* (Tokyo, 2013); and Kubozoe Yoshufumi, *Boshi o mochita bokugishi kenkyū* (Tokyo, 2017).

²⁷ See Satō Yūji, *Gi Shin Nanbokuchō shakai no kenkyū* (Tokyo, 1998); Nakamura Keiji, *Rikuchō Kōnan chikishi kenkyū* (Tokyo, 2006); Shiozawa Hirohito, *Gokan Gi Shin Nanbokuchō tojō kyōiki kenkyū* (Tokyo, 2013); Fujii Yasutaka, *Chūgoku kōnan rikuchō no kōkogaku kenkyū* (Tokyo, 2014); Kobayashi Hitoshi, *Chūgoku nanbokuchō zui to tōyō no kenkyū* (Kyoto, 2015); Muramoto Ken'ichi, *Kan Gi Shin Nanbokuchō jidai no tojō to ryōbo no kenkyū* (Tokyo, 2016); and Tanaka Kazuki, *Seishin jidai no tojō to seiji* (Kyoto, 2017).

inquiry has been how early medieval Chinese used ritual to give order to the court and social relations.²⁸ Studies of Buddhism and Daoism continue to be numerous as well.²⁹

In China, scholarly interest in the Six Dynasties period can be traced back through the ages but Zhao Yi, cited above, ranks among the foremost of those who took an interest in that history. In his *Gaiyu congkao*, 1790, and *Nian'ershi zhaji*, 1795, Zhao Yi's careful notes and learned observations set a high standard in textual studies.³⁰ His attention was for the most part focused on the texts themselves, and how well they reflected the objectivity and accuracy expected of the historiographical ideal.³¹ Zhao Yi, of course, was a man of his time. It may be noted, for example, that one of the items in his *Gaiyu congkao* is a discussion of the emphasis placed on lineage and the compilation of genealogies during the Six Dynasties, but there was no evidence offered, unlike in the case of Naitō Konan, that this played a central role in the structure of the state's political organization.³²

Turning to the emergence of a modern historiography in China, Axel Schneider, in an illuminating article, has described how the traditional role of the historian was to trace the historical facts that exemplified the *dao* 道; that is, the presence of the uniform and normative order that was the basis of the legitimacy of the current regime.³³ As Schneider says, there is a dispute whether it was the development of the *kaozheng* 考證 methods of textual criticism in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries that led to the secularization of historiography, but certainly by the early twentieth

²⁸ Watanabe Shin'ichirō, *Tenkū no gyokuza: Chūgoku kodai teikoku no chūsei to girei* (Tokyo, 1996), and *Chūgoku kodai no ōken to tenka chitsujō: Nitchū bikakushi no shiten kara* (Tokyo, 2003); Kaneko Shūichi, *Kodai Chūgoku to kōtei saishi* (Tokyo, 2001); and Togawa Takayuki, *Tōshin Nanchō ni okeru dentō no sōzō* (Tokyo, 2015).

²⁹ See Kobayashi Masayoshi, *Rikuchō Dōkyō shi kenkyū* (Tokyo, 1990); Yoshikawa Tadao, *Rikuchō Dōkyō no kenkyū* (Tokyo, 1998); Kamitsuka Yoshiko, *Rikuchō Dōkyō shisō no kenkyū* (Tokyo, 1999); Yamada Toshiaki, *Rikuchō Dōkyō girei no kenkyū* (Tokyo, 1999); Kikuchi Noritaka, *Shinjūkyō kenkyū: Rikuchō Dōkyō ni okeru kyūsai shisō no keisei* (Tokyo, 2009); Kanno Hiroshi, *Nanbokuchō zuidai no Chūgoku Bukkyō shisō kenkyū* (Tokyo, 2012); Kegasawa Yasunori, *Chūgoku chūsei Bukkyō sekkoku no kenkyū* (Tokyo, 2013); Ōuchi Fumio, *Nanbokuchō zui tōki bukkyōshi kenkyū* (Kyoto, 2013); Endō Yūsuke, *Rikuchōkei ni okeru bukkyō juyō no kenkyū* (Tokyo, 2014); Kuramoto Shōtoku, *Hokuchō Bukkyō zōzōmei kenkyū* (Kyoto, 2016); and Mugatani Kunio, *Rikuchō zui tō dōkyō shisō kenkyū* (Tokyo, 2018).

³⁰ *Gaiyu congkao* (Shanghai, 1957), chapters 6–9, pp. 111–174; *Nian'ershi zhaji*, 1795, *Qingdai xueshu biji congkan*, Volume 23 (Beijing, 2005). See also the discussion in Dong Wenwu, *Nian'ershi zhaji* (Beijing, 2008).

³¹ See the observation of his work by Liu Dong, "On the narration of the past in China: An outline," *HOH* 1.1 (2016), pp. 51–69.

³² Zhao Yi, *Gaiyu congkao*, pp. 315–322.

³³ Axel Schneider, "Between *dao* and history: Two Chinese historians in search of a modern identity for China," *HAT* 35.4 (1996), p. 55. He cites here Benjamin Schwartz, "History in Chinese culture: Some comparative reflections," *History and Theory* 35.4 (1996), pp. 23–33.

century there were important changes in the writing of history in China, due in no small part to Western influences. This new historiography can be seen in the work and example of Chen Yinke (1890–1969), who is considered to have been one of the most original and creative historians in twentieth-century China. His research focused for the most part on the Sui–Tang transition, but his description of the hereditary aristocracy of that time and its involvement with those events has set a high standard for scholars who came after him.³⁴

Chen's career exemplifies the new historiography in its breadth. As a youth he went first to Japan; in later years he also studied in Berlin, Zurich, and Paris, and at Harvard. During the fourteen years in all that he spent abroad, he studied Sanskrit, Pali, Tibetan, Mongolian, Manchu, Japanese, English, French, German, Persian, Turkic, Tangut, Latin, and Greek! On his return to China in 1925 he began his academic career. He did not hesitate to offer broad generalizations based on his careful and detailed research. His major works were the *Sui Tang zhidu yuanyuan lielungao* (*A Draft Introduction to the Origins of Institutions of the Sui and Tang Dynasties*) and the *Tangdai zhengzhishi lunshugao* (*A Draft Discussion of the Political History of the Tang Dynasty*), first published in Chongqing in 1944 and 1943 respectively.³⁵ These studies involved significant research on a variety of institutions of the Six Dynasties that had lasting importance in the following period as well. He was especially interested in the impact the northern invaders had on the culture of China, and in the mutual political and cultural relationships among the Six Dynasties states. Perhaps most impressive was his ability to analyze institutional history on a large scale. For example, he held that the most significant influence on the Sui–Tang institutions was derived from those of the Northern Wei and Northern Qi, which in turn also had elements from the early Southern Dynasties. In his opinion, a second group, that of the Liang and Chen dynasties of the later period of the Southern Dynasties, and a third, that of the Western Wei and Northern Zhou, had not had a significant role in the formation of the later institutions. In another case, the military system of the *fubing*, important in the early Tang, was generally seen as having been derived from the Western Wei–Northern Zhou who had first introduced it, but Chen demonstrated how the Tang form was very different from the earlier one and so discredited

³⁴ Ying-shih Yu, "Chen Yinke," in *Encyclopedia of historians and historical writing*, ed. Kelly Boyd (Chicago, 1999), 1, pp. 198–199.

³⁵ Chen Yinke, *Sui Tang zhidu yuanyuan lielun gao* (Shanghai, 1954), and *Tangdai zhengzhishi shulun gao* (Beijing, 1957).

that claim.³⁶ In all of this it is clear that we have moved away from highly focused textual studies to broad social and political themes.³⁷

Among Chen's better-known students were Yang Lien-sheng (1914–1990), the distinguished Harvard professor who specialized in economic history,³⁸ and Zhou Yiliang (1913–2001), who earned his doctoral degree at Harvard and returned to China, where he published important studies on the Six Dynasties, as well as on a broad range of other subjects.³⁹

A study by Chen Changqi and Fan Yaolin reviewed a critical selection of 320 books and articles (110 books and 210 articles) concerning the Six Dynasties that had been published during the thirty years between 1978 and 2008.⁴⁰ These were selected out of over 650 publications for that same period which Chen and Fan lauded as evidence of the flourishing state of Six Dynasties studies. In fact, their number greatly underestimated the extent of interest in the Six Dynasties period. For those same years, according to a search only of items under the heading “Wei Jin Nanbeichao” in the *China Academic Journals* database prepared by the Tsinghua University China Academic Journals Electronic Publishing House, Beijing, 1,724 items are listed; Chen and Fan thus included in their analysis only some 8 percent of that total. Even this percentage is a soft number since only items that contained the term “Wei Jin Nanbeichao” in the title were counted in the database, while there was no such limit in the Chen–Fan survey.

Chen and Fan divided their survey into a number of categories, such as politics, both events and institutions, economy, society, ethnicity, culture, religion, and intellectual history. Under each heading there is a general discussion of the scope and sorts of topics at issue, with citations of the relevant articles and books. For example, their treatment of the military in this period includes military households, sources of soldiers, training, equipment,

³⁶ Wang Rongzu, *Chen Yinke pingzhuan* (Nanchang, 1991), p. 143.

³⁷ Qu Jingdong, “Fanhui lishi shiye, chongshou shehui de xiangxiangli: Zhongguo jinshi bianqian ji zhingshi yanjiu de chuantong,” *Shehui* 2015.1, p. 18.

³⁸ Among L. S. Yang's many writings, “Notes on the economic history of the Chin dynasty,” *HJAS* 9.2 (1946), pp. 107–185 (reprinted in his *Studies in Chinese institutional history* (Cambridge, MA, 1963), pp. 119–197), and “Buddhist monasteries and four money-raising institutions in Chinese history,” *HJAS* 13 (1950), pp. 174–191 (reprinted in his *Studies in Chinese institutional history* (Cambridge, MA, 1963), pp. 198–215).

³⁹ Much of Zhou's memoir, *Bijing shi shubeng* (Beijing, 1998), has been translated by Joshua Fogel, *Just a scholar: The memoirs of Zhou Yiliang (1913–2001)* (Toronto, 2013). See also the review by Christian Soffel, *MS* 65.1 (2017), pp. 256–258.

⁴⁰ Chen Changqi and Fan Yaolin, “Wei Jin Nanbeichao shi yanjiu sanshinian,” *Shixue yuekan* 2009.10, pp. 107–125. The authors say that in the three decades covered by their report, the general publications numbers were over 150, over 200, and over 300. These figures indicate a relative degree of selectivity, because the numbers of publications in the *China Academic Journals* index, counting only those with “Nanbeichao” in the title, are 164, 458, and 1,102.

logistics, and support. Studies dealing with local troops and professional troops, north and south, are cited. Then the various levels of the military administrative system, local and central, expeditionary, and guardian, are treated. All of this provides what is in effect an annotated syllabus on a very wide range of topics. Based on their survey, besides deploring the poor quality of a large number of publications, needless to say not cited by them, and their emphasis on the need to pay attention to what foreign scholars were doing, their conclusion was that the field suffered from not maintaining the foundation and level of quality set by such past scholars as Chen Yinke and Zhou Yiliang, mentioned above, as well as others such as Tang Changru (1911–1994), He Ziquan (1911–2011), and Wang Zhonglao (1913–1986). The authors Chen and Fan close with a negative assessment of the current field of Wei Jin Nanbeichao studies, deploring what they see as an overall lack of innovation that breaks new ground, and that there is little, if any, broad vision of societal organization; rather, the topics generally treated in publications are overly focused and circumscribed.⁴¹ To a significant degree the authors blame this on the advances in research tools which enable rapidly written and superficial publications. At the same time, their survey demonstrates that by being selective, one may find that there is much valuable work being accomplished.

Since the beginning of the twenty-first century, Chinese scholarship on the Six Dynasties has continued to grow rapidly. The triannual meetings of the Chinese Wei Jin Nanbei chao Historical Association 魏晉南北朝史學會 now usually attract well over 120 scholars for each meeting. Participating historians come not just from China, but also from Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan, as well as a few from North America and Europe. Based on the Worldcat database, a quick count of scholarly books published in Chinese from just the years 2009 to 2017 reveal 250 titles, twice the number for the thirty-year period from 1978 to 2008. Some of these are Chinese translations of Japanese and Western works, indicating that Chinese scholars are increasingly open to different approaches and viewpoints. A survey of the current state of Six Dynasties studies in China reveals the growing interest in a number of new directions that give promise of a wider and deeper understanding of the period.

One such area is an increased study of state ritual and legal codes, both of which document the resilience of Confucianism. A number of scholars have shown that the rituals by which governments established order and attempted to legitimate themselves were Confucian in nature. That is to say, that state

⁴¹ For a similar critique, see Li Tianshi, "The retrospect and prospect of sixty years' research about the Six Dynasties in the mainland of China," *FHC* 5.4 (2010), pp. 499–524.

rituals were based on descriptions of ritual found in the classics; furthermore, ritual practice was judged both at court and by upper-class society on the basis of the degree to which it adhered to standards articulated and set in the classics. In other words, Confucian rules and etiquette guided upper-class behavior.⁴² The Confucian classic that emperors and their counselors most often consulted to shape their government and create their ritual programs was the *Zhouli* (*The Rites of the Zhou*). Recent Chinese language scholarship has looked closely at the oversized impact that this classic had on early medieval ritual programs.⁴³

Due to the 2002 discovery in Yumen, Gansu, of part of a commentary on the Jin dynasty legal codes, the law of the Wei–Jin period has attracted fresh scrutiny.⁴⁴ Based on this material, Han Shufeng notes that the Jin code was influenced not only by Confucianism, but also by *xuanxue* (the Dark Learning).⁴⁵ In his recent two-volume work, the scholar Lou Jin has demonstrated the massive effort that Six Dynasties, especially Northern Dynasties, courts devoted to creating law codes and the sizable influence Confucianism had on this corpus.⁴⁶

Much of recent Chinese-language scholarship has focused on how Six Dynasties governments legitimated themselves and functioned. A number of works have examined how many founding dynasts used the rite of abdication (*shanrang*) by the preceding dynasty to indicate that they had rightfully come into the possession of the throne (even if the last ruler of the preceding dynasty was given no choice in the matter).⁴⁷ Of course, whom the government selected to be officials and how they were chosen had a significant effect on both the shape of society and the structure of the state; hence, the Nine Rank recruiting system and its political ramifications has commanded much scholarly attention.⁴⁸ Along similar lines, a few authors have started to look at

⁴² For works that document this, see Cheng Ya-ju, *Qinggan yu zhidu: Wei Jin shidai de muzi guanxi* (Taipei, 2001); Kan Huai-chen, *Huangquan, liyi yu jingdian quanshi: Zhongguo gudai zhengzhibi yanjiu* (Taipei, 2004); Guo Shanbing, *Zhongguo gudai diwang zongmiao lizhi yanjiu* (Beijing, 2007); and Xu Yinghua, *Han Wei zhi Nanbeichao shiqi jiaosi zhidu yanjiu* (Harbin, 2009).

⁴³ For example, see Liang Mancang, *Wei Jin Nanbeichao wuli zhidu kaolun* (Beijing, 2009); and Yan Buke, *Fu Zhou zhi mian: Zhouli liumian lizhi de xingshuai bianyi* (Beijing, 2009).

⁴⁴ Li Junfang, *Jinchao fazhi yanjiu* (Beijing, 2012).

⁴⁵ Han Shufeng, *Han Wei falü yu shehui: yi jiandu, wenshu wei zhongxin de kaocha* (Beijing, 2011).

⁴⁶ Lou Jin, *Wei Jin Nanbeichao Sui Tang lifa yu falü tixi* (Beijing, 2014). See also Li Shuji, *Beichao lizhi faxi yanjiu* (Beijing, 2002).

⁴⁷ See Wei Guanglai, *Han Wei Jin huangquan shandai* (Taiyuan, 2002); Zhu Ziyang, *Han Wei shandai yu Sanguo zhengzhi* (Shanghai, 2013); and Yang Xueyue, *Shiliuguo Beichao quanli shandai xintan* (Beijing, 2016).

⁴⁸ See Hu Shuyun, *Jiupin guanren fa kaolun* (Beijing, 2003); Zhang Xuhua, *Jiupin zhongzheng zhi luelun gao* (Zhengzhou, 2004), *Jiupin zhongzheng zhi yanjiu* (Beijing, 2015), and *Zhongguo shiqi qingzhuo guanqian zhidu* (Beijing, 2017); Yan Buke, *Pinwei yu zhiwei: Qin Han Wei Jin Nanbeichao guanqian zhidu yanjiu*

how early medieval governments evaluated the performance of their officials.⁴⁹ Recognizing that many Six Dynasties regimes were established by military strongmen, a number of scholars have begun to investigate the effects of military rule on governance.⁵⁰

In the field of social history, Chinese-language scholarship has been particularly active. Renewed attention has been paid to the structure of families and relations between family members.⁵¹ The structures of clans, hamlets, and village life have also become a topic of new interest.⁵² A popular subject of inquiry has been the phenomenon of prominent families specializing in certain types of learning and using this expertise to establish their elite standing and political influence.⁵³ The chaos of this period frequently caused large-scale migrations. A number of recent books look at these migrations and their effects on families, culture, and local governance.⁵⁴ A new trend has also been works that look at political and social phenomena within specific regions.⁵⁵

Without a doubt, the most important event now affecting Chinese scholarship has been the 1996 discovery of third-century bamboo and wooden slips in an old well near a street named Zoumalou 走馬樓, in Changsha, Hunan Province. The recovered documents are local administrative records, for the most part including household registers, tax

(Beijing, 2002), *Chaju zhidu bianqian shi gao* (Beijing, 2009), and *Zhongguo gudai guanjie zhidu yinlun* (Beijing, 2010); and Zhang Xiaowen, *Wei Jin Nanbeichao difangguan dengji guanli zhidu yanjiu* (Beijing, 2010).

⁴⁹ See Wang Dongyang, *Wei Jin Nanbeichao kaoke zhidu yanjiu* (Beijing, 2009); and Dai Weihong, *Bei Wei kaoke zhidu yanjiu* (Beijing, 2010).

⁵⁰ For example, see Zhang Jun, *Han Wei Jin junfu zhidu yanjiu* (Beijing, 2006); Tao Xiandu, *Wei Jin Nanbeichao bafu yu bafu zhengzhi yanjiu* (Changsha, 2007); Zhang Jinlong, *Zhiluan xingwang: Junquan yu Nanchao zhengquan yanjin* (Beijing, 2016); and Zeng Lei, *Beichao houqi junfa zhengzhi yanjiu* (Beijing, 2015).

⁵¹ See Li Qing, *Qin Han Wei Jin Nanbeichao shiqi jiazu, zongzu guanxi yanjiu* (Shanghai, 2005); Yan Aimin, *Han Jin jiazu yanjiu* (Shanghai, 2005); Shao Zhengkun, *Beichao jiating xingtai yanjiu* (Beijing, 2008); and Wang Renlei, *Wei Jin Nanbeichao jiating guanxi yanjiu* (Zhengzhou, 2013).

⁵² Hou Xudong, *Beichao cummin de shenghuo shijie: chaoting, zhouxian yu canli* (Beijing, 2005); Yi Jiandong, *Liang-Han Wei Jin Nanbeichao shiqi Guandong baozu yanjiu* (Chengdu, 2007); and Gao Xiandong, *Nanbeichao xiangcun shehui zuzhi yanjiu* (Beijing, 2008).

⁵³ See Zhou Shufang, *Nanchao jiazu wenhua tanwei* (Changchun, 2008); Wang Yongping, *Liuchao jiazu* (Nanjing, 2008), and *Dong Jin Nanchao jiazu wenhuashi luncong* (Nanjing, 2010); Yao Xiaofei, *Liang Jin Nanchao Langye Wangshi jiazu wenhua yanjiu* (Jinan, 2010); Liu Shuwei, *Liang Jin Taishan Yangshi jiazu wenhua yan jiu* (Beijing, 2013); Yan Chunxin, *Lanling Xiaoshi yu zhonggu wenhua yanjiu* (Jinan, 2013); Chang Zhao, *Yanshi jiazu wenhua yanjiu: yi Wei Jin Nanbeichao wei zhongxin* (Beijing, 2014); Zhao Jing, *Wei Jin Nanbeichao Langye Wangshi jiazu wenhua yanjiu* (Beijing, 2014); and Gong Bin, *Nan Lanling Xiaoshi jiazu wenhua shigao* (Shanghai, 2015).

⁵⁴ See Li Jihe, *Xian Qin zhi Sui Tang shiqi xibei shaoshu minzu qianxi yanjiu* (Beijing, 2003); Bo Guixi, *Si-liu shiji neiqian buren jiazu zhidu yanjiu* (Beijing, 2003); Wang Yongping, *Zhongguo shiren qianyi yu wenhua jiaoliu* (Beijing, 2005); and Hu Axiang, *Dong Jin Nanchao qiaozhou junxian yu qiaoliu renkou yanjiu* (Nanjing, 2008).

⁵⁵ Zhang Xianhui, *Liang Han Wei Jin Liangzhou zhengzhisbi yanjiu* (Changsha, 2008); Zhang Lijun and Qiao Fengqi, *Yingchuan shizu yu Wei Jin Sui Tang lishi wenhua yanjiu* (Zhengzhou, 2015).

records, inventory reports, judicial proceedings, and contracts, dating to the Jiahe 嘉禾 reign period (232–238) of the Wu Kingdom (220–280). These documents give us a precious, firsthand glimpse of local society. Beginning in 1999, Cultural Relics Press began to publish a multivolume series entitled *Changsha Zoumalou Sanguo Wu jian* (Changsha's Zoumalou Wooden Slips from the Wu State of the Three Kingdoms Period). These volumes provide both photographs of the wood and bamboo slats, as well as transcriptions of their contents in modern script; their publication has resulted in an outpouring of new scholarship, including a periodical, *Wujian yanjiu* 吴简研究 (Studies on the Wu Wooden Slips), solely devoted to the study of these materials.⁵⁶

Another important trend in Chinese-language writings has been fueled by the many recent discoveries and excavations of Six Dynasties' tombs and city sites. Through their grave goods, tomb structure, furnishings, and murals, excavated graves have provided Chinese archaeologists, historians, and art historians with a cornucopia of information about everyday goods, visions of the afterlife, religious beliefs and rituals, conceptions of the good life, extent of contact with non-Chinese cultures, and material wealth of early medieval China's upper class.⁵⁷ A number of the newly excavated tombs have also provided the bonanza of *muzhiming* (entombed tomb inscriptions), which are biographies of varying length about the deceased written by either family members or subordinates.⁵⁸ Because these biographies were meant to honor the departed, they not only provide practical information about the tomb occupant's genealogy and career, they also shed much light on the period's social and religious values. In a number of cases, the subject of the entombed tomb inscription is a woman. Turning to urban history, a number of Six

⁵⁶ For an overall guide to the materials, see Ling Wenchao, *Zoumalou Wujian caiji bushu zhengli yu yanjiu* (Guilin, 2015); and Changsha jiandu bowuguan, *Jiabe yijing chuan Tianxia: Zoumalou Wujian de faxian baohu zhengli yu liyong* (Changsha, 2016). More specialized studies include Yu Zhenbo, *Zoumalou Wujian chutan* (Taipei, 2004), and *Zoumalou Wujian xutan* (Taipei, 2007); Gao Min, *Changsha Zoumalou jiandu yanjiu* (Guilin, 2008); Zhang Rongqiang, *Han Tang jizhang zhidu yanjiu* (Beijing, 2010); Jiang Fuya, *Zoumalou Wujian jingji wenshu yanjiu* (Beijing, 2012); and Shen Gang, *Changsha Zoumalou Sanguo zhubian yanjiu* (Beijing, 2013).

⁵⁷ For studies on the effects that archaeological finds in general have had on our understanding of the period, see Luo Zongzhen, *Wei Jin Nanbeichao kaogu* (Beijing, 2001); Zhang Qingjie, *Minzu buiju yu wenming hudong: Beichao shehui de kaoguxue guancha* (Beijing, 2010); and Wei Zheng, *Wei Jin Nanbeichao kaogu* (Beijing, 2013). For studies on findings based on tombs and their contents, see Zheng Yan, *Wei Jin Nanbeichao bibuamu yanjiu* (Beijing, 2002); Li Meitian, *Wei Jin Beichao muzang de kaoguxue yanjiu* (Beijing, 2009); Zhang Qingyi, *Wei Jin Nanbeichao shengtiantu yanjiu* (Beijing, 2010); Wei Zheng, *Liuchao muzang de kaoguxue yanjiu* (Beijing, 2011); Zhou Kelin, *Dong Han Liuchao qianshu yanjiu* (Chengdu, 2012); and Ni Run'an, *Guangzhai zhongyuan: Tuoba zhi Bei Wei de muzang wenhua yu shehui yanjin* (Shanghai, 2017).

⁵⁸ See Luo Xin and Ye Wei, *Xinchu Wei Jin Nanbeichao muzhi shuzheng* (Beijing, 2005, reprint, Beijing, 2016); and Li Hongbin, *Zhongguo muzhi buhan wenti yanjiu* (Yinchuan, 2013).

Dynasties capitals have also been excavated.⁵⁹ The site of the Eastern Han and Wei state capital Luoyang has received the most attention.⁶⁰ The southern capital of Jiankang (Nanjing) and the Northern Wei capital of Pingcheng (Datong) have also garnered scholarly interest.⁶¹ Other works have looked at more specific aspects of early medieval cities, such as their management, ritual architecture, and political influence.⁶² A noteworthy event was the 2009 discovery and excavation of Cao Cao's tomb in Anyang, which has generated much scholarly debate.⁶³

Turning to Western sinology, David B. Honey, in his *Incense at the altar: Pioneering sinologists and the development of classical Chinese philology* (New Haven, 2001), has very ably traced in detail this field from its beginnings to recent times. Here we only briefly mention some of the outstanding figures, especially as they relate to the Six Dynasties period, and expand the coverage to recent developments in fields beyond that of philology narrowly defined.

The interest on the part of Westerners in China can be traced back for millennia; what might be called an academic or sinological approach reduces that span to perhaps as few as two centuries but it can perhaps be argued that a focus on the Six Dynasties period becomes apparent only in the middle of the last century. French orientalist were dominant from the early years of the twentieth century.⁶⁴ With justice, Honey names Édouard Chavannes (1865–1918) as “the Father of Modern Sinology,” both for the example he set by his consummate adherence to strict philological standards and by his directly training as well as influencing a younger generation of specialists. Of these, Paul Pelliot (1878–1945) was by all accounts the most significant orientalist of his time. Among his many interests, those that deal with Dunhuang and Central Asia involved the Six Dynasties period. Other famed scholars would include the very influential Henri Maspero (1883–1945), who wrote on Daoism and

⁵⁹ See Cui Yanhua, *Wei Jin Beichao peidu yanjiu* (Taiyuan, 2012).

⁶⁰ Luoyangshi wenwuju, *Han Wei Luoyang gucheng yanjiu* (Beijing, 2000); Du Jinpeng and Qian Guoxiang, *Han Wei Luoyangcheng yizhi yanjiu* (Beijing, 2007); Zhongguo shehui kexueyuan kaogu yanjiusuo, ed., *Han Wei Luoyang gucheng nanjiao Dong Han xingtu mudi* (Beijing, 2007); Duan Pengqi, *Han Wei Luoyang gucheng* (Beijing, 2009); and Zhao Zhenhua and Sun Hongfei, *Han Wei Luoyangcheng: Han Wei shi dai sichou zhi lu qidian* (Xi'an, 2015).

⁶¹ Wu Tinghai, *Liuchao Jiankang guihua* (Beijing, 2011); Chen Gang, *Liuchao Jiankang lishi dili ji xinxiubiao yanjiu* (Nanjing, 2012); Wang Zhigao, *Liuchao Jiankangcheng fajue yu yanjiu* (Nanjing, 2015); and Wang Yintian, *Bei Wei Pingcheng kaogu yanjiu: Gongyuan wu shiji Zhongguo ducheng de yanbian* (Beijing, 2017).

⁶² See Ren Chong and Chen Yi, *Wei-Jin Nanbeichao chengshi guanli yanjiu* (Beijing, 2003); Jiang Bo, *Han Tang ducheng lizhi jianzhu yanjiu* (2003); Pang Jun, *Dong Jin Jiankang chengshi quanli kongjian: Jian dui rujia sanchao wumen guannianshi de kaocha* (Nanjing, 2012).

⁶³ See Henansheng wenwu kaogu yanjiu, ed., *Cao Cao Gaoling kaogu faxian yu yanjiu* (Beijing, 2010); and Li Ping, ed., *Cao Cao Gaoling* (Hangzhou, 2010).

⁶⁴ For a review of French sinology at this time, see Zurndorfer, *China bibliography*, pp. 32–33; Honey, *Incense at the altar*, pp. 41–117.

Chinese religion;⁶⁵ Marcel Granet (1884–1940), a sociologist in the tradition of Émile Durkheim (1858–1917),⁶⁶ and the Hungarian-born Étienne Balázs (1906–1963), who wrote a series of insightful articles, some of which are particularly focused on the Six Dynasties period, as well as translating the treatises in the *Suishu* that deal with law and economics.⁶⁷

As Honey recounts, the exploration of Xinjiang in the early years of the twentieth century, and the discovery of manuscripts brought back by Albert Grünwedel and Albert von le Coq, led to the establishment of a chair in sinology at the University of Berlin in 1912. The first appointment was of the Dutchman J. J. M. de Groot, not an optimal choice, but his six-volume *The religious system of China* (Leiden, 1893–1910; reprinted Taipei, 1964) has much useful Six Dynasties material. The major German sinological contribution of an earlier generation was the monumental *Geschichte des chinesischen Reiches: Eine Darstellung seiner Entstehung, seines Wesens und seiner Entwicklung bis zur neuesten Zeit* (Berlin, 1930–52), in five volumes, by Otto Franke (1863–1946). Franke, a specialist in political history who based himself on the standard histories, especially in the earlier portion, produced a work solid enough to be reprinted in 2001. A major part of volume two (1936, 1–307) is devoted to the Six Dynasties.⁶⁸ This is probably the first work in any Western language to make such a commitment to that period. The research interests of Alfred Forke, another German scholar, focused on Chinese philosophy of the Six Dynasties in his *Geschichte der mittelalterliche Philosophie* (Hamburg, 1934; reprinted 1964), 176–282. This reviewed a wide range of topics, from developments in Buddhism and Daoism of the period to debates as to whether the soul was immortal or not.

Events in Germany forced a number of German scholars to seek refuge elsewhere. Ferdinand Lessing (1882–1961), after study with F. W. K. Müller and years of researching Buddhism in China, joined the faculty at the University of California, Berkeley. He published a volume on the Yonghegong Temple in Beijing, and directed the compilation of the

⁶⁵ Henri Maspero, *Taoism and Chinese religion*, trans. Frank A. Kierman, Jr. (Amherst, 1981). This is a translation of Maspero's *Taoïsme et les religions chinoises* (1950).

⁶⁶ Marcel Granet, Maurice Freedman, trans., *The religion of the Chinese people* (New York, 1975). This is a translation of Granet's *La religion des chinois* (1922).

⁶⁷ A wide array of his articles have been collected and translated in Étienne Balázs, *Chinese civilization and bureaucracy: Variations on a theme*, ed. Arthur F. Wright, trans. H. M. Wright (New Haven, 1964); these include "Evolution of landownership in fourth- and fifth-century China" and "Nihilistic revolt or mystical escapism: Currents of thought in China during the third century A.D." The *Suishu* translations are *Le traité juridique du "Souei-chou"* (Leiden, 1954), and *Le traité économique du "Souei-chou"* (Leiden, 1954), reprint of *TP* 42.3–4 (1954), pp. 113–329.

⁶⁸ The notes on that period, in Volume 3, published in 1937, are pp. 223–447. On Franke, see Honey, *Incense at the altar*, pp. 137–144.

Mongolian–English Dictionary (Berkeley, 1960).⁶⁹ He was also the teacher of Alex Wayman (1921–2004), who became a professor of Sanskrit at Columbia University, New York. Wolfram Eberhard (1909–1989), another expatriate, also taught at the University of California, Berkeley, in the Department of Sociology. He had wide interests in folklore and popular cultures, among other things, but his main contribution to Six Dynasties studies was *Das Toba-reich Nord Chinas: Eine soziologische Untersuchung* (Leiden, 1949), a wide-ranging description of Northern Wei society based on a detailed analysis of the contents of the *Weishu*. A following work, *Conquerors and rulers: Social forces in medieval China* (Leiden, 1952), carries further his perceptive analyses of China's gentry society as well as the nature of rule of the North by various nomad tribes. Other expatriates, Walter Simon (1893–1981) and Gustav Haloun (1898–1951), who continued their professional careers in England, were less significant for contributions to Six Dynasties studies, but played an important role in the development of the British academic scene.⁷⁰

The early English scholarly community was composed primarily of either missionaries or government officials. Among the results of their work that still merit mention are James Legge's (1815–1897) magisterial translations of the classics⁷¹ and Herbert A. Giles's (1845–1935) *A Chinese biographical dictionary* (London, 1898; reprinted Taipei, 1961). The work of the latter has not weathered as well as that of the former, but may still be of use. The towering figure in England of that generation is Arthur Waley (1899–1966), an autodidact who, despite never having visited China nor being able to speak a word of the language, made his mark in a wide range of translations, including poetry of the Six Dynasties period.⁷² He has had a very strong influence on subsequent generations of translators.

Berthold Laufer (1874–1934), a native German, trained at universities in Germany, and perhaps best classified as an ethnographer and anthropologist, made his career at the Field Museum of Natural History in Chicago. Given the importance of the Silk Road during the Six Dynasties, his *Sino-Iranica: Chinese contributions to the history of civilization in ancient Iran, with special reference to the history of cultivated plants and products* (Chicago, 1919), deserves mention here. It is an exhaustive survey of the variety of material, plant and other, which was

⁶⁹ Honey, *Incense at the altar*, pp. 149–150. My participation in the dictionary project included typing the Mongolian script on the only Mongolian typewriter then in the United States. A.E.D.

⁷⁰ On Simon and Haloun, see Honey, *Incense at the altar*, pp. 150–163.

⁷¹ These include *The Shoo King* (Hong Kong, preface dated 1865); *The She King* (Hong Kong, n.d.); *The Analects of Confucius* (Oxford, 1893); *The Works of Mencius* (Hong Kong, preface dated 1861); and many others.

⁷² Honey, *Incense at the altar*, pp. 224–243. See also Francis A. Johns, *A bibliography of Arthur Waley* (New Brunswick, NJ, 1968). Waley's original name was Arthur Schloss.

introduced from China to the West. The work also includes a chapter, “Irano-Sinica” (at 535–571), dealing with imports going in the opposite direction.

Not all Western expatriates of that generation in the United States came from Germany. Peter A. Boodberg (1903–1972) was a White Russian who came to the United States in 1920, penniless and without a command of English. He obtained his degrees at the University of California, Berkeley, where he remained for his entire career. Honey’s description of him as “a brilliant sinologist and altaicist” is a typical example of the high regard in which he was held by his students.⁷³ His major contribution to the study of the Six Dynasties was his philological investigations of the nomads of the northern border in such articles as “The language of the T’o-pa Wei,” *HJAS* 1 (1936), pp. 167–185, and “Marginalia to the histories of the northern dynasties,” *HJAS* 3 (1938), pp. 223–253 and *HJAS* 4 (1939), pp. 230–283.⁷⁴ In his writings Boodberg also dealt with the history of the Chinese language and script.⁷⁵ This brings us to the topic of Chinese linguistics.

The traditional approach in China to the history of the language consisted of using the information contained in such dictionaries as the Han dynasty *Shuowen jiezi*, and the rhymes used in ancient poetry to form groupings of characters on the basis of initials and finals, but there was no awareness of phonetic change over time. Klas Bernhard Johannes Karlgren (1889–1978), a Swedish sinologist and linguist, was the first to apply the European concept of historical linguistic change to those groupings of characters and the range of pronunciations in Chinese dialects to establish first what he proposed to have been the pronunciation of Chinese in c.600 CE, and later, with less certainty, what it had been in 500 BCE. These stages are known as “middle” (or “ancient”) Chinese and “old” (or “archaic”) Chinese.⁷⁶ The former stage, of course, has been important in many ways for the study of the Six Dynasties. A number of eminent Chinese scholars, such as Li Fang-kuei (1902–1987) and Chao Yuen Ren—that is, Y. R. Chao (1892–1982)—pointed to anomalies and offered corrections, but Karlgren stubbornly ignored any such

⁷³ Honey, p. 287.

⁷⁴ These are reprinted in *Selected works of Peter A. Boodberg*, Alvin P. Cohen, compiler (Berkeley, 1979).

⁷⁵ See, for example, “Some proleptical remarks on the evolution of archaic Chinese,” *HJAS* 2 (1937), pp. 329–372, and “‘Ideography’ or Iconolatriy,” *TP* 35.4 (1940), pp. 266–288. The latter opens with the memorable clarion call, “With martial stalk, the ghost of ‘Ideography’ haunts again the platform of sinological Elsinore.” It is interesting to note that Chinese writing had very early been described as being “lexigraphic” and not “ideographic” by Peter Stephen Du Ponceau (1760–1844), an American émigré, in an article published in the *Chinese Repository* 7.7 (1838), a publication founded by American missionaries in Canton. See Laurence G. Thompson, “American sinology, 1830–1920: A bibliographic survey,” *Qinghua xuebao* (*Tsing Hua Journal of Chinese Studies*), new series 2.2 (June 1961), p. 247.

⁷⁶ Karlgren’s publications began in 1923, and the final form of his reconstructions was published in his *Grammata serica recensata* (Stockholm, 1957).

suggestions. One of his students, the Dane Søren Egerod (1923–1995), also did important work in linguistic studies. The major critic of Karlgren's work was the Canadian Edwin "Ted" Pulleyblank (1922–2013), who published *Middle Chinese: A study in historical phonology* (Vancouver, 1984), followed by *A lexicon of reconstructed pronunciation in early middle Chinese, late middle Chinese and early Mandarin* (Vancouver, 1991). Pulleyblank was a brilliant scholar with wide interests, some of which, such as his work on the names of non-Chinese peoples bordering on China, are included in a collection of his articles, *Central Asia and non-Chinese peoples of ancient China* (Aldershot, 2002).

The fine arts were also included in the research on Six Dynasties culture. Ludwig Bachhofer (1894–1976), a German expatriate, taught at the University of Chicago, and published *A short history of Chinese art* (New York, 1946).⁷⁷ Otto J. Maenchen-Helfen (1894–1969), an Austrian expatriate, taught in the Art Department at the University of California, Berkeley; it is his writings on Central Asia that give him entry here. His breadth of learning is well-displayed in his *The world of the Huns: Studies in their history and culture* (Berkeley, 1973), posthumously edited by Max Knight.⁷⁸ Alexander Soper (1904–1993), who was editor of *Artibus Asiae* from 1958 to 1992, also did important work on the technological achievements of the Six Dynasties.⁷⁹ William R. B. Acker (1910–1974), in his *Some T'ang and pre-T'ang texts on Chinese painting* (Leiden, 1954), translated the *Lidai minghua* by Zhang Yanyuan (fl. late ninth century), a very useful volume.⁸⁰ Given the importance of developments in Six Dynasties art, the period was emphasized in general surveys as well, such as in the work of Michael Sullivan (1916–2013)⁸¹ and William Watson (1917–2007).⁸²

As the field of Six Dynasties studies matured, translation of surviving texts into Western languages kept pace. Among the earliest, the Austrian Erwin von Zach (1872–1942) had a quite varied career as a diplomat, during which time he translated much of the *Wenxuan*, the literary anthology credited to the

⁷⁷ For a study of his life and work, see Lillian Lan-ying Tseng, "Traditional Chinese painting through the modern European eye: The case of Ludwig Bachhofer," in *Tradition and modernity: Comparative perspectives*, ed. Sun Kangyi and Meng Hua (Beijing, 2006), pp. 508–533.

⁷⁸ See also Charles King, "The Huns and Central Asia: A bibliography of Otto J. Maenchen-Helfen," *CAJ* 40.2 (1996), pp. 178–187.

⁷⁹ Alexander Soper, *Textual evidence for the secular arts of China in the period from Liu Sung through Sui* (A.D. 420–618). *Excluding treatises on painting* (Ascona, 1967).

⁸⁰ Acker, an American who taught at the University of Ghent, also published a volume entitled *T'ao the hermit: Sixty poems by T'ao Ch'ien* (365–427) (London, 1952).

⁸¹ Sullivan, *The birth of landscape painting in China* (Berkeley, 1962), and his general survey, *The arts of China* (Berkeley, 1967, revised edn, 1979).

⁸² Watson, *The arts of China to A.D. 900* (New Haven, 2000), Volume 1 of the Pelican History of Arts series *The art of China* (New York, 1979).

Liang prince Xiao Tong (501–531) during the 520s, and published his translations in a number of rather obscure German journals.⁸³ Another is John K. Shryock's (b. 1890) translation of a third-century work, *The study of human abilities: The Jen wu chih of Liu Shao*.⁸⁴ Although none of the standard histories of the Six Dynasties period had been (nor up to this date has been) translated as a whole, a reasonably large body of translations of varying sizes had appeared in print by 1956 when the Chinese Dynastic Histories Translations project was initiated under the aegis of the Institute of International Studies at the University of California, Berkeley. The first publication of its series was the *Catalogue of translations from the Chinese dynastic histories for the period 220–960, Supplement No. 1* (Berkeley, 1957) compiled by Hans H. Frankel (1916–2003), the primary editor of the series.⁸⁵ His painstaking search located 989 translated passages of more than twenty-five characters from the writings in Western languages of ninety-six authors. Among the translations from the standard histories of the Six Dynasties period prepared as a part of the project, edited either by Frankel or by his successor, Chauncey Goodrich, and published by the University of California Press were:

- 3 Chauncey S. Goodrich, *Biography of Su Ch'o* (1961);
- 4 Thomas D. Carroll, SJ, *Account of the T'u-yü-hun in the History of the Chin Dynasty* (1953);
- 7 Richard B. Mather, *Biography of Lü Kuang* (1959);
- 9 Albert E. Dien, *Biography of Yü-wen Hu* (1962);
- 10 Michael C. Rogers, *The chronicle of Fu Chien: A case of exemplar history* (1968).

These translations were carried out with utmost adherence to sinological standards, but in a sense the project was the last attempt to maintain its high standards and foci against an increasingly diversified field in premodern Chinese studies.

In the 1940s but more clearly in the 1950s an increasing awareness of the importance of modern Chinese studies led to funding by foundations and governmental sources to develop programs to supply the expertise required by America's role in world affairs. While care was taken to ensure that funding for

⁸³ Von Zach's translations of the *Wenxuan* as well as the poetry of Yu Xin (513–581) have been collected in Ilse Martin Fang, ed., *Die chinesische Anthologie* (Cambridge, MA, 1958), 2 vols. Special note has often been made of von Zach's unsocial behavior; see Honey, *Incense at the altar*, pp. 146–148. David Knechtges is at present engaged in translating the whole of the *Wenxuan*, with extensive notes. As of 1996, three volumes have been published: *Wenxuan, or Selections of refined literature*, Volume 1, *juan* 1–6 (Princeton, 1982), Volume 2, *juan* 7–12 (Princeton, 1987), Volume 3, *juan* 13–19 (Princeton, 1996).

⁸⁴ New Haven, CT, 1937, reprint, 1965.

⁸⁵ Frankel later taught Chinese literature at Yale. Among his publications is "Fifteen poems by Ts'ao Chih: An attempt at a new approach," *JAOS* 84 (1964), 1–14.

the whole range of studies was included, greater employment opportunities in government and academia in the modern fields inevitably led to greater emphasis on those disciplines. The Far Eastern Association, begun in 1941 basically to publish *The Far Eastern Quarterly*, became a membership society in 1948, and its annual meetings were held in conjunction with that of the older American Oriental Society. In 1956 the name of the society was changed to the Association for Asian Studies, and the annual publication became the *Journal of Asian Studies*. The expansion of activities and publications in the following years reflects the greater emphasis on modern studies.⁸⁶ The modern and premodern fields of study are both represented within the association's purview, though not without some uneasiness. We may see this early on, for example, in the association's presidential address in 1955 by Kenneth Scott Latourette (1884–1968), who characterized the study of early societies as nonutilitarian and governed primarily by “insatiable curiosity.” He cited the American Oriental Society as historically having had “a profound suspicion of any utilitarian do-good-ism,” which it distrusts as being non-scholarly. On the contrary, Latourette saw Far Eastern studies as serving to wisely inform American relations with the Asian countries, educating not just scholars and those in government, but the American people as a whole.⁸⁷ One might make the observation that without the depth of background provided by that “insatiable curiosity,” one's conclusions may well be a reflection of one's own preconceptions and biases. This volume contains a series of chapters by a group of scholars merely “curious” about the Six Dynasties who present the current state of their respective fields of specialization.

There are many reasons why the Six Dynasties period has earned the label of the “Dark Ages” in Chinese history: the centuries of political fragmentation, the North coming under the control of various non-Han peoples and the resultant Han–non-Han conflicts, the high level of warfare, the large population movements from north to south, confrontations mainly in the South between the local aboriginal peoples and the Han settlers, to name but a few. The division into a series of independent states led to much hardship, even in periods of relative peace, bringing with it burdensome taxes to support the increased military and administrative expenditures, not to speak of the risks of heavy loss of personal resources and even of life from the invading armies that lived off the land as they marched. Yet that very rupture of the erstwhile Han unity created opportunities for new initiatives. The heavy hand of a centralized

⁸⁶ Charles O. Hucker, *The Association for Asian Studies: An interpretive history* (Seattle, 1973); Mark T. Berger, *The battle for Asia: From decolonization to globalization* (London, 2004), pp. 90–92.

⁸⁷ Kenneth Scott Latourette, “Far Eastern studies in the United States: Retrospect and prospect,” *FEQ* 15.1 (1955), pp. 9–10.

authority gave way to competing rivals; as Gao Huan, the *shogun* of the Eastern Wei, at one time mused, his military officers were attracted by his rival Western Wei across the Yellow River, while talented literati were welcomed by the southern state beyond the Yangzi, all of which would have led to new possibilities for change. Further, the frequent exchange of delegations were occasions for interstate competition ranging from literary talent to presentations of local products. Less centralization allowed new patterns of thought and creativity to emerge. Thus, paradoxically, despite it being a troublesome and even fearful period for many during those more than three centuries, it was also one of the most creative and intellectually productive times in Chinese history.

The violent chaos of the period made people exceedingly aware of the fragility and absurdity of life, which caused them to seek out new means of dealing with the uncertainties of this world and new strategies for having a successful afterlife. This need for new answers allowed for the introduction and development of the organized religions of Daoism and Buddhism and the flourishing of popular religion. From the late Eastern Han to the end of the Six Dynasties, Daoism grew from being a utopian community in the Sichuan basin to a universal, organized religion with textual communities and temples throughout all of China. Buddhism went from being an alien faith practiced only by foreigners in urban settings to a universal religion that was accepted by every social class and practiced throughout China in both cities and the countryside. These religions affected every facet of social life; they created new elites (Buddhist clerics and Daoist priests), libraries of texts (the Buddhist and Daoist canons), rituals (recitation of sutras, fasting, ordination rites, visualization of interior deities, relic worship), art forms (Buddhist grottoes), architectural structures (the pagoda), and social organizations (monasteries and religious associations). Buddhism also opened the door to Chinese acceptance and recognition of Indic civilization, allowing the importation of Indian mythology, philosophy, medicine, architecture, and literary forms. In other words, the very precariousness of life during this period made Chinese open to new answers and outlooks. In this as well as other things, this was a period that spawned advances providing an important foundation for the Tang and later.

PART I

History

CHAPTER 1

WEI

Rafe de Crespigny

PROLOGUE: THE FALL OF HAN (189)

Liu Hong (156–189), sovereign of Later Han, known to history by his posthumous title as Emperor Ling, died on May 13, 189. He was thirty-four *sui* by Chinese reckoning (thirty-two or thirty-three in Western terms), he had reigned just over twenty years, and his death brought on a crisis which marked the end of the dynasty and a division of the empire.¹

Emperor Ling had been Placed upon the throne as a child in 168 by the Dowager Dou and her father Dou Wu, who planned to rule in his name and reform the government on ideal Confucianist lines. Later that year, however, the eunuchs of the harem destroyed the Dou family, and in 169 they eliminated their other opponents at court and in the capital. A proscription was maintained against the so-called men of faction for the next fifteen years.

Besides this political tension, there were problems on the northern frontier, where an imperial army was defeated by the Xianbei chieftain Tanshihuai in 177, and inside China, where frequent outbreaks of plague during the 170s and 180s had inspired people to turn to preachers who claimed powers of faith healing. In 184 the rebellion of the Yellow Turbans, led by Zhang Jue, devastated the prosperous regions of the east. Though the rising was put down within a few months, the deaths and destruction left a legacy of

¹ The chief sources in Chinese for the history of the end of Han are the standard histories *HHS* and *SGZ*, with its commentary by Pei Songzhi (pp. 372–451) (hereafter PC) citing many parallel works. This material is summarized in *ZZTJ* 59–68, translated by Rafe de Crespigny, *To establish peace: Being the chronicle of Later Han for the years 189–220 AD as recorded in chapters 59–69 of the Zizhi tongjian of Sima Guang* (Canberra, 1996). B. J. Mansvelt Beck, “The Fall of Han,” in *The Cambridge history of China*, Volume 1, *The Ch’in and Han empires, 221 BC–AD 220*, ed. Denis Twitchett and Michael Loewe (Cambridge, 1986), pp. 317–376, presents another view of the period. Rafe de Crespigny, *A biographical dictionary of Later Han to the Three Kingdoms (23–220 AD)* (Leiden, 2007), has accounts of men and women of Later Han and the early Three Kingdoms; and de Crespigny, “The Three Kingdoms and Western Jin: A history of China in the third century AD,” *EAH* 1 (1991) 1, pp. 1–36 and 2, pp. 143–65, offers a survey of the history of the third century.

insecurity. A major rebellion in the northwest during that same year removed the greater part of Liang Province from the control of the central government.

Greedy and irresponsible, however, Emperor Ling paid small attention to the troubles of his empire, while his eunuch favorites and their dependents extended power and pretensions at court and in the countryside and stirred fierce resentment among local communities. On the other hand, despite the troubles, the forms of respect and obedience to the sovereign remained intact, and though many might criticize the emperor in private, none dared question his ultimate authority.

When Emperor Ling died on May 13, his dowager Empress He took power for her son Liu Bian (173/176?–190), with her brother He Jin (d. 189) as head of the army and the court. The regency was well justified by tradition, but the He family was weak, and He Jin was persuaded by Yuan Shao (d. 202) and other men of family to turn upon the eunuchs. When the eunuchs struck first and killed He Jin, his followers slaughtered them in revenge, and on September 24, as the emperor and his young half-brother Liu Xie (181–234) fled the massacre, the general Dong Zhuo (d. 192) entered the capital and seized power.

A man from Longxi in present-day southeast Gansu, Dong Zhuo had served with varying success as a military commander on the frontier. Formally governor (*mu*) of Bing Province, the northern half of modern Shanxi, he had come to camp outside Luoyang at the behest of He Jin. And as he saw flames in the sky he brought his army forward. His men had followed him for many years, and no troops in the city could hope to stand against them.

Though Dong Zhuo announced that he would reform the government, he was quite unsuited to the task. On September 28, moreover, he deposed Liu Bian and placed Liu Xie on the throne in his stead. Such manipulation of puppet rulers fatally damaged the dynasty, and though Liu Xie, posthumously known as Emperor Xian, would reign for thirty years he never held power in his own right. For his part, Dong Zhuo had taken his position by force, and he could be removed only by violence.

CIVIL WAR AND THE RISE OF CAO CAO (190–200)

While a few senior ministers remained at the capital and hoped to guide the new head of government, many men of family fled east to raise armies against the usurper. Among them was Yuan Shao, who was elected chief of an alliance which gathered in Chenliu, about present-day Kaifeng, and his cousin and rival Yuan Shu (d. 199), who commanded an army in Yu Province and Nanyang commandery, south and southeast of Luoyang.

The allies proclaimed their loyalty to Han, but opposition to Dong Zhuo may also be seen as a matter of personal ambition among men of family who saw his usurpation both as an attack upon their power and as an opportunity to expand it. Han Fu (d. 191), the governor of Ji Province (covering much of modern Hebei) had asked, "Should we support the Dong family or the Yuan?" and though he was criticized for his insensitivity there was truth in the question. Great families with gangs of retainers had long bullied their neighbors, held vendettas among themselves, and dominated the imperial government with a network of patronage and personal connections. As troops gathered to the cause, some gentlemen brought their own contingents, but the greatest numbers were led by the heads of commanderies and provinces who could carry out forcible conscription.

Regardless of how they were acquired, however, such recruits were of limited quality. The frontiers of Later Han had compulsory military training, but inner commanderies had no such program. While part-time militia could be called to deal with local problems, the government preferred to avoid the risk of facing trained men, whether bandits or rebels, in the body of the empire, and the small but professional Northern Army, based at the capital, provided stiffening when it was needed. So men from inside China lacked discipline and skill, and though the struggle against the Yellow Turbans meant that many had experienced battle, and bandit gangs and continuing operations to counter them. However, this was not the same as combat with the regular armies on the frontier.²

In the first engagements, therefore, the seasoned troops of Dong Zhuo made short work of the "loyal rebels": a direct attack was easily turned back, and a flanking column in the north was destroyed. Cut off from the resources of the east, however, and threatened from the south, Dong Zhuo withdrew to the former capital Chang'an, and the young emperor and his court, thus isolated in the west, became irrelevant to the lands of the eastern plain and the Yangzi basin. Early in 191 Yuan Shu's general Sun Jian (155?–191) defeated Dong Zhuo's men and fought his way into Luoyang, but the city had been looted and burned and had no military value; Sun Jian made ritual sacrifices and withdrew.³

² On conscription under Later Han, see Rafe de Crespigny, *Northern frontier: The policies and strategy of the Later Han empire* (Canberra, 1984), pp. 87–88 and 94–95; following Sun Yutang, "Dong Han bingzhi de yanbian," *Zhongguo shehui jingji shi jikan* 6.1 (1939), pp. 1–34; He Changqun, "Dong Han gengyi shuyi zhidu de feizhi," *Lishi yanjiu* 1962.5, pp. 96–115; and Mark Edward Lewis, "The Han abolition of universal military service," in *Warfare in Chinese history*, ed. Hans van de Ven (Leiden, 2000), pp. 33–76.

³ The biography of Sun Jian, father of the founders of the state of Wu, is in *SGZ* 46/Wu 1, translated by Rafe de Crespigny, *The biography of Sun Chien: Being an annotated translation of pages 1 to 8a of chüan 46 of the San-kuo chih of Ch'ien Shou in the Po-na edition* (Canberra, 1966); and discussed by de Crespigny, *Generals of the South: The foundation and early history of the Three Kingdoms state of Wu* (Canberra, 1990), pp. 70–145.

The chieftains of the east now quarreled amongst themselves. Using his prestige as leader of the alliance, Yuan Shao took over Ji Province on the plain north of the Yellow River, and in 193 the general Gongsun Zan (d. 199) destroyed Liu Yu, the governor of You Province, in the region of present-day Beijing. Further east the local warlord Gongsun Du (d. 204)—not related to Gongsun Zan—established his own state in present-day Manchuria; and in the west and south Liu Yan (d. 194), governor of Yi Province in present-day Sichuan, made himself largely independent, and Liu Biao (142–208) took control of Jing province on the middle Yangzi. In 191 Yuan Shao sent an army against Yuan Shu, but it was driven back and Yuan Shu in turn attacked Liu Biao. When his general, Sun Jian, died in a skirmish, however, Yuan Shu was weakened.

Indeed, a division was opening between gentleman commanders and real fighting men. Just as the troops who followed Dong Zhuo had defeated the inexperienced recruits of the inner commanderies, so too a man such as Gongsun Zan, with experience in frontier warfare, could overcome the official Liu Yu, a member of the imperial clan, while the low-born Sun Jian, who had fought against rebels in the south and in the northwest, was important to Yuan Shu's early success. Such leaders gathered their own followers, and their cohorts were more than a match for the groups of retainers which had aided gentry leaders to bully their neighbors during more peaceful times now past.

In the conflicts that developed, armies were made up of individual groups, each with their own leaders, linked in a hierarchy of personal loyalties. Some men were conscripted or press-ganged, but many had been driven from their homes and lands by the turmoil of rebellion and war and sought a form of stability under a chosen chieftain. With their women, children and other camp followers they formed a mass of misery and uncertainty and though they might be numbered in the tens of thousands, the limited capacity for communication meant that they were difficult to control in battle and could be brought to panic by an untoward event. Forms of government remained from the Han, but within a few years disruption had become so widespread that titles of the old regime were largely meaningless, and the core questions were those of survival.

It was in this confusing and dangerous situation that Cao Cao rose to power.⁴ His family, from Pei in the south of the North China Plain, was of marginal background, but it was plucked from obscurity when his father Song (d. 193) was adopted by Cao Teng, a eunuch of the imperial court. Cao Song accumulated vast wealth and reached the highest offices of state, while Cao Cao

⁴ The biography of Cao Cao (155–220), posthumously entitled Emperor Wu of Wei, is in *SGZ* 1. Rafe de Crespigny, *Imperial warlord: A biography of Cao Cao 155–220 AD* (Leiden, 2010) is a detailed study of his life.

held middle-ranking posts in the civil administration and in operations against the Yellow Turbans. When the alliance gathered against Dong Zhuo, Cao Cao was in his mid-thirties, and he used family money to raise a private regiment. He played a small and unsuccessful part in the first offensive, but in 191 he was named administrator (*taishou*) of Dong commandery on the Yellow River. He dealt successfully with bandits in that territory, and when the governor of Yan Province (roughly modern Henan) was killed in battle soon afterwards the local leaders invited him to take the vacant place.

Cao Cao's immediate opponent was a horde from neighboring Qing Province on the Shandong peninsula, described as Yellow Turbans and apparently remnants of the earlier rebellion. His forces were outnumbered, but Cao Cao held the enemy at bay and then negotiated their surrender. Though details are obscure, it is likely that the bandits were faced with a scorched-earth policy and agreed to accept Cao Cao's suzerainty in exchange for settlement. These "Qingzhou troops" became a hereditary unit in Cao Cao's service, and though their military record was not impressive they gave an immediate and important addition to his forces at that time.

Seeking to expand his territory, Cao Cao drove Yuan Shu south to the Huai river and, after his father Cao Song was killed in Xu Province (modern southern Shandong and Jiangsu), he attacked Governor Tao Qian (132–194). In 194, however, as he was engaged on this latter campaign to the east, there was rebellion to his rear and the dissidents invited Lü Bu (d. 198) into Yan Province. Cao Cao regained his territory after a hard-fought struggle, but there followed several years of complex contest across the southern plain between Cao Cao, Yuan Shu, Lü Bu, and Liu Bei (161–223).

Both Lü Bu and Liu Bei were experienced fighting men. A man from the northwest, Lü Bu had been a trusted attendant of Dong Zhuo, but in 192 he was persuaded to kill his master. When Dong Zhuo's vengeful followers took possession of Chang'an, Lü Bu fled east to seek his fortune. Liu Bei was a man of poor family in the north who nonetheless claimed membership of the imperial clan.⁵ He assisted Tao Qian, and Tao Qian named him as his successor when he died. The other contender, Yuan Shu, a man of family with excessive pretensions, made the mistake of taking title as emperor. Though Han might be in eclipse, Yuan Shu was not the man to replace it, and he died isolated and defeated in 199.

By 200 Cao Cao had emerged as the dominant warlord between the Yellow River and the Yangzi. He captured and killed Lü Bu in 198, and he drove Liu Bei north to refuge with Yuan Shao. The tensions and dangers of the struggle

⁵ The biography of Liu Bei, founder of the state of Shu-Han, is at *SGZ* 31/Shu 1. See Chapter 3 on Shu-Han in this volume.

had made him a formidable opponent: not only was he skilled in the theory of war—he composed a commentary to the military classic *Sunzi*—but he had fought hand-to-hand and commanded his followers in the thickest of fighting; in this regard he combined the civil skills and education of gentlemen such as Yuan Shao and Liu Biao with the practical knowledge of fighting men like Lü Bu and Liu Bei.

In a remarkable coup, moreover, in 196 Cao Cao took Emperor Xian of Han under his protection. As Chang'an fell into disorder following the death of Dong Zhuo, the young ruler contrived to make his escape and return to Luoyang. Seizing the opportunity, Cao Cao transferred the imperial court to his own headquarters at Xu city, near modern Xuchang, Henan. Henceforth he could borrow imperial authority to justify his actions, and though he still had to win his battles he gained considerably in prestige and propaganda.

To the north, Yuan Shao had faced invasion and threat from Gongsun Zan. Even though he destroyed his enemy early in 199, the conflict distracted him from affairs further south. In 200, however, he turned his attention to Cao Cao and gathered forces for a direct advance. The armies met at Guandu, south of the Yellow River and just north of present-day Zhongmou in Henan. Cao Cao was slightly outnumbered, but he was closer to his base, he had well-prepared defenses, and Yuan Shao had a long supply line. After withstanding fierce attacks for several weeks, at the beginning of winter Cao Cao launched two raids which destroyed the enemy's forward supply bases; Yuan Shao's army retired in confusion.

DEVELOPMENT OF A STATE (200–208)

The victory at Guandu did not settle the conflict, but when Yuan Shao died in 202 his sons quarreled over the succession, and Cao Cao took advantage of their divisions. By 205 he had driven them away to the northern borderlands and held control of the plain, and in 206 he gained nominal control of Bing Province in present-day northern Shanxi. In the following year a brilliant flanking maneuver destroyed a confederacy of non-Chinese Wuhuan at the battle of White Wolf Mountain (Bolangshan) in present-day Liaoning. As many of the defeated enemies became elite cavalry in his service, Cao Cao returned to Xu city and took title as Chancellor (*chengxiang*) of Han.

Cao Cao's military success had been aided by reforms within his embryo state, notably the use of *tuntian*, military agricultural colonies which provided grain for his armies. In the confusion of war, families had been driven from their farms and good land had been left vacant. Cao Cao settled the refugees on abandoned fields, supplied tools and oxen, and made them direct tenants of his government without intervention from private landowners. The colonists

were expected to defend themselves, but their chief responsibility was to grow food for the army, and they were entitled to a share of the produce. There had been similar arrangements in the past, notably on the frontier, but Cao Cao established his colonies in the heart of his territory about Xu city, and they were later used widely, particularly in the basin of the Huai. As a result, while the troops of his rivals were often short of food and reduced to scavenging, Cao Cao was able to keep strong forces in the field, and he held the ground he captured with a trained and motivated militia.⁶

Though *tuntian* were a reliable source of supplies, however, they covered only a small part of the territory which Cao Cao had acquired, and there had been a general failure of official finance and taxation. The Han government had a poll tax and property taxes, and made special levies on independent workers such as merchants, craftsmen, hunters, and foresters, but most revenue came from land tax based upon production, and since Later Han never managed a proper survey many holdings were under-assessed. Over time, moreover, whether by manipulation of the market and foreclosure for debt, or by the voluntary commendation of smallholders seeking protection, leading local families gained tenants and dependents whom they guarded from the full effects of taxation. Such landlords acquired enormous wealth, but the government was starved of its share and by the end of the second century the dynasty was all but bankrupt.

The situation was further confused by the breakdown of currency. The basic money of Han was the *wuzhu* coin, issued by the imperial mint at the capital with a weight of some 3.25 grams. In the early 190s, however, as Dong Zhuo in Chang'an was cut off from the resources of the east, he debased the coinage, melting statues and other bronze works to issue new pieces that were of poor quality and light weight. There was dramatic inflation, and though *wushu* coins continued to circulate, the people and their warlord rulers began to look for payment in kind. As Chancellor, Cao Cao attempted to restore the currency, but he did not establish his own mint and so forgery was widespread. Further attempts in the 220s make it clear that he was unsuccessful.

The failure of the Han taxation system meant that Cao Cao needed other sources of revenue. Land tax continued, but it was kept at a low rate, partly to encourage farmers to take up abandoned fields but also because of the difficulty of enforcing any real assessment. For the bulk of his revenue, Cao Cao looked to

⁶ The establishment of *tuntian* under Cao Cao is described in the biography of his officer Ren Jun (d. 204) at SGZ 16.490, with additional references at SGZ 9.269 PC and JS 47.1321. There is further discussion in Cho-yun Hsu, *Han agriculture: The formation of early Chinese agrarian economy* (200 B.C.–A.D. 220) (Seattle, 1980), pp. 319–320; Lien-sheng Yang, "Notes on the economic history of the Chin Dynasty," *HJAS* 9.2 (1946), pp. 140, 163–170, translating JS 26.784–86; and de Crespigny, *Imperial warlord*, pp. 89–92.

families, and his household tax (*butiao*) became a model for later governments until the Tang.

The only clear statement of Cao Cao's tax rate appears in a proclamation issued in 204: apart from a land tax at less than one-thirtieth of the estimated production, he required a contribution of twenty yards of light silk cloth and a pound of silk floss from each household. There were no other demands for payment, though we may assume that a requirement for corvée labor remained. Local officials were ordered to ensure that everyone, including the most powerful, paid their dues. The order was issued just after the conquest of Ji Province from the Yuan brothers, with unkind comments on the extortion and corruption of the previous regime, but it is probable that the same levy was applied throughout the territories which Cao Cao came to control.⁷

The arrangements for currency and taxation date to the early and mid-200s, as Cao Cao confirmed his civilian regime. There remained the matter of finding suitable men to serve the new administration—always a problem for any government.

Under the Han, each commandery unit and province had been required to present candidates for commissioned office each year. Nominees were proposed by the senior officials, albeit guided by local officers, and spent a period of probation at court before receiving substantive appointment. The program, however, had been corrupted by the influence of great families, and it became meaningless in the time of civil war. Cao Cao and his successors created a new system, by which men were classified into nine ranks (*jiupin*) and recommended according to their capacity. Officials appointed by the central government and known as “rectifiers” (*zhongzheng*) had charge of the process, and there was no longer any period of probation.

Like the household tax, the concept of nine ranks was maintained through the Tang dynasty, but the fact that men served as rectifiers for their home communities gave direct influence to the leading families. In a sense, this was a political agreement: local proprietors supported the government in exchange for tacit approval to promote their own men to senior office. Over the longer term, however, the state was vulnerable to the ambitions of its mighty subjects.⁸

⁷ SGZ 1.26 PC; de Crespigny, *Imperial warlord*, pp. 250–257.

⁸ On Later Han, see Rafe de Crespigny, “Recruitment revisited: The imperial commissioned service of Later Han,” *EMC* 13–14.2 (2008), pp. 1–47. Among many works on the *jiupin zhongzheng* are Miyakawa Hisayuki, *Rikuchō shi kenkyū: seiji shakai ben* (Tokyo, 1956), pp. 226–338; and Miyazaki Ichisada, *Kyūbin kanjin hō no kenkyū: Kakyō zenshi* (Kyoto, 1956); Donald Holzman, “Les débuts du système médiéval de choix et de classement des fonctionnaires: Les neuf catégories et l'Impartial et Juste,” *MIHEC* 1 (1957), pp. 387–414, presents an excellent analysis; and de Crespigny, *Imperial warlord*, discusses the reform at pp. 247–250. *JS* 45.1273–77 preserves a memorial by the official Liu Yi (d. 285), complaining at p. 1274 that “there are no men of humble family in the highest categories, nor do any representatives of powerful

For his part, Cao Cao paid small attention to the old criteria for appointment, the notions of filial piety and other Confucian values which permeated the official rhetoric of Han. His concern was competence, not ideal morality. He emphasized the point in a number of proclamations—"If a man has ability, I can use him"⁹—and he controlled his subordinates by strong regulations and firm supervision.

During the last century of Later Han, a number of thinkers such as Wang Fu (c. 190–c. 165) and Cui Shi (d. c. 170) had argued for stricter government as a means to end corruption and restore the fortunes of the dynasty.¹⁰ The laws of Han were fierce, but the problem was their enforcement. Cao Cao's major change was to abandon the proclamation of general amnesties, which Later Han rulers had offered with increasing frequency, eventually almost once a year. Otherwise, though he did review aspects of the law his emphasis was on administration, and he made a point of impartiality even for his close family.

It was difficult, however, for any warlord to restore the broad consensus which had united the empire of Han, and the heart of Cao Cao's regime was his own reputation and his relationships with his immediate followers. In this regard he was remarkably successful, for those who served him, such as the advisers Jia Xu (147–223), Xun Yu (163–212) and his cousin Xun You (157–214), and the generals Zhang Liao (163–222), Yue Jin (d. 218), and Pang De (d. 219), were loyal and competent, while he made good use of his cousin Cao Ren (168–223) and his kinsmen Xiahou Dun (d. 220) and Xiahou Yuan (d. 219). In a regime dependent upon personal connections, it was no small achievement that Cao Cao was able to keep his followers in order and restore a measure of stability to a state and society that had been disrupted and demolished by twenty years of civil war.

THE LIMITS OF EXPANSION (208–217)

Even before his confrontation with Yuan Shao at Guandu, Cao Cao had attempted to enlarge his territory at the expense of Liu Biao in Jing

clans appear among the lower ranks" (Holzman, "Les débuts du système médiéval," 413). And in *Medieval Chinese society* Tanigawa Michio observes that "the aristocratic stratum in the Six Dynasties . . . established itself as a ruling class. The most concrete, structural manifestation of their institutionalization was the Nine Ranks recruitment system for the bureaucracy." Tanigawa Michio, *Medieval Chinese society and the local "community"* (Berkeley, 1985), p. 112; partial translation by Joshua A. Fogel of Tanigawa Michio, *Chūgoku chūsei shakai to kyōdōtai* (Tokyo, 1976).

⁹ For example, SGZ 1.32; de Crespigny, *Imperial warlord*, pp. 367–369.

¹⁰ The seminal article by Étienne Balazs, "Political philosophy and social crisis at the end of Han," in *Chinese civilization and bureaucracy: Variations on a theme by Étienne Balazs*, ed. Arthur F. Wright, trans. H. M. Wright (New Haven, 1964), pp. 187–225, discusses these two men and their opinions, which were supported by the younger Zhongchang Tong (180–220).

Province, and in 208 he began to train his men for operations in the riverlands of the south. When Liu Biao died in the autumn of that year, Cao Cao brought his army forward and Liu Biao's son Liu Zong surrendered.

Liu Zong's brother Liu Qi (d. 209), however, was prepared to resist, and he was supported by the soldier of fortune Liu Bei, who had taken refuge with Liu Biao and had no wish to fall into Cao Cao's hands. As the two men and their following fled south they were chased and badly defeated, but Sun Quan (182–252), ruler of the lower Yangzi, sent his general Zhou Yu (175–210) to aid them. The allied armies faced Cao Cao across the Yangzi at the Red Cliffs (Chibi), on the middle Yangzi upstream of present-day Wuhan, and after some indecisive skirmishes they launched an attack with fireships on Cao Cao's fleet and camp. The number of casualties is uncertain, but the northerners were also suffering sickness from the marshlands and Cao Cao was forced to retreat up the valley of the Han.¹¹ His new frontier followed the southern border of Nanyang commandery, with an extension southeast into Jiangxia commandery.

Further east, Sun Quan tried to take advantage of the success by an attack toward the Huai, but Cao Cao's officer Liu Fu (d. 208) had formed a complex of *tuntian* colonies, and the defenses held firm. Though the southerners controlled the course of the lower Yangzi, they could make no headway to the north, and the city of Hefei on Chao lake was a salient strongpoint. Over the next seventy years there were campaigns by either side, but neither could break the stalemate, and the region became a desolate no-man's-land.

At the same time there was tension between the former allies on the middle Yangzi. While Zhou Yu advanced up the mainstream, Liu Bei had occupied the basin of the Xiang, and when Zhou Yu died in 210 Sun Quan was so weakened in the region that he conceded much of Jing Province to Liu Bei. There was little trust between the two, but both recognized the need for mutual support in the face of constant threat from the north.

In the long term, regardless of the details of the campaign and of Cao Cao's defeat—and both have been confused and exaggerated by near-contemporary historians and by later writers of fiction and drama—the engagement at the Red Cliffs was decisive for the history of China. Never again would Cao Cao have such a strong fleet and such a good opportunity to destroy his southern enemies and the respite granted to Liu Bei and Sun Quan allowed them to build political and military structures that would defy Cao Cao and his successors for

¹¹ The Red Cliffs campaign is discussed by de Crespigny, *Generals of the South*, pp. 252–275; and de Crespigny, *Imperial warlord*, pp. 266–275. It is referred to by SGZ in several places, with the main account of the attack by fireships in the biography of Zhou Yu at SGZ 54/Wu 9.1262–3, whose subordinate Huang Gai led the assault.

generations to come. In this regard, the battle at Red Cliffs laid the groundwork for centuries of division between the north and the south of China.

Such a perspective, however, was not appreciated at the time. Cao Cao still controlled the greatest expanse of settled territory, the largest population, and by far the strongest military force. After the setback on the Yangzi, he returned to his base to confirm his authority, but then turned his attention to the west. The region about Luoyang had been settled by his officer Zhong Yao (151–230), and the city was to some extent restored, but Chang'an and the valley of the Wei were controlled by a medley of local chieftains. In the autumn of 211 Cao Cao brought his army to Huayin, by the junction of the Wei with the Yellow River. He was blocked there by the enemy alliance, but in a model of the oblique approach he led his main force in a loop to the north, outflanked the enemy and scattered them.

South of the Qinling range the religious leader Zhang Lu (d. 216), remembered as a founder of the modern Daoist church, ruled an independent state in Hanzhong, southern Shaanxi. By 214, after trouble with the local warlord Ma Chao (176–222), the bulk of Liang Province had been settled by Cao Cao's kinsman Xiahou Yuan, and in 215 Cao Cao moved against Zhang Lu. In the autumn, after a contested advance along trestle roads and mountain passes, he broke into the valley of the Han. Zhang Lu surrendered, was enfeoffed and retired to central China, while Cao Cao left Xiahou Yuan to hold the new acquisition; further advance would be difficult and dangerous.

It might have been easier a few years earlier, for Liu Zhang (d. c.220), the governor of Yi Province who had succeeded his father Yan in 194, was not a strong leader. When Cao Cao defeated the alliance at Huayin, however, Liu Zhang asked his notional kinsman Liu Bei for assistance in dealing with the threat from the north. Liu Bei accepted the invitation, but turned against his host one year later, and by the summer of 214 he had taken over the territory. As a competent fighting man, with command of Yi Province and a substantial part of the middle Yangzi, Liu Bei was a more formidable opponent than Liu Zhang, and Cao Cao could not commit himself so far from his base. The setback at the Red Cliffs had had little effect on his core position, but defeat and isolation in the west would have brought disaster.

So Cao Cao's territory was largely determined. From his new headquarters at Ye, north of the Yellow River by present-day Yexian in southern Hebei, he controlled the eastern plain from the northern hills to the valley of the Huai, together with present-day Henan and Shanxi Provinces and the southern part of Shaanxi, including the upper valley of the Han south of the Qinling mountains. Northwest he held the eastern part of present-day Gansu, though the further route to Central Asia was no longer under Chinese control. And in

the northern part of present-day Shaanxi, Bing Province of Later Han, there was a desultory settlement of non-Chinese people: the Southern Xiongnu state, which had formerly controlled the Ordos as a tributary of Han, was now weak and confused, and when the *Shanyu*, the titular leader of his people, came to court in 216 Cao Cao held him there and divided his territory into five parts under a regent; in fact the tribes were left to their own devices.

The most serious military threat came in 219, when Liu Bei defeated and killed Xiahou Yuan and captured Hanzhong. Cao Cao could not retrieve the situation, and the frontier now followed the line of the Qinling range. In the autumn Liu Bei proclaimed himself King of Han, emulating the founding Emperor Gao of the Han dynasty four hundred years earlier, and a few weeks later his general Guan Yu (d. 219) attacked Cao Cao's frontier in Jing Province. Caught by seasonal floodwaters of the Han river, the bulk of the defending forces were defeated and isolated. The invaders now posed a direct threat to Cao Cao's base territory, but Cao Ren held out against odds, and as reinforcements arrived Guan Yu was forced onto the defensive.

At this point, moreover, Sun Quan's general Lü Meng (178–219) came east against Guan Yu's rear. Guan Yu's army collapsed, he himself was killed, and Sun Quan seized the middle Yangzi and the southern part of Jing Province. So Liu Bei was restricted to Yi Province west of the gorges, and Sun Quan now dominated south China.

A few months later, on March 15, 220, Cao Cao died at Luoyang. Born in 155, he was aged in his mid-sixties.

Strategist, administrator, and poet, Cao Cao was a remarkable man, and he restored a measure of stability to a state and society that had fallen into ruin. In his own time and for centuries later, he was admired, feared, and respected, but over time his reputation changed to that of an evil minister, against whom the loyal Liu Bei and his supporters displayed their courage, wisdom, and skill. The reasons for this are varied: although he was the most powerful warlord in China, he failed to unify the empire and so he must have had moral flaws; as a man of gentry background with eunuch associations he lacked the appeal of the humbly born Liu Bei, the magical Zhuge Liang (181–234), and the heroic Guan Yu—later honored as a god of war; finally, as symbols of legitimacy defying a powerful usurper, Liu Bei and his state of Shu-Han were attractive to rulers in similar circumstances, from Southern Song to twentieth-century Taiwan, and Cao Cao and his state of Wei suffered from the comparison.

So a series of popular stories and plays, culminating in the celebrated novel *Sanguo yanyi* of Ming, have presented Cao Cao as the antihero of his time, the man to beat, and modern films and television echo the theme. The treatment

may be unhistorical, and it is a matter of political debate, but it pays perverse tribute to one of China's great men.¹²

FROM KINGDOM TO EMPIRE (216–220)

During intervals in his campaigns Cao Cao steadily raised his status in the formal structure of Han. In 213 he became Duke of Wei with a fief of ten commanderies, the bulk of the eastern plain north of the Yellow River, while three of his daughters entered the Han imperial harem. In the winter of 214 the Empress Fu was accused of treason and killed, and in 215 the second of Cao Cao's daughters became empress—we may doubt Emperor Xian had much affection for her.

In similar fashion, though royal honors had formerly been reserved for members of the imperial Liu clan, in the summer of 216 Cao Cao was named King of Wei, a title which he held to his death. While still keeping office as Chancellor of Han, moreover, he set up official altars, ministries, and a secretariat for himself, and this new regime, parallel to that of the emperor, was the effective government. In 217 Cao Cao was granted banners, flags, and other insignia to match those of his nominal sovereign.

Since his defeat of the Yuan family, Cao Cao had left the puppet imperial court at Xu city, and had established his own capital at Ye. He began construction there soon after he arrived in 204, creating canals, drainage, and irrigation works to aid farming and communication, and he raised new buildings to demonstrate the strength and prosperity of his state. Among these was the Bronze Bird Terrace, a mound of tamped earth seventy feet high, surmounted by a five-story tower, surrounded by a park and flanked by two matching platforms. The new construction was celebrated in rhapsodies composed by his sons and by Cao Cao himself.¹³

It was significant for the prestige and hence the authority of the new state that Cao Cao was a notable writer and that he attracted scholars and literary men to his capital. His poems, based on the popular *yuefu* of Han, had a sense of personal feeling that marked a substantial development of the genre, and he issued a number of public proclamations which are open about his beliefs and intentions. Most remarkable is what may be called his *Apologia*, published in the winter of 210, seeking to justify his tenure of power and his plans for the state. Though naturally somewhat self-serving, it is a genuine

¹² There is a survey of Cao Cao's posthumous reputation in Chapter 11 of de Crespigny, *Imperial warlord*.

¹³ E.g. SGZ 19.558; and de Crespigny, *Imperial warlord*, pp. 333–339.

attempt to explain himself, and it is one of the earliest autobiographical writings in Chinese history.¹⁴

Cao Cao's son Cao Pi (187–226) was likewise a competent poet, author of a work of literary criticism and an energetic collector of books, while Pi's younger brother Cao Zhi (192–232) is considered one of the finest poets of China. In addition, an impressive gathering of scholars and writers came to Cao Cao's court, some as advisers but many for the patronage which he provided, and the Seven Masters of the Jian'an period (*Jian'an qi zi*)—so identified by Cao Pi—with other men of comparable talent, formed a coterie which added luster to what might otherwise have seemed no more than a military headquarters.

In 217 Cao Cao named Cao Pi as heir of Wei. There had been some debate whether he might prefer the brilliant Cao Zhi, but Zhi was erratic in his conduct and it was safer to grant the succession, in traditional style, to the eldest son by his chief consort, the Lady Bian (160–230). Cao Pi was certainly competent, and he had a teenage son, Cao Rui (c.206–239), so the dynasty appeared secure.

When Cao Pi succeeded his father in 220, he was aged in his mid-thirties. He had general support from the chief men of Wei, but there had been competition from Cao Zhi, and their brother Cao Zhang (c.190–233) was a successful military commander who had shown interest in the succession. To confirm his authority, therefore, Cao Pi took a further step: on December 11, 220, he received the abdication of Emperor Xian of Han, and became sovereign of the new dynasty and imperial state of Wei.

The transfer of title was accompanied by memorials and petitions urging the new ruler to accept the Mandate of Heaven, and justifying the imperial claim with omens and prophecies.¹⁵ The change was nonetheless dramatic, the more so as Cao Cao had not taken such action: he presented himself as a loyal regent, and may have thought of a tutelary arrangement comparable to that of the later *shoguns* of Japan. There had been theories that the Han dynasty was reaching the end of its second cycle of fortune, and there was an idea that the

¹⁴ SGZ 1.32–34; PC quoting *Wei Wu gushi*. The text is discussed by Wolfgang Bauer, *Das Antlitz Chinas: Autobiographische Selbstdarstellungen in der chinesischen Literatur von ihren Anfängen bis heute* (Munich, 1990), pp. 131–133; and translated by de Crespigny, *Imperial warlord*, pp. 357–362.

¹⁵ Detailed accounts of the process of abdication and accession are given by Howard L. Goodman. *Ts'ao P'i transcendent: The political culture of dynasty-founding in China at the end of the Han* (Seattle, 1998); and Carl Leban, "Managing heaven's mandate: Coded communication in the accession of Ts'ao P'ei, A.D. 220," in *Ancient China: Studies in early civilization*, ed. David Roy and T. H. Hsien (Hong Kong, 1978), pp. 315–342. Among the omens presented was a proverb that "Han would be ended by *xuchang*." It had been very likely inspired and spread by a rebel of that name in the early 170s, but the residence of the puppet emperor was at Xu 許, and the name of the city was duly changed to Xuchang.

power of Fire by which it ruled would give way to the Yellow of Earth—the Yellow Turbans and other religious movements had expected to benefit—but it was also possible that the dynasty might eventually be restored to prosperity. Cao Pi's action, however, proved decisive: though Liu Bei also took the imperial title, and his state of Shu-Han claimed the legitimate succession, its final defeat in 263 meant the definitive end of Han.

On the other hand, while many had accepted that the dynasty might change, few had contemplated the division of the empire, unified by Qin more than four hundred years earlier. Sun Quan in the southeast continued his formal allegiance, and was named King of Wu as reward, but his submission sought only to ensure Cao Pi's neutrality when Liu Bei came east to avenge Guan Yu and reconquer Jing Province. That enterprise was defeated in 222, and Sun Quan swiftly resiled from his promises: he proclaimed his own reign title, mark of an independent ruler, and in 229 he took the imperial title for himself. So China was divided between three claimant emperors, and Wei was only the greatest among the rival states, engaged in constant war.

Though Cao Pi had consolidated his position, and was endorsed by the military and civil officers who had supported his father, his new regime lacked the prestige of the past. Cao Cao had been victorious in civil war and had a special relationship with the ancient dynasty—holding office as chief servant of Han, but with an administrative and military structure under his own command. Cao Pi had lost that legal fiction: he ruled only a partial empire, and behind the brilliance of his father's achievements there lay a comparatively obscure lineage which had risen to fortune through adoption by a eunuch.

For a time this did not matter: Cao Cao had restored a measure of order by military means and firm government, and so long as his successors maintained that policy they were reasonably secure.

There was, however, an alternative source of power within the new state. Many great families had been damaged and destroyed by the civil war, but others survived to restore their fortunes under the protection of the new regimes. Moreover, the very nature of warlord politics and society, with its emphasis on personal loyalty and the following of a successful leader, encouraged the development of hereditary rights. Just as tenants, clients, and retainers had gathered about the great landed families of Later Han, so there developed a principle that the command of troops could be passed from one generation to another in the same family—and their subordinates were also committed to service. Whereas the term *buqu* had previously referred to military formations, "battalions and companies" within an imperial army, by the third century it could be used to designate the dependents of a landowner working in the fields; while a system of "military families" (*shijia*),

developed by Cao Cao in parallel with his *tuntian* agricultural colonies as a means to prevent desertions, likewise bound men and their dependents to designated units.¹⁶

Cao Cao's model of a centralizing government, moreover, which looked toward a "legalist" or "modernist" solution to the political crisis, with laws and administration to end the disorder that had bedeviled the last century of Han, did not match the expectations of the chief families under its sway. They were concerned with their own interests, expected a degree of autonomy, and justified their ambitions by a "reformist" attitude that emphasized Confucian moral principles.¹⁷ It would not be easy to resolve such contradiction.

CAO PI AND CAO RUI (220–239)

Auspiciously for Cao Pi's imperial claim, in 221 his general, Jiang Ji (d. 249), defeated the non-Chinese of the northwest, and at the beginning of 222 the court of Wei received tribute missions from Central Asia.¹⁸ In the south, however, after Sun Quan's forces had demolished Liu Bei's army at the Yangzi gorges, the King of Wu faced no further threat from the west and renounced his short-lived allegiance. At the end of the year Cao Pi took formal command of an advance toward the middle Yangzi, but his troops failed to gain a bridgehead, they were affected by sickness, so he withdrew to the north early in 223. He returned to the offensive in 224, this time against the lower Yangzi, but again without success. Over the years there were further attacks by either side, but the frontier line between Wei and Wu remained largely unchanged.

¹⁶ On *buqu* in Later Han see HHS 114/24.3564. On the changing significance of the term, see Yang Chong-I, "Buqu yan'ge liekao," *Shibuo* 1.3 (1935), pp. 97–107; summary translation as "Evolution of the status of dependents," in *Chinese social history: Translations of selected studies*, ed. E-tu Sun and John DeFrancis (Washington, DC, 1956), pp. 142–156; Wang Zhongluo, *Wei Jin Nanbeichao shi* (Shanghai, 1980), p. 152; and Charles Holcombe, *In the shadow of the Han: Literati thought and society at the beginning of the Southern Dynasties* (Honolulu, 1994), p. 57. On the development of military families, later described as "hereditary troops," *shibing* 世兵, see He Ziquan, "Wei Jin Nanchao de bingzhi," *Dushi ji* (Shanghai, 1982), pp. 285–287; and Gao Min, "Cao Wei shijia zhidu de xingcheng yu yanbian," *Lishi yanjiu* 1989.5, pp. 61–75.

¹⁷ On the concepts of "modernism" and "reformism," see Michael Loewe, "The Former Han Dynasty," *The Cambridge history of China*, Volume 1, pp. 104–106; and Ch'i-yün Ch'en, "Confucian, Legalist, and Taoist thought in Later Han," *The Cambridge history of China*, Volume 1, pp. 783–794, 802–804.

¹⁸ The Annals of the reign of Cao Pi, posthumously entitled Emperor Wen of Wei, are in *SGZ* 2; the Annals of Cao Rui, Emperor Ming, are in *SGZ* 3. The period is covered by *ZZTJ* 69–74; Achilles Fang, trans., Glen W. Baxter, ed., *The chronicle of the Three Kingdoms* (220–265), *Chapters 69–78 from the Tzu chih t'ung chien of Sima Kuang* (1019–1086), translated and annotated, 2 vols. (Cambridge, MA, 1952–1965).

Liu Bei had died in 223. He was succeeded by his son Liu Shan (207–271), but left Zhuge Liang as regent in Shu-Han. Zhuge Liang renewed the alliance with Wu, and though the two states were not close, for the next forty years they formed a united front against Wei. In 228, having settled the southern part of his base in Yi Province, Zhuge Liang embarked on a series of campaigns across the Qinling divide to the north. He was faced by the general Sima Yi (179–251), and though he occupied Wudu, southwest of modern Tianshui, in 229, and established an outpost in the Wei valley in 233, his death in the following year ended the immediate threat and left a stalemate on that front too.

As Wei and its southern neighbors were thus balanced, all three states developed a system of area commanders (*dudu*) with command over all troops in their territory. In some respects they were comparable to the civil heads of provinces in former times, but these were military appointments, and they reflected the changing nature of government. The development was gradual, but by the middle of the century the area commanders were a major part of regional control.

On the northern front during this period, the Xianbei chieftain Kebineng (d. 235) established a loose hegemony on the inner steppe, and was variously subservient and hostile to China. In 220 he acknowledged Cao Pi and was awarded title as king, but a few years later he launched a number of raids along the northern frontier. Despite the trouble they caused, however, his troops were no match for regular Chinese armies and after Kebineng was killed by a Chinese agent his unruly confederacy disintegrated.

Freed of this problem, the Wei court turned its attention further to the northeast, where Gongsun Yuan had inherited the independent state in Liaodong, southern Manchuria, established by his father in the early 190s. A first assault in 237 was defeated and then driven back by rain and floods, but in 238 Sima Yi was sent with forty thousand men, and the enemy were destroyed: Gongsun Yuan was killed and a thousand men who had held office under him were slaughtered. By 245, after the general Guanqiu Jian (d. 255) had forced the non-Chinese Koguryō into submission, Chinese influence in the region rivaled the great days of Former Han. A series of embassies from the Japanese female ruler Himiko, also known as Pimiko, came to attend the court of Wei.¹⁹

¹⁹ On the state of Koguryō (Ch. Gaogouli, also Kaogouli), see K. H. J. Gardiner, *The early history of Korea: The historical development of the peninsula up to the introduction of Buddhism in the fourth century A.D.* (Canberra, 1969), particularly at p. 26. The account of the people of Wo in SGZ 30.854–858 has been translated by Ryūsaku Tsunoda, *Japan in the Chinese dynastic histories: Later Han through Ming dynasties*, ed. L. Carrington Goodrich (South Pasadena, 1968), pp. 8–20. The embassies are detailed at

Whilst the empire of Wei was thus militarily successful, the ruling family was much less secure. Cao Pi died in 226 (posthumously named Emperor Wen), forty years old by Chinese count, and his son Cao Rui succeeded him at the age of twenty. Cao Rui in turn died in 239 (posthumously named Emperor Ming), still in his early thirties, and the government came into the hands of a regency.

Such comparatively early deaths were unfortunate—the Later Han had been weakened by the fact that from the late first century on no emperor lived beyond his mid-thirties—and the problem was particularly serious for such a newly established dynasty as the Wei. After the achievements of Cao Cao, a substantial period under a mature and competent ruler would have consolidated the regime. As it was, there was room for uncertainty and insecurity.

The matter was complicated further by the policy of Cao Pi, followed by Cao Rui, which kept members of the immediate imperial family from any official responsibility. Instead, Cao Pi arranged that his full brothers Zhang and Zhi, and all his half-brothers, children of Cao Cao by other women, were granted fiefs as dukes or kings, but were then exiled to their fiefs with no control over even local government. The same restrictions applied to families related by marriage, so that no one close to the throne could rival his authority as emperor.

There were reasons for this: Cao Cao had contemplated granting the succession to Cao Zhi; Cao Zhang's military experience had made him a potential rival to Cao Pi; and any other son of Cao Cao could become a disruptive threat. The Han too had excluded close kinsmen of the emperor, but imperial relatives by marriage, notably those connected to an empress dowager, gained excessive power. Cao Pi removed this danger, but the ruler was now largely isolated and there were no men in strong positions who were directly concerned for the fortunes of the dynasty.

In addition, the ruling house was vulnerable to criticism from those men of family who served as leaders of the state. Not only were the Cao connected to the imperial eunuchs of the past—anathema to conservative Confucianists—but Cao Cao's principal wife, the Lady Bian, mother of Cao Pi, Cao Zhang, and Cao Zhi, had been a singing girl. Cao Pi's Empress Guo (184–235) came of minor gentry stock, while his former wife, the Lady Zhen (183–221), had been the wife of Yuan Shao's son Xi (d. 207), and his son and successor Cao Rui was born in bigamy while Yuan Xi was still alive; Cao Pi later had Lady Zhen

SGZ 30.857–858; Tsunoda, pp. 14–16. Embassies from Himiko, also known as Pimiko (Ch. Pimihi) had been received at the court of Han during the second century CE, and it is likely that Himiko was a title rather than the name of a person.

killed when she proved jealous of his other companions. Cao Cao had a relaxed attitude toward traditional forms of morality and propriety, and his family followed his example, so that a discontented concubine of Cao Rui would remark, “The Caos have always preferred people of inferior quality. They have never managed to make appointments on the basis of good character.”²⁰

When Cao Pi died in 226, his son Cao Rui was formally of full age, but an advisory council was chosen to guide his government. Four men were chosen: the senior official Chen Qun (d. 236), an old servant of Cao Cao; Cao Pi’s cousins Cao Zhen and Cao Xiu, both military commanders; and the minister Sima Yi—the last three had been Cao Pi’s companions before he came to the throne.²¹ Cao Xiu died in 228, Cao Zhen in 231, and Chen Qun in 236, but Cao Rui was in any case competent to manage affairs for himself.

He was not, however, an impressive ruler. Whereas Cao Pi had taken formal command of the army in the field, Cao Rui had no military career. Like his grandfather, his father and his uncle Zhi, he was a notable poet, and he sought to enhance the prestige of his government by a program of civil construction. Whereas Cao Cao had been admired for his restoration of the city of Ye, however, Cao Rui was criticized for his extravagance, and claims that he was oppressing the people by such unnecessary work damaged his reputation.

Apart from the problem that Cao Rui’s natural mother had been killed by his father, his own first Empress Mao (d. 237), daughter of a carriage-maker, also fell from favor and was forced to commit suicide. Though he kept a large harem and appointed another empress, he left no natural sons, and in the same fashion as Cao Pi, he kept his brothers isolated on their fiefs. On his deathbed in 239, Cao Rui named his adopted son Cao Fang (231–274), whose true parentage is unknown, to be his successor. Since Cao Fang was just seven years old, a two-man regency council was appointed: Cao Shuang (d. 249), who was a son of Cao Zhen, and the long-serving Sima Yi. Other senior officials and members of the imperial clan, including the prince Cao Yu (c.205–c.260), a son of Cao Cao, were passed over.

²⁰ On the women of the Cao family, see Robert Joe Cutter and William Gordon Crowell, *Empresses and consorts: Selections from Chen Shou’s Records of the Three States with Pei Songzhi’s commentary; translated with annotations and introduction* (Honolulu, 1999), pp. 89–114, translating SGZ 5; and de Crespigny, *Imperial warlord*, pp. 34–35, 400–405, 459–460. The comments of the Lady Yu are at SGZ 5.167; Cutter and Crowell, pp. 111–112.

²¹ Biographies of Cao Zhen and Cao Xiu are in SGZ 9, together with that of Cao Zhen’s son Cao Shuang, discussed below. The biography of Sima Yi, posthumously honored as the founding Emperor Xuan of Jin, with temple name Gaozu, is in JS 1. The biography of Cao Yu is at SGZ 20.582; the intrigues surrounding the appointment of the regency are described in SGZ 14.459; Fang, *Chronicle*, Volume 1, pp. 582–584.

Though Sima Yi had held civil office under Cao Pi until his late forties, during the reign of Cao Rui he engaged in military service against Wu, then commanded the defense against Zhuge Liang in the west, and in 238 he led the army which destroyed Gongsun Yuan in the northeast. Energetic and competent, he had wide support among military men, but though he was named Grand Mentor (*taifu*) to Cao Fang he played no major role in the regency government; chief power at court was in the hands of Cao Shuang.

CAO SHUANG, SIMA YI, AND THE FALL OF WEI (239–265)

In the cultural history of China, the Zhengshi reign period from 240 to 249 was a time of intellectual brilliance when Confucian philosophy, which had almost been exhausted by the sterile debates of Han, revived under the influence of Daoism and in particular through *xuanxue*, “the Study of the Mysteries.”²² Among leaders of the renaissance were He Yan (d. 249), a brilliant exponent of the repartee and dialectic of “pure conversation” (*qingtan*), and his friend Wang Bi, a major interpreter of the *Book of Changes*.²³

He Yan was a grandson of the Later Han regent He Jin; his widowed mother became a concubine of Cao Cao, and He Yan was brought up in the palace and married a daughter of Cao Cao. He was notorious as a libertine—one account claims that his wife was his own half-sister—and he and his fellows were devotees of the ecstatic drug known as the Five Minerals Powder.²⁴ At the same time He Yan was a member of the Imperial Secretariat (*shangshu tai*), close to Cao Shuang, and brought many friends to court. Of privileged background and great talent, these men sought to avoid meaningless formality, and

²² Accounts of the last emperors of Wei are in *SGZ* 4. The biographies of Sima Yi's sons and successors Shi and Zhao are in *JS* 2. The period is covered by *ZZTJ* 74–79; Fang, *Chronicle*, Volume 1, pp. 635–698, and Volume 2.

²³ Paul Demiéville, “Philosophy and religion from Han to Sui,” in *The Cambridge history of China*, Volume 1, pp. 828–832; and Étienne Balazs, “Nihilistic revolt or mystical escapism: Currents of thought in China during the third century A.D.,” in *idem*, *Chinese civilization and bureaucracy*, pp. 226–254 (first published as “Entre révolte nihiliste et évasion mystique: Les courants intellectuels en Chine au III^e siècle de notre ère,” *EA* 2 (1948), pp. 27–55). Among the many studies of this topic by Chinese scholars, see Wang Xiaoyi, “Lun Cao Wei Taihe ‘fuhua an’,” *Shixue yuekan* 1996.2, pp. 17–25; and Liu Chunxin, *Han mo Jin chu zhi ji zhengzhi yanjiu* (Changsha, 2006), pp. 135–150.

²⁴ An account of He Yan is attached to that of Cao Shuang at *SGZ* 9.292–293 and *PC*. The Five Minerals Powder (*wushi san*) included calcium and aconite. It was also known as “Cold-Eating Powder” (*banshi san*), for addicts became feverish, ate cold foods, and wore light clothing or none at all. See Rudolph G. Wagner, “Lebenstil und Drogen im chinesischen Mittelalter,” *TP* 59 (1973), pp. 110–112; and on He Yan's addiction, *SSXY*, Chapter 2.14; Richard B. Mather, trans., *Shih-shuo hsin-yü: A new account of tales of the world*, by Liu I-ch'ing, with commentary by Liu Chün (Minneapolis, 1976), 36. The excesses of “liberation and attainment” which may also have included ostentatious homosexuality, are described in the *Baopuzi* by Ge Hong of the fourth century and discussed by Jay Sailey, *The Master who embraces simplicity: A study of the philosopher Ko Hung, A.D. 283–343* (Taipei, 1979), pp. 419–432.

their attitude can be understood in the context of their time, but they offended regular Confucianists. Regardless of literary and philosophical brilliance, the excesses attributed to He Yan and his fellows were an embarrassment to the regime, and Sima Yi was seen as representative of those who looked for morality and reform.

In political terms, moreover, Cao Shuang's centralized government, continuing the policy of the dynasty, was opposed to the interests of landed families, and Sima Yi presented himself as their agent. In 249, as the emperor and the regent left Luoyang for a visit to the imperial tombs, Sima Yi gathered troops for a *coup d'état* and slaughtered Cao Shuang, his kinsmen, and his close followers, including He Yan. Thereafter, the state of Wei was in the hands of the Sima family.

Sima Yi died two years later, but his eldest son Shi (208–255) succeeded to his position. In 254 there was a short-lived threat from dynastic loyalists, but Sima Shi responded by deposing Cao Fang and placing another puppet, Cao Mao (239–260), a grandson of Cao Pi, upon the throne. The general Guanqiu Jian seized the city of Shouchun on the Huai and called for help from Wu, but the southerners could not reach him and Guanqiu Jian was destroyed. Though Sima Shi died soon afterwards, he was succeeded by his brother Zhao (211–265), and the family control was maintained. In 257 another general of Wei, Zhuge Dan (d. 258), also rebelled in Shouchun, but Wu was again ineffective and Zhuge Dan was killed. In 260 there was a last attempt to preserve the dynasty, but it was put down swiftly and Cao Mao (posthumously Duke of Gaoguxiang) was killed in the fighting. He was replaced by his senior cousin, Cao Huan (245–302, r. 261–265), a grandson of Cao Cao, who would remain upon the throne for just five years.

The destruction of Cao Shuang and the murder of He Yan and his associates meant the end of a brilliant school of eccentrics and the return of a traditional Confucianism. Some younger men, however, preserved the free-thinking tradition, and though their opinions were more cautiously expressed they followed the examples of spontaneity. A loose comradeship of poets and intellectuals known as the Seven Sages of the Bamboo Grove (*Zhulin qixian*), notable among them Ruan Ji (210–263) and his friend Xi Kang (223–262), continued to explore concepts of mysticism and immortality, and their literary works were admired and celebrated even in the conservative milieu of their time.²⁵

²⁵ The biographies of Ruan Ji (210–263) and of Xi Kang (223–262), whose surname is also transcribed as Ji, are in *JS* 49. On the Seven Sages, see Balazs, "Nihilistic revolt or mystical escapism"; and the three works by Donald Holzman: "Les sept sages de la forêt des bambous et la société de leur temps," *TP* 44 (1956), pp. 317–346; *La vie et la pensée de Hi Kang (223–262 ap. J.C.)*, Leiden, 1957; and *Poetry and politics: The life and works of Juan Chi, A.D. 210–263* (Cambridge, 1976).

The turmoil of the mid-250s to 260, with emperors of the Cao family overthrown and the deaths of Sima Yi and of Sima Shi, meant that active military operations were largely placed in abeyance. The failures of Wu on the Huai frontier, however, even when the renegades Guanqiu Jian and Zhuge Dan offered opportunity, showed that region could be considered secure. By the early 260s the Sima regime was able to contemplate a serious attack on Shu-Han in the west, where personal favorites and eunuchs of the harem dominated the government of Liu Shan, and the general Jiang Wei (202–264), despite many attempts, had failed to gain ground beyond the Qinling mountains.

In the autumn of 263 the army of Wei captured the passes which led to Hanzhong, and as Jiang Wei was held on the defensive the general Deng Ai advanced to Chengdu. After one pitched battle, Liu Shan surrendered. There followed a period of confusion, as Deng Ai was dismissed for insubordination and then murdered while Jiang Wei joined a rebel commander of Wei in an attempt to restore an independent state. The plotters were soon killed, however, and in 264 Liu Shan came to honored exile in Luoyang.

Of course the formal triumph of Wei was the actual triumph of the Sima family. Shortly before his overthrow and death the young emperor Cao Mao had been obliged to name Sima Zhao as Imperial Chancellor and Duke of Jin—it was this demand which inspired his unsuccessful conspiracy—and his successor Cao Huan now enfeoffed Sima Zhao as King of Jin.

Sima Zhao died in the autumn of the following year, but his eldest son Sima Yan (236–290) had already been named as his heir, and he succeeded to his father's position without question. In the winter a few months later, on February 4, 266, in a form reminiscent of Cao Pi's accession forty-five years before, Sima Yan received the abdication of Cao Huan and took the imperial title for himself. Cao Huan was granted title as Prince of Chenliu, and posthumously named Emperor Yuan upon his death in 302.²⁶

In military and even administrative terms, the state of Wei founded by Cao Cao from the wreckage of the Han had been remarkably successful, uniting the north of China, securing the frontier, and gathering strength to overthrow its rivals in the west and, eventually, in the south.

The facade of government, however, was compromised by the nature of its rulers and by the society it sought to control. Unlike Han, the Cao family lacked the traditional respect which had preserved the Liu clan in times of

²⁶ The biography and annals of Sima Yan, Emperor Wu of Jin, are in *JS* 3; the ceremony of abdication and accession is described at pp. 50–51. Damien Chaussende, *Des Trois Royaumes aux Jin: Légitimation du pouvoir impérial en Chine au III^e siècle* (Paris, 2010), presents a detailed account of the rise of the Sima family under Wei and of the transfer of sovereignty; see further in the chapter on the Western Jin dynasty in this volume. For Cao Mao's titles, *SGZ* 4.154.

difficulty, and the dynasty was damaged by the early deaths of Cao Pi and Cao Rui. The new imperial regime, moreover, was faced by powerful families which sought to maintain hereditary privilege against any centralized control, and which extended their rights over the institutions of the state: by the time of Jin, even the *tuntian* colonies were falling into private hands.

At its base, Wei was a warlord regime seeking trappings of legitimacy in a parody of the past, while the social structure of great families which had developed under Han, came to dominate the state. Rather than restoration of the fallen empire, the period of the Three Kingdoms saw the beginning of new political disorder, with weak dynasties holding nominal sway over families who could rival the government in their own territory and cared little who claimed to rule them.

CHAPTER 2

WU

Rafe de Crespigny

Beginning in 195, Sun Ce created a warlord state south of the Yangzi, his brother Sun Quan developed it with energy, and for half a century Wu held sway over the middle and lower Yangzi and the far south of China. As the court became isolated from the great families of the region, its rulers lacked the resources to match their opponents in the north.

Despite this ultimate failure, the enterprise of Wu consolidated the expansion of Chinese people and culture in the South. In later centuries, as the north lay under the control and influence of alien occupation, the south of the Yangzi provided refuge for the Southern Dynasties and their Chinese tradition.

SUN JIAN (c. 155–191) AND SUN CE (175–200)

Founder of the fortunes of his family, Sun Jian was born in the mid-150s at Fuchun in Wu commandery, a frontier outpost of Han on the Qiantang river southwest of present-day Hangzhou. Though he was a man of humble background, and his father's personal name is unknown, Sun Jian had a notable career as a military commander.¹

While serving as a temporary commandant (*jiawei*) in his home county, around 172, Sun Jian received a short-term commission against the religious rebel Xu Chang (d. 174). His success in the field was recognized by an imperial letter, and he then held office as assistant magistrate (*cheng*) in a series of counties in the southeast. In 184, as the Yellow Turban rebellion swept the east of the empire, Sun Jian was again called to military service. With some 1,000 pressed conscripts and a core group of personal companions, he distinguished himself at the siege of Wan city, capital of Nanyang. Promoted major (*sima*), he took part

¹ The biographies of Sun Jian and Sun Ce are in SGZ 46/Wu 1, discussed by Rafe de Crespigny, *Generals of the South: The foundation and early history of the Three Kingdoms state of Wu* (Canberra, 1990), pp. 70–145, 146–212. See also de Crespigny, *The biography of Sun Chien: Being an annotated translation of pages 1 to 8a of chüan 46 of the San-kuo chih of Ch'en Shou in the Po-na edition* (Canberra, 1966).

in the campaign against the rebels of Liang Province in the northwest, both as a staff officer and with command in the field. After a few months' probation at the capital in 187, he was named administrator (*taishou*) of Changsha.

This was a remarkable advancement, raising Sun Jian to one of the highest civil ranks in the service of the Han, but there was widespread rebellion south of the middle Yangzi and he was known as a fighting man. He swiftly settled the trouble, and was rewarded with enfeoffment.

When Dong Zhuo (d. 192) seized power at the capital in 189, Sun Jian went north to join the armies raised against him, and he became chief general to Yuan Shu (d. 199), based in Nanyang. In 191 he drove Dong Zhuo from Luoyang, but later that year the alliance broke up. Sun Jian was killed in a skirmish against Huang Zu (d. 208), a general of Liu Biao (142–208), the governor of Jing Province. Most of his troops reverted to Yuan Shu's command, though a small contingent was preserved as a unit under his cousin Sun Ben (c.170–220).

Sun Jian had married the Lady Wu (d. 207?), of somewhat better lineage than his own, and the couple had four sons. While Sun Jian was on campaign against Dong Zhuo, his family went to Lujiang commandery, in the southwest of present-day Anhui, where they were supported by the powerful Zhou clan, and Sun Jian's eldest son Sun Ce became a close friend of Zhou Yu (175–210), a young man of his own age.

Early in 193 Yuan Shu was attacked by Cao Cao (155–220) and driven to the south, re-establishing himself at Shouchun city in the basin of the Huai. Though he was only eighteen, Sun Ce had already acquired a personal following, and he was joined by his father's men under Sun Ben. Sun Ce sought an appointment from Yuan Shu, but, although unsuccessful, remained at Shouchun. His uncle Wu Jing (d. 203) was Yuan Shu's administrator in Danyang, south of the Yangzi.

In 194 Wu Jing was attacked by Liu Yao (157–198), a member of the imperial clan who had been sent to Yang Province by the military regime at Chang'an which had succeeded Dong Zhuo. Forced back to the north of the Yangzi, Wu Jing asked for help, but though Yuan Shu sent reinforcements they could make no headway, and the two sides faced one another across the river for more than a year.

At this point Sun Ce asked to join the battle, promising to raise troops through his family connections in the region. Yuan Shu gave him title as a colonel (*xiaowei*), with small expectation of success. Yet Sun Ce, as young as he was, proved to be one of the most talented military commanders of his day. With the contingent from Yuan Shu and his personal following, he conscripted more men as he marched. Forcing a crossing of the Yangzi by present-day Nanjing, he drove Liu Yao away, seized a major storage depot, and

expanded his territory in a series of successful attacks. By winter of 195 he controlled the east of Danyang and the west of Wu commandery.

Despite his youth, Sun Ce seems to have had no difficulty in gaining the allegiance of his followers, and even his uncle Wu Jing—not, it appears, an energetic man—accepted his orders. Many of those whom he had defeated, to whom Sun Ce promised amnesty and rewards, were willing to change sides. Having collected some 20,000 foot soldiers and a thousand horsemen, he certainly commanded the largest army in the region, and he was able to enforce sufficient discipline to make it effective.

During 196 Sun Ce extended his position eastwards, taking all of Wu commandery and then Kuaiji, including settlements on the coast of present-day Fujian. He had to deal not only with regular officials of varying loyalty, but also with a variety of clan forces and individual settlements, with the non-Chinese people of the hills, and with those who had fled the disorder to take refuge among them. His control was not complete, but no local chieftain could oppose him.

Though Sun Ce was in practice independent south of the Yangzi, he had continued to acknowledge Yuan Shu as his patron. In 197, however, when Yuan Shu took title as emperor, Sun Ce declared his loyalty to Han and guarded the line of the river against the north. His kinsmen and others joined him, and after some hesitation the imperial government controlled by Cao Cao confirmed his commission in the southeast.

In 198 Sun Ce moved west, taking first the remainder of Danyang and then the great commandery of Yuzhang, present-day Jiangxi, with a population over one and a half million and access to the trade of the far south. Following the death of Yuan Shu in 199, moreover, Sun Ce captured Lujiang north of the river and obtained many of his former master's people. Now dominant on the lower Yangzi, with five commanderies of Han, he moved upstream toward Jing Province and defeated an old enemy of his family, Liu Biao's general Huang Zu. Before that campaign could develop further, however, Sun Ce was shot while hunting by a former retainer of a local clan that he had destroyed. Naming his brother Sun Quan as his successor, Sun Ce died in the summer of 200 at the age of twenty-five.

SUN QUAN AND THE KINGDOM OF WU (200–222)

Sun Quan (182–252) was only eighteen years old when he succeeded Sun Ce,² but he was readily accepted as leader of the warlord enterprise; Sun Jian and his sons had a remarkable ability to hold the loyalty of their followers.

² The annals/biography of Sun Quan, posthumously entitled Great Emperor (*dadi*) of Wu, are in *SGZ* 47/ Wu 2. His early career, and events to 221, are discussed in de Crespigny, *Generals of the South*, pp. 213–407. His later government is summarized by Hans Bielenstein, "The Six Dynasties, Volume 1," *BMFEA* 68 (1996), pp. 17–29.

The new regime was initially concerned with securing control of the extensive territory that had been acquired so swiftly. It was not until 203 that Sun Quan and his troops, notably led by his brother's old friend Zhou Yu, were able to confirm their position in Yuzhang. It was only in 206 that they felt strong enough to advance once more against Huang Zu. Early in 208 the army and fleet overwhelmed Huang Zu's defenses at Xiakou, located by present-day Wuhan on the junction of the Han river with the middle Yangzi. Huang Zu was killed as he fled.

This success gave Sun Quan a foothold in Jing Province, but it would bring him face to face with a far more powerful enemy. The warlord governor (*mu*) Liu Biao died a few months later, and in the winter of 208 his son Liu Zong surrendered to Cao Cao. Liu Zong's brother and rival Liu Qi (d. 209) preferred to withdraw to the south, accompanied by the *condottiere* Liu Bei. Pursued and hard pressed by Cao Cao, as they came to the region of Xiakou they called on Sun Quan for aid.

It was not an easy decision. Liu Bei and Liu Qi were in exile and retreat. Though Liu Bei's lieutenant Guan Yu had collected much of the Jing Province fleet from the Han river, Cao Cao had taken the naval base for the middle Yangzi, at Jiangling in Nan commandery. Turning then to the east, Cao Cao led his army and his new fleet in pursuit of Liu Bei, and sent messengers calling on Sun Quan to surrender.

Sun Quan was uncertain of his best course of action, and there was considerable debate at his headquarters. He might have made terms with Cao Cao, or kept aloof from the quarrels of his rivals, but in one of the great decisions of Chinese history, with repercussions for hundreds of years, he resolved to oppose the invader. He sent Zhou Yu to support Liu Bei and Liu Qi, and to test Cao Cao's strength. If the defense was unsuccessful, he could nonetheless expect to withdraw most of his men, and he would still have a reserve army with which to negotiate terms.

The newly joined allies met Cao Cao's forces at the Red Cliffs (Chibi), on the Yangzi between present-day Wuhan and Yueyang, and for a few days the two groups faced one another across the river. The men from the north had already taken part in a long campaign with several forced marches, and they were not used to the southern waterways and marshlands. Further, we are told there was sickness in the camp. Some of the army and all of the fleet had formerly served Liu Biao, and many must have been undecided about their new master. On the other hand, Sun Quan and his forces had lately been fierce enemies of the men of Jing Province, and the relationship between the new allies was naturally uneasy. For his part, Cao Cao probably regarded the operation as a reconnaissance in force: if he could establish a beachhead across the Yangzi he might well be able to drive his opponents

to make separate surrenders; if he could not, there would surely be another opportunity.

Cao Cao's first attack was driven back, and when the wind changed against him, Zhou Yu's officer Huang Gai led an attack with fireships. In the warfare of that time, fire was a common weapon, and when used in the right circumstances it could cause large-scale destruction. Whatever preparations Cao Cao may have made against the threat, he was compelled to abandon his position and retreat, and the allies enhanced their victory with tales of slaughter. The battle at the Red Cliffs has become one of the most celebrated in the Chinese tradition; it is the theme of several plays and poems, and it forms the centerpiece of the great historical novel *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*.³

It is very likely that the account of Cao Cao's defeat has been exaggerated, and literary tradition has embellished the story out of proportion, but later events justify the engagement as one of the decisive battles of Chinese history. As Cao Cao retreated, he left garrisons behind him, but in the following year Zhou Yu's army captured Jiangling, in modern Hubei, an important post on the Yangzi. Cao Cao's control thus became restricted to the valley of the Han by present-day Xiangfan in Hubei, with a slight extension southeast into Jiangxia commandery. The southerners thereafter faced no serious threat to their naval control of the Yangzi, and though Cao Cao and his successors made several attempts to break the river defenses, they could not match the strategic position or the tactical skills of their enemies. Neither side may have realized it at the time, but the Red Cliffs campaign was the last chance for many years to reunite the empire, for it was control of the middle Yangzi which meant the difference between survival and surrender in the south.

East along the lower Yangzi, Sun Quan sought to take advantage of the victory at the Red Cliffs and led an army toward the Huai. He had no success, however, for Cao Cao's officer Liu Fu (d. 208) had established a defense system with *tuntian* military colonies and a complex of fortification centered on the city of Hefei, strong enough to hold any attack. In the same fashion as

³ The story of the Red Cliffs, Chapters 43–50 of the *Sanguozhi yanyi*, by Luo Guanzhong (c. 1330–1400), has been translated by C. H. Brewitt-Taylor, *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms* (Tokyo, 1959); and by Moss Roberts, *The Three Kingdoms* (Berkeley, 1991). There are a number of plays on the theme in the traditional repertoire of Chinese drama, and a modern composite work "Battle of the Red Cliffs" was prepared in 1958, at a time of increasing interest in the career and historical significance of Cao Cao. Two films on the theme were released, in 2008 and 2009. The major historical account of the campaign is in the biography of Zhou Yu, *SGZ* 54/Wu 9:1262–1263, with commentary by Pei Songzhi (372–451) quoting the late third-century work. There is a chronicle history of the operations in *ZZTJ* 65:2082–2093, translated by de Crespigny, *To establish peace: Being the chronicle of Later Han for the years 189–220 AD as recorded in chapters 59–69 of the Zizhi tongjian of Sima Guang* (Canberra, 1996), pp. 245–275; and de Crespigny, *Imperial warlord: A biography of Cao Cao 155–220 AD* (Leiden, 2010), pp. 258–275.

prevailed in Jing Province, the southern fleet was well able to control the Yangzi, while Sun Quan also maintained outposts on the northern bank, including Huan city in Lujiang. Despite many attempts neither side was able to break the other's line. For the next seventy years, from the Dabie mountains, the main watershed between the Huai and Yangzi rivers, east to the sea there extended a desolate no-man's-land, abandoned to war.

In Jing Province, moreover, Sun Quan likewise gained very little. As Cao Cao withdrew to the north, the allies advanced in different directions. Zhou Yu moved west to capture the naval base at Jiangling, while Liu Bei went south to occupy Changsha and the valley of the Xiang. Sun Quan arranged for his sister to marry Liu Bei, but Liu Bei was never a reliable colleague. Further, when Zhou Yu died in 210 Sun Quan had no one of comparable stature to take his place. His extended position along the main course of the Yangzi was exposed to Liu Bei on the south and Cao Cao on the north. In a reluctant settlement, Sun Quan ceded the bulk of Jing Province to Liu Bei and kept only a small section in the east.

The situation was hardly satisfactory—Sun Quan had been doing better against Liu Biao and Huang Zu before the Red Cliffs—and it became more serious in 214, when Liu Bei seized Yi Province, present-day Sichuan, from his self-claimed kinsman Liu Zhang (d. c.220). Still more galling was the fact that Sun Quan and Zhou Yu had previously suggested an advance against Liu Zhang, but Liu Bei had opposed the plan with a claim of family loyalty. The formal alliance against Cao Cao was maintained, but Liu Bei was now the more powerful of the two, and he rejected Sun Quan's demand for territorial compensation. In 215 Sun Quan sent his generals Lu Su (172–217) and Lü Meng (178–219) to back his claim. There was a short war, but both sides were concerned about the threat from Cao Cao, and a new agreement was reached, adding to Sun Quan's holdings in Jing province and setting a new frontier at the Xiang river. Such a settlement could not be conclusive, but the balance of strength in the region continued to lie with Liu Bei and his local commander and close comrade Guan Yu.

Liu Bei and Guan Yu had good reason for their growing confidence. Sun Quan's attacks in the east toward the Huai had not been impressive, and in 215 his army was badly defeated in an assault on Hefei. The troops may have been affected by sickness, but the result was so embarrassing that Sun Quan never took personal command again. He was physically brave, but he lacked his brother's genius and was fortunate to have good military men willing to serve him. Two years later, when Cao Cao came in force to the Yangzi and left a threatening army on the northern bank, Sun Quan acknowledged him as suzerain. It was only a matter of form; no hostages were sent and it ensured

Cao Cao's withdrawal. But it left Guan Yu and Liu Bei with a low opinion of their colleague.

Early in 219 Liu Bei gained a decisive victory over Cao Cao's army in Hanzhong, in present day southwest Shaanxi, occupied that strategic commandery and proclaimed himself a king. Guan Yu then opened a second front against Cao Cao with an attack north in Jing Province. Aided by autumn flooding on the Han river, he gained initial success, but was eventually held and forced onto the defensive. Sun Quan and his general Lü Meng took advantage of Guan Yu's overcommitment and his disregard of their potential. Attacking up the Yangzi, the Wu forces captured Guan Yu's base and cut his communication with Yi Province; as Guan Yu's position collapsed he was defeated and killed. Later commentators have criticized this as a great betrayal, but it enabled Sun Quan to capture all the southern part of the middle Yangzi basin, a vast augmentation to his state. He now controlled the greater part of two provinces of the Han.

Cao Cao died in the following year, and a few months later his son Cao Pi proclaimed himself emperor of the new dynasty of Wei. Confirming his allegiance from 217, Sun Quan recognized Cao Pi's new position and in September 221 he was rewarded with enfeoffment as King of Wu. His chief concern, however, was to keep Cao Pi neutral as he prepared to meet an attack from the vengeful Liu Bei. Since Liu Bei had also taken the imperial title, while Sun Quan was a nominal feudatory of the Wei, it was hardly possible for Cao Pi to join such an attack.

In the spring of 222 Liu Bei brought his army and fleet through the Yangzi gorges. Lü Meng, Sun Quan's commander against Guan Yu, had been ill at the time of that campaign and died soon afterwards. Sun Quan now appointed his close confidant Lu Xun (183–245), a man of good gentry and official family who had married a daughter of Sun Ce, to take responsibility for the defense of the west. Against the advice of his subordinates, Lu Xun waited until Liu Bei was fully committed along the Yangzi below the gorges, and in the sixth Chinese month, at the end of summer, he made a series of attacks with fire against the flank of Liu Bei's extended positions. The army of Shu-Han was broken and Liu Bei was driven away in humiliating defeat.

Having thus confirmed his control of the middle Yangzi, Sun Quan promptly abandoned his allegiance to Wei. In the tenth month he proclaimed his own reign title, symbol of an independent sovereign, and when Cao Pi brought his armies against him Sun Quan held the line on both the middle and lower Yangzi. At the end of the year, completing a brilliant series of diplomatic and military maneuvers—albeit of questionable integrity—he restored the alliance of peace and friendship with Liu Bei and his state of Shu-Han.

THE EMPIRE OF SUN QUAN (222–252)

The boundary of Sun Quan's state was thus determined against its neighbors, and it remained on largely the same line for the next sixty years.⁴ In the east, Wu controlled the lower Yangzi, but Wei held the basin of the Huai with an outpost at Hefei. In Jing Province on the middle Yangzi, Wu controlled the river, lakes and marshland, and the lower reaches of the Han, but Wei's position was secure in Nanyang and extended a salient into the northern part of Jiangxia; the Wuling Shan and other ranges on the west, broken only by the gorges of the Yangzi, provided clear demarcation with the state of Shu-Han based on present-day Sichuan.

Though strategy against Wei in the north was primarily defensive, with garrisons and naval bases and area commanders to supervise operations, there was room for expansion further south. During the 190s, in the early period of civil war, the far south of the Han empire, present-day Guangdong and Guangxi Provinces and the northern part of Vietnam, had been of no more than marginal significance. Though the central government and Cao Cao sought to establish some authority, the local warlord Shi Xie (137–226), member of a powerful family from Jiaozhi on the Red River delta, gained a local hegemony. He named his brothers as heads of neighboring commanderies, and his capital of Longbian by present-day Hanoi was a valuable entrepôt for trade from the south.⁵

In 200 Shi Xie accepted title as a general from Cao Cao, but after the Red Cliffs Sun Quan's officer Bu Zhi (d. 247) moved into Nanhai, about present-day Guangzhou, and the now elderly Shi Xie acknowledged Sun Quan and sent a son as hostage. In 220 Bu Zhi was succeeded by Lü Dai (161–256), and when Shi Xie died in 226 at the age of ninety Lü Dai captured his sons and killed them. Controlling the region on behalf of Sun Quan, he received tribute from non-Chinese states of Southeast Asia, and the commerce in local rarities and imported treasure—pearls, coral, tortoiseshell, ivory, and incense—brought by river and canal north across the Nanling mountains provided profit to the government of Wu.

The true prosperity of the state, however, depended upon the people under its control, and it was the changing demography of China during the Han period which made possible the foundation and later survival of a separate state in the

⁴ The imperial claim and the later government of Sun Quan are discussed by de Crespigny, *Generals of the South*, pp. 408–532.

⁵ The biography of Shi Xie, remembered in the region as King Si, is in SGZ 49/Wu 4. Several scholars identify Longbian as Kattigara, the great city of the Far East described by the Greek geographer Ptolemy in the second century C.E.

south. During the civil war which followed the fall of Wang Mang (c. 45 BCE–23 CE) at the beginning of the first century, once Emperor Guangwu of Later Han had gained victory over his rivals in the north he had little difficulty in taking over the warlords south of the Yangzi. Since that time, however, there had been a steady flow of migrants and colonists to the south, and the figures for some areas are dramatic. In the basin of the Xiang river on the middle Yangzi, between the census of 2 CE and that of the early 140s the registered populations of Changsha and Lingling multiplied five and seven times respectively, so that each commandery now contained more than a million people. South of the lower Yangzi, Yuzhang's population had also increased five times. Though Wu commandery and Danyang had gained only 15 percent, the resources of the region were sufficient to support a local independence.

From the earliest days of Sun Quan's state, moreover, his officers had been involved in further conquest of the hill country to the south as far as Fujian. The leading figure of the initial enterprise was He Qi (d. 227), who had first been appointed by Sun Ce as a colonel (*xiaowei*) in Kuaiji, based upon the isolated coastal settlement of Dongye, now Fuzhou. During the following years, by intrigue, persuasion, and military force, He Qi extended his territory northwest along the Min river, and by 208 his area of influence had reached Yuzhang commandery, with a series of newly established counties to confirm control.

During the same period but closer to home, other military commanders were dealing with various groups among the Huangshan ranges of southern Anhui and in the marshlands of Yuzhang. Some of their opponents were non-Chinese tribesmen, commonly referred to as Yue, but many were Chinese settlers who had remained beyond the reach of government, refugees from the troubles of the time who had formed camps for self-defense. Despite the great increase in registered population, Later Han had set up few new counties and maintained only nominal suzerainty in this marginal region, but it was a major concern of Sun Quan and his agents to gain control of the people. As each advance was made, the newly acquired subjects were pressed into the service of the state for taxation or military service, whether against their immediate neighbors or on the northern frontier against Wei across the Yangzi.

Besides He Qi, those involved in the program included Huang Gai (the hero of the Red Cliffs), Lü Meng, and Lu Xun—the latter two both rising to become chief generals of Wu—while the final settlement of the hill country in the south of Danyang was achieved by Zhuge Ke (203–253) in 234. The operations continued elsewhere, and their success may be measured in the fact that the number of counties listed in the former territory of Wu by the Treatise of Geography of *Jinshu* is double those recorded in the parallel treatise

of *Hou Hanshu*. Not only was administrative control more intense, it was extended more broadly over regions which had never before been subject to Chinese government.⁶

Holding now three provinces of the Later Han and gaining greatly from the southern trade, in 229 Sun Quan took the final step and declared himself emperor. There was no continuity with Han, but there were favorable portents and a formal claim to the Mandate of Heaven. Though Liu Bei's son Liu Shan, ruler in the west, also held the imperial title as putative successor of Han, both states recognized that their alliance against Wei was essential. Some sophistry was involved, with occasional diplomatic debates when embassies came to court, but it was tacitly agreed that questions of legitimacy and protocol should be left until later.

Further afield, Sun Quan received emissaries from Funan and other countries of the South, while he also sought other opportunities to expand his imperial sway. He re-established some Chinese control on Hainan island, he sent an expedition to Taiwan and perhaps also to the Ryūkyūs, and he made alliance with the Gongsun warlords of Liaodong in present-day Manchuria. These ventures, however, had limited success: the gains from Taiwan did not match the cost, and the northeast passage by sea around the Shandong peninsula was difficult and dangerous. Some horses were obtained as breeding stock for the cavalry, but one fleet suffered heavy losses in a storm, and in 233 Gongsun Yuan turned on Sun Quan's ambassadors; a few years later he was destroyed by the armies of Wei.

Despite these distant contacts, and the continuing expansion and consolidation of power within his territory, Sun Quan's state of Wu was handicapped by geography. Unlike Wei, with the resources of the North China Plain, and Shu-Han, with the coherent region of present-day Sichuan, the provinces of Wu were separated by mountains. Jiao Province in the far south could be reached from Yuzhang and from the valley of the Xiang, but the passes across the Nanling range were difficult. More significantly, while the barrier between Yang and Jing Provinces was not so severe, the major link between the two followed the comparatively

⁶ The counties of Jing, Yang, and Jiao Provinces of Later Han are listed by *HHS* 112/22:3476–3491 and 113/23:3530–3532; those of the comparable territory in Western Jin are listed by *JS* 15:455–468. The development of the region is discussed by de Crespigny, "Prefectures and population in South China in the first three centuries AD," *Zhongyang yanjiuyuan. Lishi yuyan yanjiusuo jikan* 40 (1968), pp. 139–154, building on Hans Bielenstein, "The Chinese colonisation of Fukien until the end of Tang," in *Studia Serica Bernhard Karlgren Dedicata: Sinological studies dedicated to Bernhard Karlgren on his seventieth birthday October fifth, 1959*, ed. Søren Egerod and Else Glahn (Copenhagen, 1959), pp. 98–122. There is further detail in de Crespigny, *Generals of the South*, pp. 328–340, 474–478.

narrow valley of the Yangzi between the Dabie mountains to the north and the Mufu to the south.

The problem may be observed even in the choice of capital. In 211 Sun Quan set his headquarters at Jianye, “Establishing the Great Matter,” on the site of a former county in Danyang. This new city, now the heart of Nanjing, was well placed for defense against attack from the Huai, but when Jing Province was conquered in 219 Sun Quan took up residence in Guan Yu’s former base at Gong’an near Jiangling. Two years later he moved to Wuchang, downstream from present-day Wuhan and closer to the border with Yang Province.⁷ The compromise was not satisfactory, and soon after he had taken the imperial title in 229 Sun Quan returned to Jianye. He left his eldest son Sun Deng, twenty years old, in nominal command, but Lu Xun held the real authority, and the separate headquarters was maintained for many years. It was never easy to co-ordinate the civil and military activity of the two provinces.

Over the course of time Jianye gained population, prosperity, and power as a base for the government and a center of trade, and when Zuo Si composed his “Three Capitals Rhapsody” toward the end of the third century he could celebrate the beauties of the region, the multitude of buildings, and the traffic by land and water. Wu never matched the brilliance of Wei, but the ministers Zhang Zhao and Zhang Hong, among others, were recognized for traditional scholarship and calligraphy, while Wang Fan and Lu Ji—the latter a junior kinsman of the general Lu Xun—were distinguished in mathematics, astronomy, and the calendar.⁸ On a more practical level the porcelain of Wu, developed from traditional Yue ware, was admired throughout China.⁹

Wu was nonetheless a state founded and maintained by military means; its leading men had military background and many exhibited erratic conduct. Some, such as He Qi and Gan Ning, were known for their splendid display of weapons and equipment; others were noted for their brutal or extravagant behavior—and some were probably mad. To control such followers cannot have been easy, and Sun Quan himself was not exempt from their influence. In one incident at a banquet he demanded furiously that the minister Yu Fan be

⁷ This city of Wuchang was not at the modern site of that name, but downstream on the Yangzi by present-day Echeng in Hubei.

⁸ See, for example, Joseph Needham, *Science and civilisation in China*, Volume 3, *Mathematics and the sciences of the heavens and the earth* (Cambridge, 1959), pp. 200, 359, 386; also Wolfram Eberhard and Rolf Müller, “Contributions to the astronomy of the San-Kuo period,” *MS* 2 (1936–1937), pp. 149–164. Besides changing his reign title, in 223 Sun Quan adopted a calendrical system which varied by a few days from those used by Wei and by Shu-Han. Eberhard and Müller observe at p. 149 that many mathematicians and astronomers were employed at the court of Wu, and their mathematical work was more advanced than that of Han.

⁹ Rose Kerr and Nigel Wood, *Science and civilisation in China*, Volume 5, *Chemistry and chemical technology*, Part 12, *Ceramic technology* (Cambridge, 2004), p. 140.

executed for failing to respond properly to a toast; he was dissuaded at the time, and thereafter left instructions that should he give such orders in future the execution should be delayed until he had sobered up and reconsidered.¹⁰ The paraphernalia of empire could never quite disguise the reality of a warlord state.

THE SUCCESSION TO SUN QUAN AND THE FALL OF WU (252–280)

When Sun Quan died in 252 at the age of seventy, his long reign had given stability to the newly formed state.¹¹ There were, however, disadvantages. Sun Quan's eldest son and designated heir Sun Deng (209–241) had died before him, and though the next son, Sun He (224–253), was named heir soon afterwards, the situation was confused by the intrigues of the ladies Sun Luban and Sun Luyu, daughters of Sun Quan by his favored consort the Lady Bu. Sun Luban married the general Quan Zong (d. 247), and is often referred to as the Princess Quan. Sun Luyu was the wife of the courtier Zhu Ju (174–250); she is also known as the Princess Zhu.¹²

After Sun Luban quarreled with the Lady Wang, mother of Sun He, she made every effort to have Sun He replaced by his brother Sun Ba; for her part, Sun Luyu formed a faction to support the heir. Matters came to a head in 250, when the aging ruler, angry at the constant quarreling and slander, deposed Sun He, and when Zhu Ju and other supporters of the former heir continued to argue his case, they were variously banished and sentenced to death. Sun He was only sent from the capital, but Sun Ba was ordered to commit suicide.

No doubt persuaded by his latest empress, the Lady Pan, Sun Quan named their son Liang (243–260), just seven years old, as his new heir. The Lady Pan, however, was ambitious and tyrannical, and as Sun Quan lay on his deathbed

¹⁰ SGZ 57/Wu 12:1321; de Crespigny, *Generals of the South*, pp. 514–515.

¹¹ The biographies/annals of the three last sovereigns of Wu are in SGZ 48/Wu 3. Events are summarized by Bielenstein, "Six Dynasties I," pp. 30–46.

¹² On the Lady Bu and her daughters, see SGZ 50/Wu 5:1198–1201; Robert Joe Cutter and William Gordon Crowell, *Empresses and consorts: Selections from Chen Shou's Records of the Three States with Pei Songzhi's commentary; translated with annotations and introduction* (Honolulu, 1999), pp. 126–131. The biography of Quan Zong is at SGZ 57/Wu 12:1340–1341; that of Zhu Ju is at SGZ 60/Wu 15:1381–1383. The course of the intrigues is outlined by Cutter and Crowell, *Empresses and consorts*; de Crespigny, *Generals of the South*, p. 511; Bielenstein, "Six Dynasties I," pp. 26–32; and Achilles Fang, *The chronicle of the Three Kingdoms* (220–265): Chapters 69–78 from the Tzu chih t'ung chien of Sima Kuang (1019–1086), translated and annotated, 2 vols. (Cambridge MA, 1952–1965), *sub voce*. Cutter and Crowell observe in their Prolegomenon at pp. 56–57 that more embarrassing detail is provided about the women of Wu than for those of the other two states. They suggest that, since Wu was never quite regarded as a true claimant to the Mandate, Chen Shou "may have included the sort of material that he felt constrained to suppress in his accounts of Wei and Shu."

two years later she was strangled by her own attendants. Sun Liang succeeded to the throne under a council of regency dominated by Zhuge Ke.

Son of the trusted counselor Zhuge Jin (174–241), Zhuge Ke was an energetic general who had succeeded Lu Xun in charge of Jing Province.¹³ Soon after he came to power he gained a major victory over an offensive from Wei across the Huai, but he suffered a heavy defeat at Hefei in the following year, and his authority was seriously damaged. In 253, after just eighteen months in power, he and his family were murdered by order of Sun Liang under the influence of Sun Jun (219–256), a distant cadet of the imperial family, who had become the lover of the Lady Sun Luban.

The government suffered endemic intrigue, and there were almost annual attempts at a coup; when one of the plots against Sun Jun was discovered in 255, the Lady Luban implicated her sister Luyu and had her killed. In 256 Sun Jun died, to be succeeded in power by his cousin Sun Lin (231–258).¹⁴

Militarily there were two notable lost opportunities. In 254, the Wei general in command of Shouchun, Guanqiu Jian, opposed to the Sima domination of the Wei court, rebelled in Shouchun. Sun Lin led troops to take advantage of the confusion, but though he received the surrender of an enemy army and many civilians came as refugees to Wu, he could not capture the city. Again in 257, the Wei general Zhuge Dan (d. 258), commanding the garrison at Shouchun, defected and called for help. As the new Wei regent Sima Zhao laid siege to the city, however, Sun Lin could bring no useful assistance: the city was recaptured and Zhuge Dan was killed.

In 258 Sun Liang, now in his mid-teens, sought to rid himself of his overpowerful minister. He was supported by Quan Zong and his family, but Sun Lin struck first, deposed Sun Liang and replaced him with his elder half-brother Sun Xiu (235–264), sixth son of Sun Quan and now in his early twenties; Quan Zong and his kinsmen were killed, and the troublemaking Princess Luban was banished to Yuzhang. A few months later, however, Sun Xiu himself carried out a successful coup, killed Sun Lin, and began to rule in his own right.

Sun Xiu was ruthless in maintaining his position—he had Sun Liang killed on suspicion of seeking a return to power—but he was personally self-indulgent and the government had major problems. In 263 a local rebellion removed present-day Vietnam from the control of Wu, and at the end of that

¹³ The biography of Zhuge Ke is in *SGZ* 64/Wu 19. Zhuge Jin, whose biography is in *SGZ* 52/Wu 7, was the elder brother of Zhuge Liang, the great minister of Shu-Han. The brothers had no close contact from childhood, but the family did remarkably well in their separate states.

¹⁴ For the biographies of Sun Jun (219–256) and of Sun Lin (231–258) see *SGZ* 64/Wu 19.

year the forces of Wei commenced a final invasion of Shu-Han. Armies from Wu attempted offensives toward Nanyang and across the Huai, and they sought to gain a foothold across the mountains into Sichuan, but the diversions were unsuccessful and Sun Xiu died just at the time that Shu-Han surrendered.

Sun Hao (241–283), son of the former heir Sun He and now in his early twenties was chosen as an adult ruler who might restore the fortunes of the state. He is described by the history as arrogant, brutal, and thoughtless, with an excessively large harem, but though the charges may be justified, it is doubtful that anyone could have maintained the state for long against the power of the north now reinforced by the west. It took time, however, for the Wei conquest of Shu-Han to be completed. In 265 Sima Yan deposed the last ruler of Wei and proclaimed his own dynasty of Jin; this likewise required a period of political settlement.

Wu did regain control of Vietnam in 271, but from the middle 270s there was increasing dissatisfaction with Sun Hao's regime, and several military commanders in the north defected with their followers to Jin. In 279 another rebellion in the far south removed the whole of that region from government control, and in the winter at the end of that year Sima Yan launched an overwhelming attack: armies of Jin advanced across the Huai toward the lower Yangzi, down the Han river toward the middle Yangzi, and down the Yangzi itself through the gorges. The defences of Wu collapsed before the onslaught, and on 31 May 280 Sun Hao surrendered at Jianye. Brought to Luoyang with title as a marquis, he died there in 284.

The history of the state of Wu may be divided into two periods. At first, under Sun Ce and the younger Sun Quan, it was an energetic and aggressive state, with armies led by men of military skill and achievement. Many of these officers had come to join the enterprise from territories north of the Yangzi, but their status depended closely upon the central government and few were able to establish an independent position in the society of the south. As opportunities for expansion ended in the 220s, the chances of politics and personality took their toll of the fortunes of the families of these early leaders. Despite the prowess of Zhou Yu and Lü Meng, for example, and the favor they received from Sun Quan, their sons and grandsons were only at the margins of power, while the Zhuge clan was destroyed after the fall of Zhuge Ke in 253; all had come originally from the north.

With the passage of time, therefore, local interests came to dominance. Already under Han, powerful magnates had acquired clients, tenants, and retainers whom they protected from rival forces, including the imperial government. The process continued under Wu, aided by the principle that

military command was a hereditary right, and by official grants of households for civilian service—effectively serfdom.¹⁵

In his “Three Capitals Rhapsody,” Zuo Si lists the four great families of Wu: the Yu and the Wei from Kuaiji, and the Gu and the Lu from Wu commandery.¹⁶ From these, Lu Xun and Gu Yong (168–243) were Chancellors to Sun Quan and their descendants held high rank,¹⁷ while Yu Fan came from an important local family and his chequered record did not prevent his relatives from gaining senior appointment. The Wei family was likewise well established, and managed very well without any close connection to the central government; their example was surely followed by lesser lineages.

In 253, soon after the death of Sun Quan, the general Deng Ai in Wei observed that it was the leading families of Wu who held essential power. They were prepared to accept the suzerainty of the Sun clan, and they had access to high office, but their chief concerns were in their own communities.¹⁸ Such families could be kept under control by the threat of force and by internal hostages, but they were not easily overthrown by the chances of politics. So long as the regime remained reasonably competent and recognized local interests, there was no cause to oppose it, but the same pattern obtained as in the last years of Later Han: essential dues were paid to the central authority, but the details of its activities and the intrigues at court were largely irrelevant to local power, influence, and survival.

In its latter years, therefore, the state of Wu was no longer an ambitious warlord enterprise, but a group of magnates concerned to maintain their wealth and authority. Faced with such a collection of family interests, the government never established strong control. The regime held power through

¹⁵ On the development of hereditary military office and the right to private clients, see the discussion of *buqu* in note 16 of Chapter 1 on Wei in this volume, and Mark Edward Lewis, *China between empires: The Northern and Southern Dynasties* (Cambridge, MA, 2009), pp. 55–58.

¹⁶ See David Knechtges, trans., *Wen xuan, or Selections of refined literature*, Volume 1, *Rhapsodies on metropolises and capitals* (Princeton, 1982), pp. 398–399, and notes.

¹⁷ The Lu was one of the great lineages of Chinese history. Recognized in the southeast from the time of Former Han, members of the family held senior office during Later Han, under Wu, and under Jin, and descendants are recorded with high rank still in the fifth and sixth centuries: de Crespigny, *Generals of the South*, p. 503 notes.

¹⁸ The comments of Deng Ai are recorded at SGZ 28.777. They are discussed by Tang Changru, *Wei Jin Nanbeichao shilun cong* (Beijing, 1955), pp. 22–23; and by Miyakawa Hisayuki, *Rikuchō shi kenkyū: seiji shakai hen* (Tokyo, 1956), p. 33. Denis Grafflin, “The great family in medieval South China,” *HJAS* 41 (1981), pp. 65–74, fairly criticizes the concept of a “super-elite” aristocracy at the highest levels of the state; the families which held power in local communities, however, were not particularly interested in the state. On hostages see SGZ 48/Wu 3.1177 PC, quoting the *Soushen ji* by Gan Bao of the early fourth century; also Yang Lien-sheng, “Hostages in Chinese history,” *HJAS* 15.3/4 (1952), pp. 507–521; and Pong Sing-wai, “*Lun Sanguo shidai zhi dazhu*,” *Xin Ya xuebao* 6.1 (1964), pp. 141–204.

its past military success, but it was unable to mobilize its potential resources to the full.¹⁹

One achievement, however, was of great importance for the future. We have noted how the growth of population in the south during Later Han provided opportunity for the first establishment of the separate state. The rulers of Wu then vastly increased the numbers of people and the territory under their control, extracting manpower and taxation from the non-Chinese native tribes and from those Chinese settlers who had been hitherto outside the reach of the government. The combination of a strong local structure with a network of grassroots independence, firmly developed under Wu, laid the foundation for the separation and survival of Eastern Jin in the early fourth century.

¹⁹ This question is discussed in more detail by de Crespigny, *Generals of the South*, pp. 493–512. Lewis, *China between empires*, p. 37, makes the same point but goes further, observing, “The *political* history of the Northern and Southern Dynasties was dominated by this tug of war between military dynasts and locally powerful families” (*italics added*).

CHAPTER 3

SHU-HAN

J. Michael Farmer

THE SHU REGION IN THE LATE HAN

Situated in the southwest, bounded by mountains and watered by the Yangzi and several tributaries, the region occupied by the former Warring States-period state of Shu was secure and rich in both agricultural and mineral resources. An abundant supply of copper and tin had led to the rise of a bronze-producing society at Sanxingdui, contemporary with the Shang at Anyang (c. 1200 BCE), and later, salt, iron, and natural-gas deposits were developed into thriving industries during the late Zhou period.¹ Moreover, quality soil, easy access to water, and a warm and lengthy growing season made the region highly productive in terms of agriculture. After Shu was conquered by Qin in the third century BCE, a large number of families from the Central Plains were relocated to the area to provide material support for the Qin war effort. It was due in no small measure to the resources extracted from Shu that Qin was able to conquer and unify China by 221 BCE. Later, following the fall of Qin, the Han founder Liu Bang likewise relied upon resources from his secure base in the region to defeat his rivals and establish his rule over the empire. The area was then administered as Yi Province, with its seat located in Shu commandery in the city of Chengdu. Based on the census of the year 2 CE, the region had some 972,783 registered households, with 4,548,654 individuals.² During the reign of Wang Mang, one of Wang's officers, Gongsun Shu, occupied the area as a warlord, and after Wang Mang's defeat, he proclaimed himself emperor in 25 CE. Gongsun Shu was defeated by Liu Xiu, the future Guangwu Emperor of the Later Han, and the Shu region

¹ On early Sichuan, see Robert Bagley, ed., *Ancient Sichuan: Treasures from a lost civilization* (Seattle, 2001); Steven F. Sage, *Ancient Sichuan and the unification of China* (Albany, 1992); Gu Jiegang, *Lun Ba-Shu yu zhongyuan de guanxi* (Chengdu, 1981); and Tong Enzheng, *Gudai de Ba-Shu* (Chengdu, 1979). On the iron industry, see Donald Wagner, *Iron and steel in ancient China* (Leiden, 1993), pp. 250–255; *idem*, *The state and iron industry in Han China* (Copenhagen, 2001), pp. 45, 50, 95.

² HS 28A.1596–1604.

was brought back into the fold of the Han empire in 36 CE.³ As a result of these geographical and historical factors, the region enjoyed a reputation of being both resource-rich and strategically important; a heaven's storehouse and a haven for rebels and would-be dynasts.⁴

THE REIGN OF LIU YAN AND LIU ZHANG

As matters deteriorated at the Han court in the 180s,⁵ Liu Yan,⁶ a distant imperial kinsman serving as Chamberlain for Ceremonials (*taichang*), heard a colleague predict that a Son of Heaven would arise from Yi Province. Liu Yan then requested a transfer to the southwest. Around 184, he was dispatched there to deal with reports of corrupt local administrators, but due to unrest throughout the empire, he was unable to reach his new post. In the interim, Yellow Turban rebels in Yi Province killed the prefect (*cishi*), Xi Jian, and took control of three commanderies. This uprising was quelled by a local elite's private troops supplemented with mercenaries from the Qiang ethnic minority group.⁷ The situation stabilized and Liu Yan entered the province. He took office and moved the administrative seat from Chengdu to nearby Mianzhu, appeasing the rebels, executing a number of local elites, and

³ For Gongsun Shu, see *HHS* 13.533–545; and Hans Bielenstein, “Wang Mang, the restoration of the Han dynasty, and Later Han,” in *The Cambridge history of China*, Volume 1, *The Ch'in and Han empires*, 221 BC–AD 220, ed. Denis Twitchett and Michael Loewe (Cambridge, 1986), pp. 254–256.

⁴ The major sources for the history of Shu-Han in addition to *SGZ* and the contemporary historical documents cited in Pei Songzhi's commentary included in the *Zhonghua shuju* edition are Chang Qu (c. 291–c. 361 CE); Ren Naiqiang, ed., *Huayang guo zhi jiaobu tuzhu* (Shanghai, 1987, rpt. Shanghai, 2007), hereafter *HYGZ*, and the narrative account of the period in *ZZTJ*, Chapters 69–78. For a translation of those chapters, see Achilles Fang, trans., Glen W. Baxter, ed., *The chronicle of the Three Kingdoms* (220–265): *Chapters 69–78 from the Tzu chih t'ung chien of Sima Kuang* (1019–1086), 2 vols. (Cambridge, MA, 1965). Also see *Liuchen zhu Wenxuan* (Taipei, 1959), pp. 4.4a–34a; translation in David Knechtges, trans., *Wen xuan or Selections of refined literature*, Volume 1, *Rhapsodies on metropolises and capitals* (Princeton, 1982), pp. 1.341–372. For a study of Chen Shou's *SGZ* and Pei's commentary (PC), see Rafe de Crespigny, *The Records of the Three Kingdoms* (Canberra, 1970). Two important modern studies are He Ziquan, *Sanguo shi* (Beijing, 1994); and Ma Zhijie, *Sanguo shi* (Beijing, 1993). For a concise overview of the period in English, see Rafe de Crespigny, “The Three Kingdoms and Western Jin: A history of China in the third century AD,” *EAH* 1 (June 1991), pp. 1–36, 2 (December 1991), pp. 143–165. Much has been written on the historiographical perspective of Chen Shou's history of the period, especially in regard to the matter of political legitimacy. For an overview of this debate, see Rao Zongyi, *Zhongguo shixue shang zhi zhengtong lun* (Shanghai, 1996).

⁵ For an account of the turmoil at the end of the Han, see B. J. Mansvelt Beck, “The fall of Han,” in *The Cambridge history of China*, Volume 1, ed. Twitchett and Loewe, pp. 317–376.

⁶ The main biographies of Liu Yan and his son, Liu Zhang, are in *SGZ* 31.865–870. A secondary account is in *HYGZ* 5.340–353.

⁷ For a study of the effect of the Yellow Turban rebellion on the area, see J. Michael Farmer, “The Three Chaste Ones of Ba: Local perspectives on the Yellow Turban rebellion on the Chengdu Plain,” *JAOS* 125.2 (2005), pp. 191–202.

reorganizing the provincial military structure. Liu Yan then began to openly pursue his own imperial aspirations, constructing over a thousand imperial-style carriages and equipages. When word of Liu Yan's actions reached the capital, the emperor dispatched Liu's son, Liu Zhang, to discover his intent. Liu Yan detained his son and began to plot an attack on Chang'an, but before the plan could be enacted, two of his sons were executed by the court, a fire destroyed his carriages, and he developed an abscess on his back and died.⁸ Liu Zhang was appointed as army supervisor (*jianjun zhizhe*) and governor (*mu*) of Yi Province, inheriting his father's posts.

The reign of Liu Zhang in Yi Province has been described as indecisive.⁹ After taking over the provincial administration, Liu Zhang continued his father's feuds with local power holders, including Zhang Lu,¹⁰ the leader of the Celestial Masters (*Tianshi*) Daoist community in Hanzhong, in present-day southwest Shaanxi, just north of the Shu area. Rebellions by both ethnic minority and Han populations in the province increased, and much of Liu Zhang's administrative focus was on putting down these uprisings. Moreover, there was potential for rebellion within the ranks of Liu Zhang's provincial officers as many doubted both his ability and loyalty to the Han court. When an envoy sent by Liu Zhang to pay respects to Cao Cao felt slighted by Cao,¹¹ he returned and urged Liu Zhang to establish relations with Liu Bei, a nominal kinsman who had recently taken control of Jing Province. Other advisers opposed the proposed alliance with Liu Bei, fearing Liu Bei would displace Liu Zhang in Yi, but growing concerns over threats from Cao Cao and Zhang Lu led Liu Zhang to dispatch Fa Zheng as an envoy to Liu Bei in 208 and again in 211.¹² Fa then expressed his own doubts about Liu Zhang to Liu Bei and urged him to avail himself of the resources of the region and seize the province. Pleased with the idea, Liu Bei in 211 marched westward from Jing with 10,000 troops.

LIU BEI'S CONQUEST OF YI PROVINCE

Liu Bei was a native of Zhuoxian, modern Zhuozhou, Hebei.¹³ Though claiming descent from the Han imperial family, Liu Bei was orphaned and raised in an impoverished family. At fifteen, he was sent to study with a local scholar, and while not taking his studies seriously, he gained the respect of

⁸ Clear signs of Heaven's disapproval according to the prevailing worldview of correlative cosmology.

⁹ *HYGZ* 5.346. ¹⁰ For Zhang Lu, see *SGZ* 8.263–266.

¹¹ For Cao Cao, see *SGZ* 1.1–55. Also see Chapter 1 on the Wei in this volume.

¹² For Fa Zheng, see *SGZ* 37.957–962.

¹³ The main biographical treatment of Liu Bei is found in *SGZ* 32.871–892. Additional details are found in a secondary biography in *HYGZ* 6.355–383.

members of his extended clan and local elites. As a result, Liu Bei was often the beneficiary of their material support, which he used to gather a following. Among his earliest supporters were Zhang Fei and Guan Yu.¹⁴ He was said to have been generous and equitable toward his followers, and consequently “people attached themselves to him in droves.”¹⁵ During the Yellow Turban uprising of the mid-180s, Liu Bei and his followers earned merit for their efforts in fighting the rebels. Accordingly, Liu Bei was appointed to his first public office as commandant (*wei*) of Anxi.¹⁶ After a violent confrontation with a local inspector (*duyou*) in his prefecture, Liu Bei left his post. For the next two decades, he drifted as a soldier of fortune, first fighting the Yellow Turban rebels, and later uniting himself serially with one after another of the late Han regional warlords. In 196, Liu Bei allied with Cao Cao. During this period, Cao Cao treated Liu Bei with great respect, sharing a mat with him during meals, regarding himself and Liu as the only two heroes of the empire. Their relationship eroded as numerous local leaders and soldiers abandoned Cao Cao for Liu Bei, and in 200 CE, Cao Cao attacked Liu, capturing his wife and son, as well as his general Guan Yu. Fleeing southward, Liu Bei eventually allied with Liu Biao in Jing Province.¹⁷ Cao Cao attacked Jing in 208, and Liu Bei led a group of refugees through the province, attracting more followers in the process. Seeking aid from Sun Quan in Wu,¹⁸ Liu Bei and his troops joined forces with Sun’s general Zhou Yu,¹⁹ and together they repelled Cao Cao at the battle of Red Cliffs (Chibi) in 208.²⁰ The military defeat, combined with an epidemic that spread through Cao’s camp, sent Cao retreating northward and effectively established a boundary between Cao Cao in the north and Liu Bei and Sun Quan in the south. Liu Bei was then made prefect of Jing Province. Sun Quan feared him, and so offered his sister to Liu Bei to establish a marriage alliance between the two families. Sun Quan then proposed a military alliance to seize Yi Province, but Liu Bei rejected the plan. By 210, the dividing lines between the major players in the late Han civil war had been drawn: Cao Cao controlled a vast territory north of the Yangzi, Sun Quan held the lower Yangzi and points south, Liu Bei occupied Jing Province in the central Yangzi

¹⁴ For Zhang Fei, see SGZ 36.943–944. For Guan Yu, see SGZ 36.939–942. The stories of Guan Yu, Zhang Fei, and later Zhuge Liang joining with Liu Bei have been embellished and popularized in later drama and especially the fifteenth-century literary account, Luo Guanzhong’s *Sanguo zhi yanyi*.

¹⁵ SGZ 32.873, n. 4.

¹⁶ Anxi was located approximately 200 kilometers southwest of present-day Beijing in Hebei province.

¹⁷ For Liu Biao, see SGZ 6.210–217; Andrew B. Chittick, “The life and legacy of Liu Biao,” *JAH* 37.2 (2003), pp. 155–186.

¹⁸ For Sun Quan, see SGZ 47.1115–1150; also see Chapter 2 on Wu in this volume.

¹⁹ For Zhou Yu, see SGZ 54.1259–1267; also see Chapter 2 on Wu in this volume.

²⁰ For the Battle of Red Cliffs, see Xu Zhaoren, *Sanguo taolüe* (Beijing, 1995), pp. 678–683; also see Chapter 1 on the Wei in this volume.

region, and Liu Zhang administered the upper Yangzi region in Yi Province, while Zhang Lu was pressed between Cao Cao and Liu Zhang in Hanzhong.

When Liu Bei entered Yi Province in 211, he was warmly welcomed by local elites and Liu Zhang. Liu Zhang immediately dispatched Liu Bei to attack Zhang Lu in Hanzhong, but when Cao Cao attacked Sun Quan in 212, Liu Bei turned his troops eastward to aid Sun. This angered Liu Zhang, who then killed one of Liu Bei's supporters and sent troops to prevent him from entering the area around Chengdu. Liu Bei marched on Chengdu and defeated Liu Zhang's troops, surrounding the city for several weeks. Despite possessing some 30,000 troops and a two-year supply of rations, Liu Zhang surrendered to Liu Bei, offering a pro forma acknowledgment that the two decades of rule in the area, by his father and himself, had brought no favor or kindness upon the people, only conflict and bloodshed.²¹ Liu Bei accepted the surrender; restored Liu Zhang's insignia, ranks, and property; and then transferred him to Gongan in Jing Province.²²

THE REIGN OF LIU BEI (214–223)

Upon deposing Liu Zhang, Liu Bei assumed the office of regional governor of Yi Province and set about organizing his administration. Early followers Zhang Fei and Guan Yu occupied high military offices, supplemented by newfound supporters in Shu like Ma Chao and Fa Zheng,²³ who had held posts under Liu Zhang, and a host of others who joined Liu Bei's entourage during his sojourn in Jing Province, including Liu's top adviser Zhuge Liang.²⁴ While some doubted Liu Bei's own prowess, citing his numerous military defeats and proclivity for retreat, others praised him for his treatment of subordinates and his ability to make the fullest use of their talents. As a result, many men of arms and men of letters sought to enter Liu Bei's service.

Among other tasks, this influx of talent was charged with reviving the scholarly institutions of the province which had declined under the regimes of Liu Yan and Liu Zhang. A number of intellectuals who accompanied Liu Bei from Jing had trained in the academy at Xiangyang, studying the so-called *xuanxue*, which drew heavily on the Shu native Yang Xiong's (53 BCE–18 CE) *taixuan*.²⁵ Local Shu scholars drew on other native academic traditions, such as

²¹ HYGZ 5.348.

²² It is unclear what position, if any, Liu Zhang held in Gongan. Later, after the death of Liu Bei in 223, Sun Quan "reappointed" Liu Zhang as inspector of Yi Province, but he did not take up the position and later died in Wu.

²³ For Ma Chao, see SGZ 36.944–948. ²⁴ For Zhuge Liang, see SGZ 35.911–937.

²⁵ Tadao Yoshikawa, "Scholarship in Ching-chou at the end of the Later Han Dynasty," *AcA* 60 (1991), pp. 1–24. The term *taixuan* derives from the Han divinatory text *Taixuanjing* by Yang Xiong that resembled

the syncretic approach to the classics based on celestial observation and prophetic wordplay, as taught by the Yang family of Guanghan commandery and its followers. Members of this tradition continued to produce important canonical commentaries and works of national and local history.²⁶ Surprisingly, of such active literary activity, only one poem from the Shu-Han period survives.²⁷ Despite Liu Bei's efforts to restaff the Chengdu academy (originally established in the early Han) and revitalize it as an institution of classical study, the early results were not good. Reports of petty feuds and whining laments over lack of recognition in the form of high rank were common.²⁸ In seeking to restore the Han imperial enterprise, Liu Bei modeled his academy and court on the early Han institutions, and likewise, scholars came to Liu Bei's service with classical expectations. They saw themselves as cultured gentlemen who should be recognized for their morality and intelligence, and thus rewarded with positions as high-ranking ministers of the state. But however noble his intentions may have appeared, Liu Bei was first and foremost a warlord, and his primary objective was to conquer his political rivals by force. Not surprisingly, then, Liu Bei's highest-ranking civil officials tended to be men with military inclinations, not scholars. To the scholars, Liu Bei bestowed lower-ranking positions at the academy and as tutors to his sons.

In the years following Liu Bei's takeover of Yi Province, diplomatic and military activity between the various regional warlords increased. In 215, Liu Bei and his ally Sun Quan quarreled over territory in Jing Province,²⁹ and Zhang Lu surrendered Hanzhong to Cao Cao. Liu Bei led an unsuccessful attack on Hanzhong in 218, but managed to seize the area from Cao Cao the following year. In the autumn of 219, Liu's supporters, following traditional ritual protocol, petitioned him to take the title King of Hanzhong. Upon accepting the title, he submitted a memorial to the Han emperor, who was then in the custody of Cao Cao, enumerating Cao's offenses and declaring his

closely the oracular purposes of the *Yijing*; see Michael Nylan, *The Canon of supreme mystery: A translation with commentary of the T'ai hsiian ching* (Albany, 1993).

²⁶ Cheng Yuanmin, "Dong Han Shu Yang Hou jingwei xue zongchuan," *Guoli bianyiguan guankan* 17.1 (1988), pp. 31–48, 17.2 (1988), pp. 19–39; *idem*, *Sanguo Shu jingxue* (Taipei, 1997); and Yoshikawa Tadao, "Shuku ni okeru shin'i no gaku no dentō," in *Shin'i shisō no sōgōteki kenkyū*, ed. Yasui Kōzan (Tokyo, 1984), pp. 103–136.

²⁷ This was purportedly written by Qin Mi. See Ding Fubao, *Quan Sanguo shi*, 1.326, in *idem*, *Quan Han Sanguo Jin Nanbeichao shi* (Taipei, n.d.).

²⁸ For Chen Shou's account of scholarship in Shu, see SGZ 42.1019–1042. Also see J. Michael Farmer, *The talent of Shu: Qiao Zhou and the intellectual world of early medieval Sichuan* (Albany, 2007).

²⁹ On the history of the diplomatic relationship between Shu-Han and Wu, see Chen Qianqiang, "Lun Sanguo shidai de Wu Shu tongmeng," *Sichuan shifan daxue xuebao* 24.4 (1997), pp. 122–126; Zhao Guohua, "Sanguo shiqi de Wu Shu guanxi," in *idem*, *Wei Jin Nanbeichao Sui Tang shi* 1997.3, pp. 5–10; reprinted from *Huazhong shifan daxue xuebao (zheshe ban)* 1997.1, pp. 113–119.

loyalty to the house of Han. Shortly thereafter, Sun Quan attacked and killed Guan Yu at Jiangling, claiming the western commanderies of Jing Province.

The events of 220 dramatically changed the political landscape of the late Han period. In the first month of 220, Cao Cao died and his son Cao Pi inherited his father's title of King of Wei.³⁰ Then, on December 11, 220, Cao Pi forced the abdication of the Han emperor and established himself as the emperor of Wei. In Chengdu, supporters of Liu Bei submitted reports of auspicious omens and portents, interlaced with prophetic wordplay drawn from the apocrypha encouraging Liu to claim the Han throne.³¹ As would be expected, Liu Bei initially declined but then claimed the throne as the first emperor of the third iteration of the Han dynasty on April 6, 221.³² An amnesty was proclaimed, a new year-title was established, and the offices of the imperial court were organized, with Zhuge Liang installed as Chancellor (*chengxiang*). Liu Bei established Lady Wu as empress,³³ and his son Liu Shan as heir apparent.

In 221, despite warnings from several advisers, Liu Bei launched a campaign against Sun Quan to avenge the death of Guan Yu. The campaign proved costly. Zhang Fei was defeated in battle and killed by his subordinates. After an initial victory by Liu Bei at Zigui, at the Yangzi river gorges in western Hubei, the tide of battle turned to Sun Quan in 222. Throughout the course of the year, several of Liu's top civil and military officials died,³⁴ and though Sun Quan sent an envoy seeking peace, Liu persisted.³⁵ Late in the year, Liu Bei fell ill. In early 223, he summoned Zhuge Liang from Chengdu to his encampment at Baidi, to which he had pulled back, and instructed him to aid his heir apparent, but should the heir prove inadequate, to take the throne for himself. Zhuge Liang pledged his loyalty to Liu Bei's imperial enterprise. In the fourth month, Liu Bei died there at the age of sixty-three *sui*. He was given the posthumous title of Radiantly Eminent (Zhaolie 昭烈) Emperor and buried in Chengdu.

³⁰ For Cao Pi, see *SGZ* 2.57–90; also see Chapter 1 on the Wei in this volume.

³¹ See Wolfram Eberhard and Rolf Müller, "Contributions to the astronomy of the San-Kuo Period," *MS* 2 (1936–1937), pp. 149–164; and Tiziana Lippiello, *Auspicious omens and miracles in ancient China: Han, Three Kingdoms, and Six Dynasties* (Sankt Augustin, 2001).

³² Liu Bei's state took the name "Han." The name "Shu-Han" is a later appellation, used here to clearly differentiate between the Former and Later Han dynasties and the state established by Liu Bei. For a study of this nomenclature and its use in early medieval historiography, see Farmer, "What's in a name? On the appellative 'Shu' in early medieval Chinese historiography," *JAOS* 121.2 (2001), pp. 44–59.

³³ For Lady Wu, posthumously Empress Mu, see *SGZ* 34.906; Robert Joe Cutter and William G. Crowell, *Empresses and consorts: Selections from Chen Shou's Records of the Three States with Pei Songzhi's commentary* (Honolulu, 1999), pp. 116–118.

³⁴ Fa Zheng, Xu Jing (*SGZ* 38.963–969), and Ma Chao.

³⁵ On these campaigns, see Xu Zhaoren, *Sanguo taolüe*, pp. 737–749.

THE REIGN OF LIU SHAN (223–263)

Liu Shan,³⁶ son of Liu Bei and Lady Gan,³⁷ took the throne at the age of seventeen *sui* under the regency of Zhuge Liang and presided over the state for the next forty years. His reign can be divided into two periods: the regency of Zhuge Liang (223–234), and the post-Zhuce Liang era (234–263). At no time during these years did Liu Shan take an active role in government, essentially leaving the state in the hands of civil and military officers or court eunuchs.

After observing the one-year mourning period for the death of his ruler, Zhuge Liang set about organizing his administration. Among his early policy initiatives, he was said to have provided relief to the commoners, changed laws and lightened punishments, and reduced the size of the bureaucracy. Moreover, reversing the practice of Liu Bei, he appointed a greater number of local scholars and elites to civil and military positions, strengthening the bond between the state and its nonlocal rulers on the one hand, and the local populace on the other.³⁸ Zhuge Liang was reputed to have been fair in the performance of his duties, and his primary focus in government was the fulfillment of his late sovereign's goal of unifying the empire through military force.

In 225, Zhuge Liang led troops southward to quell uprisings among the large ethnic minority population in the seven commanderies known collectively as Nanzhong.³⁹ These minorities were branches of two main ethnic groups: the Di Qiang from the west and the Yue from the east. The area had been nominally brought under Han administration during the reign of Han Emperor Wu (r. 141–87 BCE), and Liu Bei had reasserted control over Nanzhong after taking control of Yi Province in 214 by appointing local strongmen to administrative posts. After Liu Bei's death, several local chieftains of the Sou (a branch of the Qiang) rebelled. In the summer of 225, Zhuge Liang's forces captured a rebel leader named Meng Huo. Recognizing the difficulty of administering the region directly, Zhuge Liang pardoned Meng and freed him. Meng attacked again, but was captured, pardoned, and released; this happened for a total of seven times until he finally submitted. Zhuge Liang reorganized the administrative units in Nanzhong and left his

³⁶ The primary biography of Liu Shan is in *SGZ* 33.893–903. An important secondary account is in *HYGZ* 7.387–431.

³⁷ For Lady Gan, see *SGZ* 34.905–906; Cutter and Crowell, *Empresses and consorts*, pp. 115–116.

³⁸ These included Qin Mi (*SGZ* 38.971–976), Wu Liang (*HYGZ* 10B.584), Du Wei (*SGZ* 42.1019–1020), and Qiao Zhou (*SGZ* 42.1027–1034).

³⁹ On these campaigns, see Xu Zhaoren, *Sanguo taolüe*, pp. 756–758.

assistant generals Ma Zhong and Li Hui in charge. Some 10,000 households of crack Qiang troops were relocated to Chengdu and organized into military units. Moreover, material resources such as gold, silver, cinnabar, lacquer, plow-oxen, and warhorses were extracted from Nanzhong for use by the Shu-Han military and court. Relative order was maintained, but tensions between the Shu-Han administrators, often locals, and the local minority populations remained, with occasional uprisings taking place throughout the reign of Liu Shan.⁴⁰

After returning from the South in late 225, Zhuge Liang set his sights on the North. In 226, the Wei emperor Cao Pi died, and the following year Zhuge Liang submitted a memorial to Liu Shan requesting permission to campaign against Wei.⁴¹ In the second month, Zhuge Liang set out, establishing his headquarters at Hanzhong.⁴² Here, he established additional agricultural garrisons, as well as constructing new weirs and irrigation canals, all designed to increase agricultural production for the troops. In the spring of 228, he attacked Wei at Qishan in modern Gansu,⁴³ securing the submission of Tianshui, Nan'an, and Anding commanderies in the process. An advance toward Chang'an failed due to insubordination by several of Zhuge Liang's assistant generals, and the Shu-Han troops were forced to retreat back to Hanzhong. For the next several years, Zhuge Liang continued his campaigns in the North, with limited success. In the spring of 231, a siege of Qishan failed, again the result of insubordination and the failure of a subordinate to maintain the supply line for the vanguard troops. Zhuge Liang then rested his troops for a season, retraining them, establishing additional agricultural garrisons, and improving supply routes. In 234, he again led troops, but fell ill and died in the field in the eighth month at the age of fifty-four *sui*.

In many respects, the regency of Zhuge Liang was a continuation of Liu Bei's policies; that is, the pursuit of military unification of the empire. His southern campaigns both quelled local disorder and provided a valuable source of supplies for the military. Moreover, Zhuge Liang's appointment of a greater number of Yi Province locals to posts at court and in the commanderies and

⁴⁰ See *HYGZ* 4.240–247 for an account of the relations between Shu-Han and the minority population of Nanzhong. Also see *HYGZ* 7.387–391; Ma Zhijie, *Sanguo shi*, pp. 346–352; and Xu Heping, “Shixi Shu Han dui shaoshu minzu de zhengce,” *Zhongnan minzu xueyuan xuebao* (*zhongnan minzu xueyuan xuebao*) 1988.4, pp. 34–38.

⁴¹ For the text of this memorial, see *SGZ* 35.919–920; *HYGZ* 7.392.

⁴² On these campaigns, see Xu Zhaoren, *Sanguo taolüe*, pp. 763–797; and John Killigrew, “Zhuge Liang and the northern campaigns of 228–234,” *EMC* 5 (1999), pp. 55–91; also Ralph Sawyer, *Zhugue Liang: Strategy, achievements, and writings* (North Charleston, 2014).

⁴³ Qishan is located approximately fifty kilometers southwest of present-day Tianshui, Gansu.

prefectures eased the perception of the Lius as an “outsider regime” and led to greater stability in the state. Zhuge Liang’s failure to extend territorial control into the Central Plains or win a major victory against Wei, however, clearly diminished the overall assessment of his administration.⁴⁴

Following the death of Zhuge Liang, a new corps of civil and military leadership assumed control. Jiang Wan,⁴⁵ who had been previously recommended by Zhuge Liang to be his replacement, was appointed as the director of the Imperial Secretariat and placed in charge of affairs of state, while Yang Yi,⁴⁶ Fei Yi,⁴⁷ Jiang Wei,⁴⁸ Deng Zhi,⁴⁹ and Zhang Yi⁵⁰ were given command over the various armies. The following year (235), Jiang Wan was made senior general (*da jiangjun*) and prefect of Yi Province, with Fei Yi as the director of the Imperial Secretariat (*shangshu ling*) and Dong Yun in command of the palace guards.⁵¹ These three men remained in charge of state affairs in Shu-Han for the next eighteen years.

The early years of Jiang Wan’s administration were relatively stable. While both Shu-Han and Wu increased troops on their common border in 235, no major conflict ensued. In late 238, Jiang Wan encamped at Hanzhong, but launched no campaigns. Though he consulted with Fei Yi on new strategies for attacking Wei, Jiang Wan’s plans were abandoned when he fell chronically ill in 242. He appointed Fei Yi as general in chief in 243, and placed him in charge of the civil government. In autumn of 244, Jiang Wan formally yielded power to Fei Yi and Dong Yun, with Fei handling affairs of the province and military, and Dong in charge of matters at court. In the eleventh month of 246, Jiang Wan died, followed shortly thereafter by Dong Yun. Lü Yi succeeded Dong as director of the Imperial Secretariat,⁵² and Jiang Wei was promoted to be general of the guards (*wei jiangjun*), sharing civil administrative duties with Fei Yi.

The promotion of Jiang Wei marked a change from the peaceful years of Jiang Wan’s administration. In 247, Jiang Wei defeated Wei troops near Longxi commandery, northwest of Tianshui, and in 249 he began the first of many offensive campaigns against Wei.⁵³ Jiang was defeated that autumn, with two of his subordinate generals surrendering to Wei. The following year, Jiang Wei again launched an attack on Wei and was

⁴⁴ For historical evaluations of Zhuge Liang, see Eric Henry, “Chu-ko Liang in the eyes of his contemporaries,” *HJAS* 52.2 (1992), pp. 589–612; and Hoyt Tillman, “Historic analogies and evaluative judgments: Zhuge Liang as portrayed in Chen Shou’s *Chronicle of the Three Kingdoms* and Pei Songzhi’s commentary,” *OE* 43 (2002 [2004]), pp. 60–70.

⁴⁵ For Jiang Wan, see *SGZ* 44.1057–1060. ⁴⁶ For Yang Yi, see *SGZ* 40.1004–1005.

⁴⁷ For Fei Yi, see *SGZ* 44.1060–1062. ⁴⁸ For Jiang Wei, see *SGZ* 44.1062–1069.

⁴⁹ For Deng Zhi, see *SGZ* 45.1071–1073. ⁵⁰ For Zhang Yi, see *SGZ* 45.1073–1075.

⁵¹ For Dong Yun, see *SGZ* 39.985–987. ⁵² For Lü Yi, see *SGZ* 39.988.

⁵³ On these campaigns, see Xu Zhaoren, *Sanguo taolüe*, pp. 837–878.

defeated. In the winter of 251, Lü Yi died and Chen Zhi⁵⁴ was made director of the Imperial Secretariat and General of Defense Command (*zhenjun jiangjun*).⁵⁵ In early 253, Fei Yi was murdered by a defector from Wei, and eunuchs led by Huang Hao seized power at court, collaborating with Chen Zhi.

With the death of Fei Yi, Huang Hao and Chen Zhi had free rein at court. Jiang Wei launched attack after attack on Wei in the field, while the emperor amused himself among his harem and in pleasurable excursions. Between 253 and 258, Jiang Wei set out on five major campaigns. He was defeated each time, and the loss in the autumn of 256 was so humiliating that Jiang was forced to write a letter of apology to the court.⁵⁶ By 258, the Huang Hao–Chen Zhi faction at court had become so powerful that many suspected they were plotting to depose the emperor. The Superior Grand Master of the Palace (*taizhong daifu*) and longtime Shu-Han official Qiao Zhou debated Chen Zhi at court and then composed a literary transcript of the debate entitled “Discourse on Enemy States.” His text critiqued the aggressive military policy pursued by the court and Jiang Wei.⁵⁷ Later that year, Jiang Wei proposed a dramatic change in the Shu-Han military strategy, seeking to dismantle frontline defensive positions in order to lure Wei troops onto the Chengdu plain. By 261, Huang Hao was in control of the court and civil government. Jiang Wei requested that Liu Shan execute Huang Hao, but the emperor refused, so Jiang transferred his military headquarters to an agricultural garrison and farmed millet, thus avoiding conflict at court.

In 262, Wei troops led by Deng Ai attacked, defeating Jiang Wei, and the following year, additional Wei armies under the command of Deng Ai, Zhong Hui, and Zhuge Xu marched on Shu.⁵⁸ Jiang Wei’s request for additional defensive troops was denied by Huang Hao, who claimed knowledge through magical means that Wei armies would not attack. Instead, the Wei assault began in the summer and made slow but steady progress, taking territory once protected by the defensive outposts that had previously been dismantled by Jiang Wei. By winter, the Wei forces were deep into Shu-Han territory.

⁵⁴ For Chen Zhi, see SGZ 39.987.

⁵⁵ *Zhenjun jiangjun*, a title not in Charles O. Hucker, *A dictionary of official titles in imperial China* (Stanford, 1985).

⁵⁶ See SGZ 44.1064–1065; and Xu Zhaoren, *Sanguo taolüe*, pp. 862–863.

⁵⁷ For “Chouguo lun,” see SGZ 42.1029–1030. For a translation, see J. Michael Farmer, “Classical scholarship in the Shu region: The case of Qiao Zhou,” in *Early medieval China: A sourcebook*, ed. Wendy Swartz et al. (New York, 2014), pp. 108–124.

⁵⁸ On the Wei conquest of Shu, see Xu Zhaoren, *Sanguo taolüe*, pp. 880–885.

Seeking advice, Liu Shan summoned his court officials. Some proposed fleeing to the wilds of the South, while others suggested flight to the east to seek refuge with Wu. Qiao Zhou rejected both of these plans, and instead recommended surrender, hoping to avoid the death of their ruler and loss of officers, troops, and commoners that would inevitably follow a Wei attack on Chengdu. Qiao was criticized by both officials and members of the imperial family, but Liu Shan accepted his proposal and had Xi Zheng draft the documents of surrender.⁵⁹ Liu Shan then went out in proper ritual fashion, bound, to meet Deng Ai, and presented him with the imperial seal and documents.

Following the surrender, chaos ensued. The Prince Liu Chen killed his wife and children, offering their heads in the ancestral temple of Liu Bei before committing suicide in protest. Huang Hao avoided execution by bribing Deng Ai. Jiang Wei, who was in the field at the time of Liu Shan's surrender, received the news late, then surrendered to Zhong Hui. In the first month of 264, Zhong Hui and Deng Ai plotted against the Sima clan, then in control of Wei. Deng was arrested, so Zhong Hui brought Jiang Wei into the conspiracy. Jiang Wei joined the plot, hoping to later kill Zhong Hui and restore Liu Shan to the throne. However, the conspirators were all killed by the governor of Nan'an, Hu Lie.⁶⁰ In the third month, Liu Shan and his household were relocated to Luoyang, where he was enfeoffed as the Duke of Anle prefecture. Numerous Shu-Han officials were offered posts by Wei, and later by Jin. Some, like Chen Shou, the future author of the *Sanguozhi*, the history of this period, accepted these offices, while others, such as Qiao Zhou, declined.

In total, Liu Bei and his son Liu Shan ruled over the Shu region for some fifty years, with most of that time spent in conflict with rival powers in the North and East. Liu Bei was a charismatic warlord, while his son was a disinterested ruler who permitted his top officials to obsessively continue his father's campaigns. The region possessed both abundant material and human resources, and the government maintained offices that oversaw production and taxed these industries.⁶¹ Moreover, the *Huayang guo zhi* estimated the population of Shu-Han to be approximately 1,045,000 households.⁶² Nevertheless, the Shu-Han

⁵⁹ For Xi Zheng, see SGZ 42.1034–1041.

⁶⁰ SGZ is lacking in significant details about the plot. For Deng Ai, see SGZ 28.779–780, for Zhong Hui, see SGZ 28.791–793. See also Xu Zhaoren, *Sanguo taolüe*, pp. 885–889.

⁶¹ For a survey of the Shu-Han economy, see Ma Zhijie, *Sanguo shi*, pp. 275–288. Also, see HYGZ Chapters 1–4 for accounts of the resources and produce of the various locales.

⁶² The figure cited here is a composite of population estimates of the various administrative units that comprised Shu-Han, scattered throughout the HYGZ.

rulers and administrators were neither capable of marshaling those resources into a successful military conquest of their rivals, nor content to enjoy the safety of secure borders and plentiful supplies as an independent state. As a result, the state was lost and its resources were absorbed by Wei, and later Jin, who for a time succeeded in reunifying the empire.

CHAPTER 4

WESTERN JIN

Damien Chaussende*

Historical works traditionally argue that the Western Jin dynasty was founded in 265 (or, making calendrical allowances, in 266) by Emperor Wu (Sima Yan), and ended in 316 when Liu Yao seized the capital at Chang'an and Emperor Min was dethroned. Reality is a great deal more complicated.¹ The foundation of the Jin dynasty was much more the result of a long process that had begun by 249, when Emperor Wu's grandfather, Sima Yi (179–251), brutally seized power in the Wei court. The prehistory of the Jin, or the period between 249 and 265, is particularly notable politically, because it explains certain decisions taken by Emperor Wu, such as the distribution of principalities to members of his own clan. Once the Jin line was established, the period divides into two, each part extending about twenty-five years. The first period (265–290) is defined by the reign of Emperor Wu, and marked by dynamism and prosperity. The second (290–316), which begins with the coronation of his son and successor Sima Zhong (259–306, r. 290–306), posthumously Emperor Hui, is characterized by a slow and inexorable decline due to internal problems in the imperial family. Moreover, the kingdom suffered the threats of northern “barbarians,” notably from the rulers of the Former Zhao state (called Han until 319), one of the most important non-Chinese states in the period.

THE PREHISTORY OF THE JIN: THE RISE OF THE SIMA CLAN UNDER THE WEI

From the middle of the Later Han, three generations of the Sima clan of Henan (modern Qinyang, Henan) held relatively important local positions associated with military prerogatives. This is apparent from the titles by which they were

* Translated by Joelle Neulander.

¹ A more complete synthesis on the Western Jin, contrary to what its title might indicate, is the work by Fukuhara Akirō, *Seishin no Butai Shiba En* (Tokyo, 1995).

designated in the imperial ancestors' temple (*zongmiao*) of the Jin, established in 266.² The three ancestors were Sima Jun of the Han (d. 115), General of the Western Expeditions (*zhengxi jiangjun*) and Lord of the Commandery of Yuzhang (*Yuzhang fujun*), and his son and grandson, Sima Liang of the Han, Lord of the Commandery of Yingchuan (*Yingchuan fujun*), and Sima Jun of the Han, Lord of the Commandery of Jingzhao (*Jingzhao fujun*), respectively.

In that period, the Sima had not yet been integrated into the elite of the Han imperial court. It was with the son of the second Sima Jun, Sima Fang (149–219), that the Sima rose to central prominence, especially through their association with Cao Cao during the restive context of the period after the Yellow Turbans rebellion. We know that Sima Fang began his career as a local functionary—the historian Sima Biao tells us that he “served in the provinces and the commanderies”—but no more than that.³ He was the father of eight sons, of which the eldest, Sima Lang (171–217), predeceased him. From 219, the year Sima Fang died, the next eldest of the clan, and thus the most important due to the right of age, was Sima Yi (179–251), Fang's second son, who established what would become the Jin imperial line.⁴

Before he carried out the *coup d'état* in the Wei court in 249, Sima Yi's career was essentially a military one and began under Cao Cao. He entered Cao Cao's service in 208, and held a local post. He then participated in many victorious battles against Cao Cao's various enemies: against Zhang Lu (d. 216) in 215; Sun Quan (182–252, r. 222–252) in 217 and 226; the Xiongnu in 232; and Zhuge Liang (181–234) in 234, to cite only a few well-known examples. One of his most important military successes was the reconquest of Liaodong (in today's province of Liaoning) in 238. This area had been under the Gongsun family's control since the secession of Gongsun Du (d. 204) from the Han in 189.⁵ Gongsun Yuan (d. 238) had succeeded to be head of this *de facto* independent area in 228.⁶ The Wei, powerless, could do nothing but confirm him as governor (*taishou*) of Liaodong. Gongsun Yuan established relations with the Wu kingdom, and in return its sovereign, Sun Quan, gave him the title of prince. In 237, Gongsun Yuan attacked the Wei armies, commanded by Guanqiu Jian (d. 255), the governor of Youzhou, thus making the rupture with the Wei an open one. The next year Sima Yi was dispatched with an army

² JS 19.603. ³ SGZ 15.466, n. 1.

⁴ The Sima Fang cited in HHS 87.2882 in reference to events taking place in 87 CE, of course, would not be the Sima Fang mentioned here. Sima Guang (ZZTJ 47.1509) gives the place of origin of the earlier Sima Fang mentioned in HHS as Henei, making him a part of the more famous Sima lineage, but that may well be an error.

⁵ On this region, see Hong Tingyan, “San zhi liu shiji de Liaodong he Liaoxi,” *Beichao yanjiu* 1990.2, pp. 121–132; see also SGZ 8.252–261.

⁶ See SGZ 8.252–261.

to Liaodong, where he soon demonstrated his talents as an unparalleled tactician and quickly annexed the region.⁷ Sima Yi returned to the capital credited with an important military success. This served him well in the political sphere,⁸ and was further cited by his successors, as witnessed in Jin liturgical chants that were entirely consecrated to that victory.⁹

The successes, even if exaggerated by the family or emphasized by later historians to paper over Sima failures, show that Sima Yi was in the first rank of military leaders. Though he came to hold high positions at the court, he was better known for his abilities as a general. It is high military ranks that dominate his record, titles often given ad hoc during campaigns: he was named Senior General of the Pacification Army (*fujun dajiangjun*) in 226, Senior General (*da jiangjun*) in 230, commander charged with the military affairs (*dudu zhu junshi*) of Yongzhou and of Liangzhou in 231, and Defender in Chief (*taiwei*) in 235.

At the same time, during his career, Sima Yi ultimately made himself indispensable to the Wei court. He became an intimate of Cao Pi (187–226) even before Cao came to be emperor. When he did ascend to the throne in 220 (to be known posthumously as Emperor Wen, r. 220–226), Sima Yi was given such high positions at the court as Vice Director on the Right of the Department of the State Affairs (*shangshu youpu*). But more important than the title itself, when Cao Pi was dying in 226, he chose Sima Yi to serve as one of four regents for his son, Cao Rui (205–239, r. 226–239), posthumously Emperor Ming, who would reign for less than fifteen years.¹⁰ Appointment as imperial regent is evidence of the high level of influence that Sima Yi held at the Wei court.¹¹

In addition, during the first half of the third century, the Sima family under the guidance of Sima Yi gradually enhanced its position through numerous marriage alliances with the elite of the era, in this way achieving greater distinction.¹² By drawing near to such important families as the Xun of Yingchuan or the Wang of Donghai that had undergone the imperial proscriptions at the end of the Later Han, Sima Yi and his successors built themselves a reservoir of important and powerful relationships, and were able thus to rise to the ranks of these elite families. Being considered by them as both social and cultural equals would facilitate the eventual Sima access to dominance.

⁷ Wang Jinlu, "Sima Yi gongke Liaodong," *Shehui kexue jikan* 1992.6, pp. 83–84.

⁸ Wang Xiaoyi, *Ru, Shi, Dao yu Wei Jin Xuanxue xingcheng* (Beijing, 2003), p. 138.

⁹ See the song "Zheng Liaodong" (Campaign against Liaodong), in *JS* 23.704. ¹⁰ *SGZ* 2.86.

¹¹ *SGZ* 3.114.

¹² For the matrimonial unions of the Sima with other great clans in the period, see Damien Chaussende, *Des Trois Royaumes aux Jin: Légitimation du pouvoir impérial en Chine au IIIe siècle* (Paris, 2010), 128–147.

In 230, Emperor Ming had issued a decree with the goal of ridding the court of what were considered to be “undesirable” elements. The key term applied to these “undesirables” was *fubua*, which literally means “floating flower” and had the meaning of ornamentation, or frivolity, in opposition to something substantial.¹³ The dismissals had only a relatively brief consequence because radical change came after the death of Emperor Ming in 239.

On his deathbed,¹⁴ as regents for his adopted son and successor, Cao Fang,¹⁵ Prince of Qi (232–274, r. 239–254), an eight-year-old (*sui*) boy, Emperor Ming turned to men who had served years before as his own regents, Sima Yi and Cao Shuang. These two men were so different that it is difficult to understand the emperor’s intentions. The first, Cao Shuang,¹⁶ who favored the so-called “superficial ones,” was the son of Cao Zhen (d. 231),¹⁷ an orphaned clansman brought up by Cao Cao, and whose martial exploits were highly regarded. The second, Sima Yi,¹⁸ was viewed as a great and wise general, sixty years of age, a person of much prestige as he had just returned from his victorious and bloody campaign in Liaodong after having put to an end the secession of the Gongsun.

Cao Shuang quickly exercised his own power and acted as a veritable *maire du palais*. He quickly made the attempt to take over the armies by naming his two brothers, Cao Xi (d. 249) and Cao Xun (d. 249), Capital Commandant (*zhonglingjun*) and General of the Militant Guard (*wuwei jiangjun*), two key positions. At the same time, he put his partisans into government, many of whom had been dismissed from office in the 230s. For example, the philosopher He Yan (190–249), as well as Ding Mi and others, were reintegrated into the court and presented in the historical sources as the ideologues and close confidants of Cao Shuang. It was they who, with Cao Shuang as their protector, forced Sima Yi into retirement, arguing that he presented a danger.¹⁹ Sima Yi was thus named Grand Mentor (*taifu*), a prestigious, but solely honorific, title that had no actual decision-making power in courtly affairs.²⁰

Cao Shuang and his faction remained in power for about a decade in the Zhengshi era (240–248), a period known for its literature and philosophy that stemmed from relative intellectual liberty.²¹ The immediate cause of Sima Yi’s *coup d’état* was Cao Shuang forcing the Dowager Empress Guo, wife of Emperor Ming, into forced retirement, but the reality was much more

¹³ SGZ 3.97. ¹⁴ SGZ 3.114. ¹⁵ Cao Fang’s precise parental line is unknown.

¹⁶ His biography is in SGZ 9.282. ¹⁷ His biography is in SGZ 9.280.

¹⁸ On Sima Yi in the Cao court from an ideological stance, see Wang Xiaoyi, *Ru, Shi, Dao*, pp. 127–148.

¹⁹ SGZ 9.284. ²⁰ SGZ 9.282.

²¹ See Xu Bin, *Wei Jin xuanxue xinlun* (Shanghai, 2000), pp. 92–168; Kong Fan, *Wei Jin xuantan* (Shenyang, 1991, reprint 1995), pp. 29–60.

complicated.²² In the face of the increasing gains made by his adversary, Sima Yi faked a grave illness—he was almost seventy years old by this time—and allayed the fears of his adversaries. He unleashed his *coup d'état* while the Prince of Qi, only sixteen or seventeen years old, and accompanied by Cao Shuang and Cao's brothers, attended a ceremony at Emperor Ming's tomb outside the capital.²³

The events developed rather quickly: there were only four days between the visit to the tomb on February 5, 249,²⁴ and the execution of Cao Shuang, He Yan, and others.²⁵ According to the sources, while the emperor and his party were at the tomb, Sima Yi, in the name of the dowager empress (who held legitimate claim, given the youth of the emperor), had the city gates closed and held by his armed men. He then sent a message to the emperor that detailed the crimes of Cao Shuang and his partisans. The message was intercepted by Cao Shuang, who sequestered the emperor behind a barricade. Sima Yi sent emissaries to convince Cao Shuang to surrender, with assurances that he would live. In the end, Cao Shuang escorted the emperor to his palace, was stripped of his office, and returned to his apartments. On February 9, an underling serving as a messenger between the emperor and Cao Shuang was interrogated and revealed that Shuang and his partisans were plotting to restore themselves to control. Cao Shuang and his two brothers, as well as He Yan, Ding Mi, and others, were condemned to death for high treason (*da ni bu dao* 大逆不道), and then executed.²⁶ As recounted in the *Jinshu*, the *coup d'état* was carried out amidst much bloodshed; "When [Sima Yi] executed Cao Shuang, the latter's accomplices were exterminated to the third generation. There was no distinction made for sex or age, killing all the aunts, sisters and children, even those married to others."²⁷

Sima Yi's understanding of politics, together with this being a case of a *coup d'état*, made it necessary for him to legitimize these acts of violence. This consisted basically of proclaiming himself to be the defender of an endangered emperor and presenting his adversaries as traitors; in fact, of course, he had only seized the power that had been assumed by his rival. In this whole affair, the emperor of the Wei, the young Prince of Qi, was nothing more than a simple symbol of legitimacy, as had been the case of the last ruler of the Han in the turmoil of the last years of that dynasty.

²² The event is recorded in ZZTJ 75.2370, but a note by Hu Sanxing (1230–1302) says this was a clumsy change in the original texts by Jin supporters seeking to cast Cao Shuang in an abusive light.

²³ The tomb is the Gaopingling located by the Luo river slightly south of Luoyang. ²⁴ SGZ 4.123.

²⁵ For a precise recital of the events, see ZZTJ 75.2375; and the translation by Achilles Fang, *The chronicle of the Three Kingdoms (220–265): Chapters 69–78 from the Tzu chih t'ung chien of Sima Kuang* (Cambridge, MA, 1952–1965), pp. 31–43.

²⁶ SGZ 9.288. ²⁷ JS 1.20.

From 249, the year of the coup, until the official foundation of the Jin dynasty at the beginning of 266, three Sima succeeded to lead the Wei: Sima Yi, until 251, his eldest son Sima Shi (208–255) from 251 to 255, and then another son, Sima Zhao (211–265). During this sixteen-year period, the Sima successfully faced a series of internal challenges to their control of the state; each in turn was not only overcome, but also used to augment the prestige of the regime, for the Sima claimed they were acting to defend a throne in mortal danger. Titles were liberally awarded to gain support in this show of their pretended loyalty to the Wei. The accelerated presentation of titles ended in 263, a sign of an impending development. Sima Zhao began to take the first steps toward seizing the throne for himself. The ritual procedure for a dynastic change then began.²⁸

Certain of victory over the Shu state, Sima Zhao in 260 had taken the title of State Chancellor (*xiangguo*) and was named Duke of Jin. In 263 he agreed to be the recipient of the Nine Distinctions,²⁹ and in 264 his title was raised to that of Prince, thus following in the orchestrated footsteps used by Cao Cao to initiate his new dynasty, based on practices dating back to Wang Mang. As Chancellor, Sima Zhao initiated an important reform of noble titles that then might be given as favors to his followers, some of whom had already claimed official positions in the princely court of the Jin. Death brought to a halt his progress toward taking the title of emperor. It was his son Sima Yan (236–290) who received the abdication of the last Wei emperor, thus transmitting imperial power to the Sima.

THE REIGN OF EMPEROR WU (266–290)

The investiture in 266 of Sima Yan, to be known posthumously as Emperor Wu, continued the same pattern as that which his father Sima Zhao was following but which had been cut short by his death.³⁰ The three stages of this coronation corresponded to three official reports:³¹

²⁸ See Chapter 3 on the Shu by J. Michael Farmer in this volume. See also the detailed account in Carl Leban, "The accession of Sima Yan, AD 265: Legitimation by ritual replication," *EMC* 16 (2010), pp. 1–50.

²⁹ Chauncey S. Goodrich, "The nine bestowals during the Han–Wei period: A study of a ritual donation as a prelude to dynastic change" (PhD dissertation, University of California, 1957). On these Jin events, see *JS* 2.37–44. These were special honors such as being allowed to ride a horse in the palace precincts and bearing weapons at court.

³⁰ See Howard L. Goodman, *Ts'ao P'i transcendent: The political culture of dynasty-founding in China at the end of the Han* (Seattle, 1998).

³¹ The analysis and translation of these texts come from Chaussende, *Des Trois royaumes aux Jin*.

- 1 The first stage was the abdication of the last Wei ruler, Emperor Yuan (Cao Huan, 258–302, r. 260–266), who turned over all powers to his successor through an imperial conferral (*ce*), which was equivalent to the act of abdication.³²
- 2 The second stage contained a sacrifice to Heaven made by Sima Yan, who, through a proclamation (*gao*) to Shangdi, the supreme deity, accepted the mandate that he had been given.³³
- 3 The third stage was a decree issued at the imperial ancestral temple, announcing the new enfeoffment of the former Wei emperor, the upgraded posthumous titles of Jin ancestors, and the new titles of living relatives and close associates. Finally, a new reign title was announced, officially inaugurating the new dynasty.³⁴

That imperial conferral from the last Wei emperor, in the manner of the ancient Yao ceding his throne to Shun, affirmed that he was following the will of Heaven. A few weeks later, on February 8, 266, the new emperor's consecration took place with a sacrifice to Heaven. Sima Yan thus became emperor while protesting aloud that he was accepting the title in spite of himself and only from a desire to obey Heaven's Mandate. He clearly projected himself as a new Shun, the illustrious successor to Yao.

Adherence to these hallowed rites did not mean that the Jin was definitively established and legitimated. Such status was to be gained by numerous events during Emperor Wu's reign (266–290) that established the Jin in a more substantive manner. The territorial expansion from the conquest of Shu in the year 263–264 was a significant one, but there were also other measures taken before and after that were meant to stabilize the new state.³⁵

- 1 The distribution of numerous principalities to members of the Sima clan, accompanied by a reform of the system of noble titles;
- 2 the *Jin Code of Law* (*Jin li*) which, promulgated in 267, continued in effect in the later Southern Dynasties and inspired the Tang code;³⁶
- 3 the demobilization of regional armies, which followed the annexation of Wu, the last of the Three Kingdoms;

³² JS 3.50. ³³ JS 3.50–51.

³⁴ JS 3.51–52. On his abdication, Cao Mao was named Prince of Chenliu, and at his death in 302, he received the posthumous title of Emperor Yuan; see SGZ 4.154, n.

³⁵ See, among other general works, that by Zheng Xin, "Xi Jin de lishi diwei," in *idem*, *Wei Jin Nanbeichao shi tansuo* (Jinan, 1989), pp. 55–62.

³⁶ See Benjamin Wallacker, "Chang Fei's preface to the Chin code of law," TP 72.4–5 (1986), pp. 229–268; and Étienne Balazs, *Le traité juridique du "Soueï-chou"* (Leiden, 1954), pp. 18–21.

- 4 the laws of land registration (*zhantian*) and of allocation (*ketian*), intended to limit and encircle the agricultural land owned by notables.³⁷

These four large accomplishments of Emperor Wu share a common character; that is, breaking with the prior period. Not only did this ruler found the Jin, with all that concerned state rituals and the official cult, but he also imposed a new regime by giving it a specific identity.³⁸

The reforms began with the birth of the dynasty, sometimes in a direct line with measures taken earlier by Sima Zhao. Aside from the continuation of the reform of noble titles,³⁹ and the grant of fiefs to members of the imperial clan, Emperor Wu very rapidly had work begun on a new penal code; on a new ritual code, which had been ordered drawn up by his father; and on a series of detailed measures, such as those proscribing the imperial Liu clan of the Han and the Cao princes as well, and calling into question the military colonies, one of the economic bases of the Wei. Other measures, of varying importance, were also laid down by Emperor Wu in a spirit of change.

The Jin Code, also called the Taishi Code (*Taishi liü*) has not come down to us in its complete form. What we know comes mostly from the juridical chapter of the *Jinshu*.⁴⁰ Sima Zhao, father of Emperor Wu, by late summer 264,⁴¹ had a number of his supporters, supervised by Jia Chong (217–282), revise the whole of the Wei code, which had already been modified during the Sima Shi regency. The reason given was that the code, dating back to the Han, was too cumbersome.⁴² Certain laws had fallen into disuse, others, notably the collective punishments, were too harsh. The justification for the revision tended strongly to devalue some of the code in order to prioritize the work achieved under the auspices of Sima Zhao. A line in the legal chapter of the *Jinshu* is revelatory of this attitude: “We will get rid of the severe and bad [laws] and preserve those that are simple and measured.”⁴³ The code was not

³⁷ See Lien-sheng Yang, “Notes on the economic history of the Chin dynasty,” *HJAS* 9.2 (1946), pp. 107–185; and Rafe de Crespigny, “The Three Kingdoms and Western Jin: A history of China in the third century AD,” *EAH* 2 (1991), pp. 146–148.

³⁸ A general look at the reforms engaged in by the Sima is given in Zheng Xin, “Simashi jituan de gaige zhengce,” *Shandong daxue xuebao* (*zhixue shehui kexue ban*) 1996.3, pp. 8–12. See also Tao Xisheng, “Sanguo fenli yu Jin zhi tongyi,” *Shibao yuekan* 1974.4–5, pp. 159–191.

³⁹ In 264, Sima Zhao re-established the five ancient noble ranks (*gong* 公, *bou* 侯, *bo* 伯, *zi* 子, *nan* 男) in order to supplement the reserve of available titles to use to thank his faction. On this occasion, more than 600 titles were conferred. See Chaussende, *Des Trois royaumes aux Jin*, pp. 283–288.

⁴⁰ *JS* 30.915–942. See also the partial reconstitution of this code in Cheng Shude, *Jinchao liü kao* (Taipei, 1965), 3.221–300. A recently excavated tomb dated to the beginning of the fifth century contained a coffin, the cover of which bears a section of the Jin Code, with commentary by Zhang Pei; see Li Xueqin and Xie Guihua, eds., *Jianbo yanjiu* (Guilin, 2005), pp. 324–325; *Zhongguo kaoguxue huibian*, *Zhongguo kaoguxue nianjian* 2003 (Beijing, 2004), pp. 357–358.

⁴¹ *JS* 2.44. ⁴² *JS* 30.917. ⁴³ *JS* 30.927.

promulgated by Sima Zhao, but three years later in 267 by Emperor Wu, who simultaneously published a similar decree to devalue the old in favor of the new work.⁴⁴ At the same time that the renovated penal code was being drawn up, Sima Zhao charged others of his supporters, under the direction of Xun Yi (d. 274), to create a new ritual code,⁴⁵ completed in 269. The three chapters on rites in the *Jinshu* cite numerous changes contained in the “new rites” (*xinli*), too many to enumerate here.⁴⁶

If the reforms to the penal and ritual codes, or at least to a certain number of rituals and methods of worship, seem to be relatively general measures mostly in the area of organization, Emperor Wu was equally concerned with more detailed changes, such as the lifting of old proscriptions. He is quoted in the *Jinshu* as saying, “The old enmities are to be forgotten and the ban on access to official positions will be terminated. Those who have had their noble titles or official posts rescinded will have them restored.”⁴⁷

The greatest success enjoyed by Emperor Wu was, without a doubt, the conquest in 280 of Wu, the last of the Three Kingdoms, an achievement that marked the reunification of territory fragmented for over fifty years. When Shu had been conquered in the winter of 263–264, only Wu remained the northern state’s major enemy. It happened that after Shu fell, Wu had had a serious succession crisis, and a heavy attack by the Jin might have been a fatal blow, given the weakness of the central command of the Wu forces. Their ministers quickly chose a successor to Sun Xiu (235–264, r. 258–264) who had just died. Their choice fell to a young Sun Hao (242–283, r. 264–280), presented in the sources as a cruel and stubborn autocrat.⁴⁸ His excesses weakened his kingdom, especially during the years 273–274 and in 276, as he celebrated the two *feng* and *shan* sacrifices, both in an exceptionally extravagant manner that seems to suggest that he was suffering from extreme hubris.⁴⁹ The reason why Jin’s conquest did not follow immediately on its victory over Shu was probably due less to Wu’s strength—it was clearly not as stable as its northern adversary—than to reasons of Jin’s choosing. When Emperor Wu took the throne in 265, his dynasty controlled a territory larger than that ruled by Sun Hao. The population is estimated at double that of the Wu state.⁵⁰ The size of Jin’s armies similarly was larger than that of Wu: the state could theoretically

⁴⁴ JS 40.1167. ⁴⁵ SGZ 21.604, n. 1; JS 19.581. ⁴⁶ JS, *juan* 19–21. ⁴⁷ JS 3.51.

⁴⁸ Sun Hao’s biography can be found in SGZ 48.1162–1178. For a timeline of his reign, see Hans Bielenstein, “The Six Dynasties, Volume 1,” *BMFEA* 68 (1996), pp. 40–46.

⁴⁹ Hans Bielenstein, “The Six Dynasties, Volume 1,” p. 43.

⁵⁰ On the Jin conquest of Wu, see Zhongguo gudai zhanzheng zhanli xuanbian bianxiezhu, *Zhongguo gudai zhanzheng zhanli xuanbian*, 3 vols. (Beijing, 1981–1984), Volume 2, pp. 101–421; John Killigrew, “The reunification of China in AD 280: Jin’s conquest of Eastern Wu,” *EMC* 9 (2003), pp. 1–34; Zhang Jinlong, “Jin mie Wu zhanzheng de juece tanyin,” *Beijing shifan daxue xuebao (shehui kexue ban)* 1998.3, pp. 52–57.

mobilize 500,000 soldiers to the Wu's 230,000. Within a few years, Sun Hao's ruthlessness cost him his best generals. Sun Xiu, charged with guarding the city of Xiakou (now the city of Wuhan in Hubei), a strategic location on the Yangzi river, defected to the Jin in 270.⁵¹ Bu Chan (d. 272), also based on the Yangzi river at Xiling (near today's Yichang), in surrendering the city to the Jin in 272 precipitated a battle in which the Wu armies were victorious, but greatly weakened.⁵² To their strategic advantage, the Jin controlled the upper Yangzi river, as Sima Zhao had remarked in 263: "Now we ought first to seize Shu; then in three years, using the advantage of following the flow [downstream] from Ba-Shu, we will advance by both water and land."⁵³ Sima Zhao would thus have seemed to believe that Wu would be conquered within three years of the conquest of Shu. Emperor Wu, instead, waited fifteen years to begin his military campaign, the following four reasons no doubt being important considerations.⁵⁴

- 1 The Jin dynasty had to consolidate its power. It would have been politically dangerous to launch a campaign against Wu too early.
- 2 Economically, the Jin were still relatively weak, as Emperor Wu himself admitted in a proclamation in 266, in which he stated, "The government stores have not become large."⁵⁵
- 3 The Jin strategic position on the upper Yangzi was only gained over time because the integration of the former Shu state was a gradual one.⁵⁶
- 4 The Jin had to deal with incursions from the Xianbei and Xiongnu in the North and Northwest, led by their respective chiefs Shujineng (d. 280) and Liu Meng (d. 272).

These constraints slowed the decision to take on a major war, but the idea was still at the forefront of people's minds, particularly that of Emperor Wu. A number of ministers proposed to launch it many times, but those opposed offered convincing arguments against such a move. The conquest of Wu is basically attached to the name of Yang Hu (221–278), the foremost promoter of a decisive campaign, whose biography offers much information on the hesitations of the ruler and the pressure brought to bear by those who wished to avoid the campaign.⁵⁷ Their resistance so delayed the onset of hostilities that Yang Hu died before the campaign was concluded.

By 269, in line with his desire to end the Wu state, Emperor Wu had named Yang Hu area commander charged with the military affairs of

⁵¹ *JS* 1.60. ⁵² *JS* 1.62. ⁵³ *JS* 2.38. ⁵⁴ Zhang Jinlong, "Jin mie Wu," pp. 52–53.

⁵⁵ *JS* 26.786, translated in Yang, "Notes on the economic history of the Chin dynasty," 158.

⁵⁶ The Jin seem to have otherwise distanced themselves from the former Shu elites; see Wang Yongping, "Ru Jin zhi Shu Han renshi mingyun de fuchen," *Shixue yuekan*, 2003.2, pp. 24–29.

⁵⁷ *JS* 34.1013–1025.

Table 4.1 *The six military fronts of the conquest of the Wu Kingdom. From John W. Killigrew, "The reunification of China in AD 280," EMC 9 (2003), p. 25*

Fronts	Name(s) of the commander(s)	Notes on the adopted strategy
1	Du Yu (222–284)	Attacks Jiangling from Xiangyang
2	Hu Fen (d. 288)	Attacks Xiakou
3	Wang Rong (234–305)	Attacks Wuchang
4	Wang Hun (223–297)	Attacks the lower Yangzi from Hefei
5	Sima Zhou (227–283)	Attacks Tuzhong
6	Wang Jun (206–286), aided by Tang Bin (234–294)	Descends to the Yangzi from Jianping

Jingzhou.⁵⁸ Because Jingzhou was located in the middle of the Yangzi river basin, this gave Yang de facto control of the armies in any attack to the south. The general idea, as Sima Zhao had said, was to invade Wu by moving down the Yangzi, but also by frontal attacks along the banks of that river. It was not long before war came. In 276, Yang Hu sent a letter to Emperor Wu asking him for an immediate decision to launch an attack, for as he said, "When the Shu state fell, everyone said that Wu ought also to be vanquished; since then, thirteen years have passed, or, in other words, a complete cycle. Now is the time to bring the pacification to a close."⁵⁹ The court officials argued instead for war against the Xianbei Shujineng in the northwest to counter Yang Hu's insistence and to delay any attack on Wu. But in 279, a month before the final defeat of Shujineng, armies were finally sent south against Wu.⁶⁰

The attack came on six different fronts, five by land and one by river. The objective was to break the resistance that Sun Hao had posted along the Yangzi and to overwhelm his armies under a wave of 200,000 soldiers. Table 4.1 synthesizes the strategy and its development along these six fronts.⁶¹

In 280, after a year of fighting, Jianye (modern Nanjing), the capital of the Wu state, came under siege; it quickly fell and Sun Hao, its ruler, capitulated. The surrender on May 1, 280, marked the reunification of the empire.⁶²

The annexation of the Wu state was followed by two far-reaching reforms, one concerning the distribution of land, and the other concerning the armies. Emperor Wu proclaimed a law for land registration and land allocation termed the *zhantian* (landowning) system. The terms of the allocation are described in

⁵⁸ ZZTJ 79.2509. ⁵⁹ JS 34.1018. ⁶⁰ Following the dates in ZZTJ 80.2558–2559.

⁶¹ ZZTJ 80.2558; Zhongguo gudai zhanzheng zhanli xuanbian bianxiezhu, 2, pp. 110–121; Killigrew, "The reunification of China in AD 280."

⁶² JS 3.71.

the monograph on economics in the *Jinsbu*. Amounts of land to be tilled were distributed according to categories of age and gender, with stipulations concerning the taxes involved. Orchards and land devoted to housing were retained but the fields were returned to the state when tillers reached retirement. Aside from a general sense of the system, the actual implementation of the law remains somewhat unclear.⁶³

Land was distributed also to titled functionaries according to both deed and rank, ranging from ten *qing* (or 100 *mu*) to fifty *qing* (or 500 *mu*) of land.⁶⁴ These amounts are in contrast to the fifty *mu* to which the ordinary male farmer was entitled. Functionaries could have the land worked through tenants, and this empowered them to become entrenched landlords. As such it was possible that these functionaries could thus become a danger to the dynasty through their possession of both financial and administrative power.

The second emphasis of Emperor Wu's reform program was to reshape the military. The changes that were applied after the conquest of the Wu Kingdom are relatively undocumented so it is difficult to understand either the precise weight of the decisions taken by the emperor or their actual application.⁶⁵ The *Jinsbu* has only a few allusions to these measures, in the imperial annals⁶⁶ and in two biographies,⁶⁷ without giving any details. According to the text of an imperial memorial said to have been issued at this time, Emperor Wu recalled that during the period of disunion since the Han, the prefects (*cishi*)—that is, governors—took on the local administration but also commanded troops for action beyond their jurisdictions. Now that unity had been restored, it was time, in his opinion, to disband these local military forces.⁶⁸

It seems that this measure consisted of both a demobilization of certain army corps and a new redistribution of military power, in that the provincial governors were stripped of their military prerogatives. One trace of opposition to this reform can be found in the biography of Tao Huang, governor of Jiaozhou Province, far from the capital, corresponding to modern southern

⁶³ JS 26.790; Yang, "Notes on the economic history of the Chin dynasty," p. 167. For a more detailed description of the land policies at this time, see Chapter 14, "The Northern Economy," in this volume.

⁶⁴ Yang, "Notes on the economic history of the Chin dynasty," p. 168. A *mu* at this period was approximately 0.12 acre.

⁶⁵ A detailed study of the question can be found in Gao Min, *Wei Jin Nanbeichao bingzhi yanjiu* (Zhengzhou, 1998), pp. 155–169; see also Tang Changru, "Wei Jin zhoujunbing de shezhi he feiba," in *idem*, *Wei Jin Nanbeichao shi lun shiyi* (Beijing, 1983), pp. 141–150.

⁶⁶ JS 3.73. ⁶⁷ JS 43.1227, 57.1560.

⁶⁸ The memorial, given at length, is in the commentary to the *HHS* by Liu Zhao (fl. 510), see *HHS* 28.3620; it is summarized in *ZZTJ* 81.2575.

Guangxi and northern Vietnam. He sent a memorandum to the throne expressing his unhappiness with the military reforms:

I initially had under my command 7,000 soldiers, but with the humid climate of the southern lands, and due to its poisonous air and the military campaigns over a number of years, many are dead. I only have 2,400 men left. At present, the country is unified, and none think but to submit. Now [it is said that] we should fold away our armor and eliminate our arms, and rituals and music will be the order of the day. But among the subjects of my province, those who have a sense of what is right are few. They have an aversion to peace and relish provoking disorder . . . Only some five thousand families have ceded to my administration. The two provinces [Jiaozhou and Guangzhou] are interdependent, and only the force of an army can defend them . . . This is not the time to reduce regional armies; this will only allow our weakness to show. The misfortunes of war come to those who do not expect it.⁶⁹

Tao Huang believed that his region, bordered by bellicose populations, needed to be able to defend itself. His text attests to the proposal to reduce locally commanded military forces. The military reorganization that Emperor Wu apparently promoted had two results already stated: first, the provincial governors lost their own military forces; and secondly, the territories under their control saw their defenses drastically reduced.

While this reform emptied the countryside of its regional armies, it seems that the Sima princes were untouched by the law. Since the establishment of the Jin, Emperor Wu, in effect, had distributed numerous fiefs amongst the oldest members of his clan, fiefs that had princely armies at their disposal.⁷⁰ His intention was to draw on what he considered to be the better of the two traditional military structures: the feudal system in place of a centralized imperial system (commanderies and districts). He hoped to avoid what had caused the fall of the Wei: in his opinion, the Caos found themselves too isolated because they had forgotten their own clan.⁷¹ They preferred to place their confidence in outsiders (in some cases, the Sima) rather than in their own family members. In creating principalities with armies, territories that would be inherited, Emperor Wu had the ambition to develop particularly stable zones throughout the empire, removed from the problems rife in imperial systems: corrupt and autocratic functionaries. And so during his reign he placed enormous military responsibilities on the Sima princes by naming some

⁶⁹ JS 57.1560–1561.

⁷⁰ The administrative distribution of fiefs is analyzed in Chaussende, *Des Trois Royaumes aux Jin*, pp. 311–334.

⁷¹ According to Sima Guang, “Emperor Wu, taking note of the mistake by the Wei of isolating themselves, enfeoffed numerous members of the family as well as appointing them to official positions. There was also a memorial that the various princes were to select on their own the senior officials within their states.” ZZZJ 79.2493.

of them generals and others area commanders (*dudu*), an even more elevated position that controlled one or more provinces.

Economically, the ten-year period that followed territorial unification was a relatively prosperous one. Politically, nothing disturbed the running of the state. But Emperor Wu left an explosive situation to his son and successor Sima Zhong, known posthumously as Emperor Hui. The general situation was declining, principally due to the serious crisis known as the Disturbances of the Eight Princes (*bawang zhi luan*).

THE DISTURBANCES OF THE EIGHT PRINCES AND THE FALL
OF THE WESTERN JIN

The Disturbances of the Eight Princes were an almost direct consequence of the distribution of fiefs that Emperor Wu gave to members of the imperial family, and of rivalries between the Sima and its allied families.⁷² These wars led directly to the Jin loss of the North to non-Han forces.

The table shows the eight princes in question as well as their fiefs and family relationships.

As a part of the imperial family, each of the princes pretended to power. Their fiefs were located across the empire and literally encircled the capital at Luoyang: Sima Liang was in today's Henan, Sima Wei in Jiangsu, Sima Lun

Table 4.2 *The Eight Princes*

Name	Fief	Family Tie
Sima Liang (d. 291)	Prince of Runan	Son of Sima Yi
Sima Wei (271–291)	Prince of Chu	Son of Emperor Wu
Sima Lun (d. 301)	Prince of Zhao	Son of Sima Yi
Sima Jiong (d. 302)	Prince of Qi	Nephew of Emperor Wu
Sima Yi (277–304)	Prince of Changsha	Son of Emperor Wu
Sima Ying (279–306)	Prince of Chengdu	Son of Emperor Wu
Sima Yong (d. 307)	Prince of Hejian	Grandson of a brother of Sima Yi
Sima Yue (d. 311)	Prince of Donghai	Grandson of a brother of Sima Yi

⁷² For a detailed account of this complicated crisis, see Edward D. Dreyer, “Military aspects of the War of the Eight Princes,” in *Military culture in imperial China*, ed. Nicola Di Cosmo (Cambridge, MA, 2009), pp. 112–142. The causes of this crisis have led to an abundant Chinese literature; see the synthetic article by Jing Youquan and Li Chunxiang, “Xi Jin ‘ba wang zhi luan’ baofa yuanyin yanjiu shuyao,” *Zhongguo shi yanjiu dongtai* 1997.5, pp. 6–9.

and Sima Yong in Hebei, Sima Jiong and Sima Yue in Shandong, Sima Yi in Hunan, and Sima Ying in Sichuan.

The crisis began in 290, the year Emperor Wu died; it was triggered by Jia Nanfeng (d. 300), Emperor Hui's consort. In effect, as soon as the heir, described as mentally unstable in the sources, became emperor, Yang Jun (d. 291), father of the dowager empress, became regent and attracted the jealousy of the Jia clan. Jia Nanfeng first assassinated Yang Jun and then called Sima Liang to the court. Next, she turned on him and had him assassinated by Sima Wei, whom she had executed soon after. After this there was a lull, and for a decade (291–300) Empress Jia reigned in her husband's name. The empire remained in relative peace; only an insurrection by Qi Wannian, a Qiang tribesman, disturbed the calm. He proclaimed himself emperor and provoked uprisings in Qinzhou and Yongzhou Provinces (296–299), but the imperial troops were able to put down these rebellions.

The Disturbances of the Eight Princes resumed later at a higher level of intensity; from 301 to 307 there was a cascade of assassinations, power grabs, and counterattacks. The scenario was always the same: as soon as one prince succeeded in taking power, the others formed a coalition against him and did all they could to bring him down. As soon as that goal was attained, the coalition broke apart. Sima Jiong dominated from 301 to 303, Sima Yi lasted the winter of 303–304, and Sima Ying in 304–305. Lastly, in 306, Sima Yue took control and moved to the capital at Luoyang to be better able to keep Emperor Hui in thrall. During the whole period the emperor was held as a prisoner numerous times because legitimacy still rested in him. But at the beginning of 307, Sima Yue had Emperor Hui poisoned and placed one of the sons of Emperor Wu, Sima Chi (284–313, r. 306–311), on the throne; he would be known posthumously as Emperor Huai. The peace was short-lived: in 311, Luoyang fell to Liu Yao, a Xiongnu, to Shi Le (274–333), a Jie, and to other non-Han generals, who sacked the city and captured the emperor, who died in captivity two years later. In Chang'an, now a nearly abandoned city, the last ruler, Sima Ye (Emperor Min, 300–318, r. 313–316), Emperor Huai's nephew, came to the fragile Jin throne. He was, in his turn, captured by Liu Yao when Chang'an fell in 316. The emperor was killed two years later by Liu Cong (d. 318), on February 7, 318.⁷³ In the South, Sima Rui (276–323, r. 317–323), a great-grandson of Sima Yi, was in command of Jiankang (until 313 named Jianye, the modern Nanjing). He had taken the title Prince of Jin after Emperor Min had been dethroned in April 317,⁷⁴ and learning of the death of that emperor on April 23, 318,⁷⁵ he claimed the title of emperor of

⁷³ *JS* 5.132.

⁷⁴ *JS* 6.145.

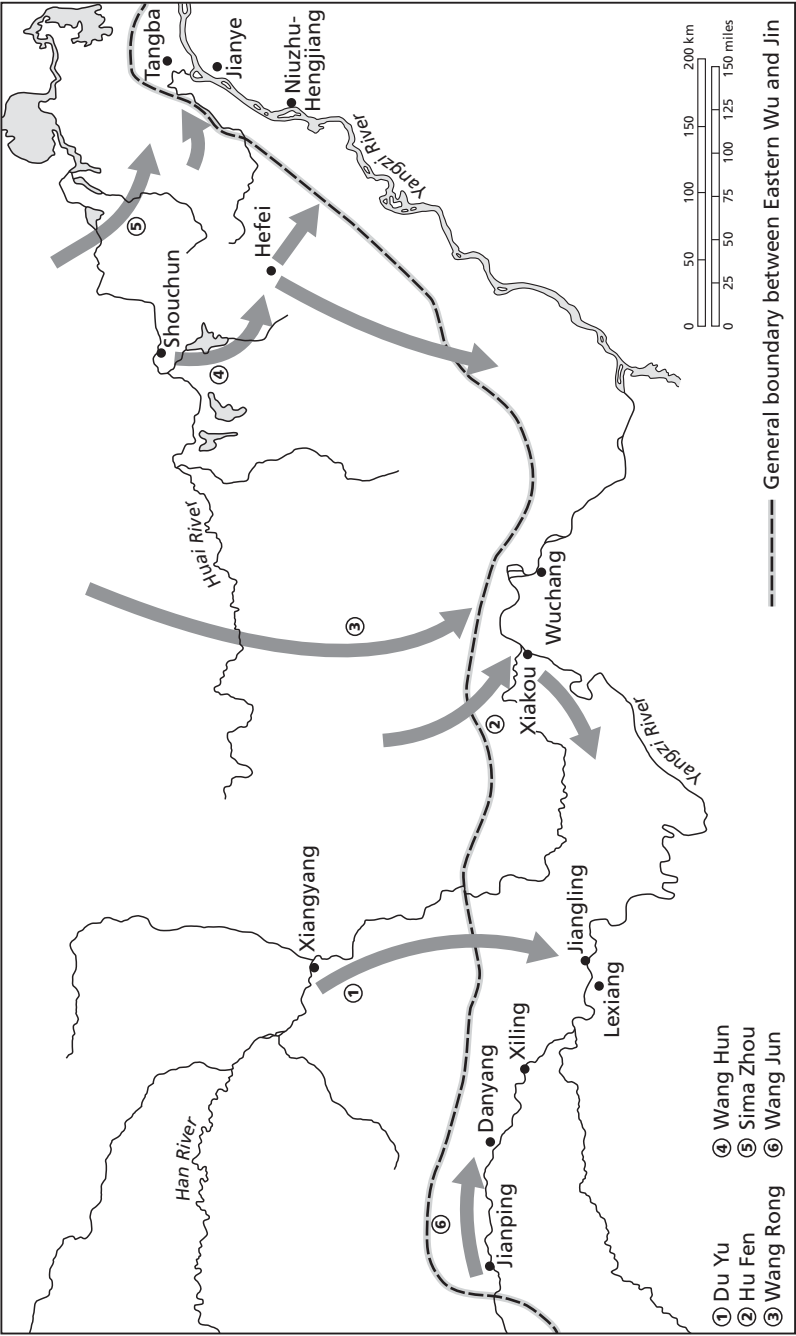
⁷⁵ *JS* 6.149.

the Jin on the 26th, to be known posthumously as Emperor Yuan.⁷⁶ This began the period of the Eastern Jin.

The overview of the Western Jin is one of contrasts. On the one hand, during the entire period from the fall of the Han to the Sui, the Jin was the only dynasty that was able to unify the whole of China. That unification undertaken by Emperor Wu had much symbolic value over the centuries and was given special attention by later historians. It is a rare historian who would deny Jin the legitimacy it had thus created.⁷⁷ Even so, this unification was very short, and did not long outlast its fashioner. Emperor Wu did not anticipate the problems posed by the non-Han at the frontiers of the empire despite being surrounded on almost all sides by them. Finally, the Sima princes had in their hands large competing military forces that they would employ less for the defense of the country than for their own selfish ambitions. At Emperor Wu's death in 290, the dynasty was already destined to a certain end, accelerated as it was by the disastrous Disturbances of the Eight Princes. The irony is that in attempting to avoid the pitfall of the preceding Wei state, Emperor Wu sealed the fate of his own.

⁷⁶ *JS* 6.149.

⁷⁷ An exception is discussed by Andrew Chittick, "Dynastic legitimacy during the Eastern Chin: Hsi Tso-ch'ih and the problem of Huan Wen," *AM*, 3rd series 11.1 (1998), pp. 21–52.



Map 4.1 The conquest of Wu by the Jin. From Killigrew, "The reunification of China in AD 280," 25

CHAPTER 5

EASTERN JIN

Charles Holcombe

THE FOUNDING OF THE EASTERN JIN DYNASTY (317–420)

In 311, the Western Jin dynasty capital Luoyang fell to “rebel” forces. In 316, the alternate capital, Chang’an, also fell, and the Western Jin was finished. One sixth-century history claimed, undoubtedly with some exaggeration, that “weeds luxuriated in the deserted fields of China” and half the population had perished.¹ A contemporary lamented that marauding nomads now watered their horses in the Yangzi river, deep in central China.² Amid gathering indications of dynastic doom, in 306, Sima Yue (d. 311), the final victor in the vicious “Disturbances of the Eight Princes” (*bawang zhi luan*), that had been the immediate cause of much of this dynastic collapse, appointed his nephew Sima Rui (276–323) to a garrison command at Xiapei, near the modern city of Xuzhou, toward the south.

Sima Rui was the Prince of Langye (in southeastern Shandong), and a great-grandson of Sima Yi (179–251)—the founding patriarch who had first established the fortunes of the Jin dynasty ruling house of Sima. While one of Sima Yi’s grandsons became the first Western Jin emperor, Sima Rui, however, was not descended from the principal wife of Sima Yi, who gave birth to the line of reigning Western Jin sovereigns, so Sima Rui was at the time a member of a lesser line of the Western Jin imperial family.

In 307, Sima Rui was transferred even further south to what is now Nanjing, and entrusted with command of all military affairs in southeast China.³ The city was then known as Jianye, a name that was changed to Jiankang in 313 to avoid the taboo on the use of the last Western Jin emperor’s personal name (Sima Ye, 300–318, posthumously known as Emperor Min, r. 313–316). This city had been the capital of Three Kingdoms’ Wu in the third century. Although its location on the lower Yangzi river may have previously been less developed than the middle reaches of that river, it lay at

¹ WS 108a.2733, 110.2849.

² JS 69.1848.

³ JS 5.117, 6.144.

the heart of what was rapidly becoming an especially prosperous region.⁴ It was well situated to provide a refuge after the collapse of imperial government in the North.

When news arrived in Jiankang in 317 of Chang'an's fall and the captivity of the last Western Jin emperor, Sima Rui was hailed as Prince of Jin, and urged to organize a final bastion there in defense of the Jin dynasty. When it was learned in the third month of 318 that the last emperor had died, Sima Rui was enthroned as a new Jin emperor (to be posthumously known as Emperor Yuan, r. 318–323). The resulting dynastic discontinuity eventually came to be indicated by referring to the new regime as the Eastern Jin, to distinguish it from the earlier Western Jin period (though both the Western and the Eastern Jin are covered by a single standard dynastic history, the *Jinshu*). The modifying label “Eastern” derives from the fact that its capital was located southeast of the previous Western Jin capitals, in a region that was at the time commonly referred to as “left” (meaning “east,” from a conventional Chinese imperial geographic orientation facing south) of the Yangzi river.⁵

At least theoretically, this Eastern Jin dynasty could be regarded as a legitimate continuation, or restoration, of the Western Jin, but not everyone necessarily recognized its unquestionable legitimacy at the time. For example, the Former Liang (313–376) regime established in modern Gansu by an ethnic Chinese family at least sporadically continued to use the last Western Jin reign periods, rather than those of the Eastern Jin, for dating purposes until as late as 361. Sima Bao (d. 320), a cousin of Sima Rui based in Gansu, also aspired to supreme imperial titles in rivalry to Sima Rui, although he soon perished. Most of the ancient heartland of Chinese civilization in the North, moreover, fell under non-Chinese rule (until 581), and the unfortunate people perched precariously in the no-man's-land between opposing northern and southern regimes sometimes repeatedly shifted their professed allegiances back and forth.⁶

Nevertheless, a number of desperate but determined local northern Chinese leaders did assemble personal followings to resist the armed bands rampaging across north China in the early 300s, and eventually made their way south to join the Eastern Jin. Altogether, perhaps one-eighth of the entire population of north China may have fled south during the fourth century, with the largest

⁴ Liu Shufen, “Jiankang yu Liuchao lishi de fazhan,” in *idem*, *Liuchao de chengshi yu shehui* (Taipei, 1992), pp. 8, 10–12; Yao Dazhong, *Nanfang de fenqi* (Taipei, 1981), pp. 188, 194.

⁵ *JS* 6.144–145, 149. Albert E. Dien, “‘Chiang-yu/Chiang-tso’: Right and left of the Yangtze. A problem in historical geography,” *JAO* 82.3 (1962), pp. 376–383.

⁶ *JS* 6.153, 37.1098–1099, 86.2229–2230, 86.2248–2249; Hans Bielenstein, “The Six Dynasties, Volume 1,” *BMFEA* 68 (1996), pp. 54–55, 74.

number settling in modern Jiangsu.⁷ Presumably, though, this massive exodus was motivated more by a desire to escape the devastation of the North than out of any deep sense of loyalist yearnings to rejoin the house of Jin in exile in the South.

ÉMIGRÉS AND NATIVES

Although Sima family rule over a dynasty called Jin had been preserved, the situation remained desperate, and the new Eastern Jin dynasty initially had to be content with some rather hasty makeshift arrangements. The imperial library had been completely lost and only gradually began to be reassembled; a proper imperial palace was not constructed in Jiankang until the 330s; and the capital city was long surrounded only by a bamboo stockade—not receiving a regular brick city wall until 480.⁸ The Eastern Jin also remained very much a regime in exile, whose refugee leaders had to reach some kind of accommodation with the older southern natives.

Despite the exceptionally large number of émigrés from the North, these new arrivals constituted only about one-sixth of the total southern population.⁹ Significant numbers of non-Chinese aboriginal peoples remained in the region, even though the exotic frontier aspects of the Yangzi basin, by this time, should not be exaggerated. The Yangzi river area had long been at least loosely within the pale of Chinese civilization, and it had been fairly extensively settled by Chinese people during the Han dynasty. By the third century, the so-called “mountain Viets” (Shan Yue) in the Yangzi delta region already included an admixture of ethnic Chinese people, together with remnants of the ancient non-Chinese inhabitants of the area. These Mountain Viets were then fairly aggressively incorporated into the Three Kingdoms’ Wu state and were seldom mentioned afterwards.¹⁰ However, other non-Chinese peoples—generically referred to in Chinese sources as the Man, Lao (or Liao), and Li—remained very numerous in the South and West (and they were sometimes joined by ethnic Chinese who fled amongst them to escape

⁷ Tan Qixiang, “Jin Yongjia sangluan hou zhi minzu qianxi,” in *idem*, *Changshui ji*, Volume 1 (Beijing, 1987), pp. 219–220.

⁸ SS 32.906; Zhang Xuefeng and Fu Jiang, *Dong Jin wenhua* (Nanjing, 2005), p. 115; Mark Edward Lewis, *China between empires: The Northern and Southern Dynasties* (Cambridge, MA, 2009), p. 100; Liu Shufen, *Liuchao shidai de Jiankang* (Taipei, 1982), p. 45.

⁹ Zhou Yiliang, “Nanchao jingnei zhi gezhong ren ji zhengfu duidai zhi zhengce,” in *idem*, *Wei Jin Nanbeichao shi lunji* (Beijing, 1963), p. 39.

¹⁰ Li Bozhong, “Dong Jin Nanchao Jiangdong de wenhua ronghe,” *Lishi yanjiu* 2005.6, pp. 91–92; Herold J. Wiens, *China’s march into the tropics: A study of the cultural and historical geography of south China* (Washington, DC, 1952), p. 61; Zhang Chengzong, Tian Zebin, and He Rongchang, eds., *Liuchao shi* (Zhenjiang, 1991), pp. 7–8.

taxation and service obligations). In the early fourth century, some of these non-Chinese peoples were even spreading northward into the mountains south of Luoyang.¹¹ Sima Rui, as emperor, “held them only under loose rein, and was never able to subdue their peoples.”¹²

In addition, after Three Kingdoms’ Wu had been defeated by the Western Jin in 280, it was held by the Western Jin essentially as conquered foreign territory. Former (ethnic Chinese) members of the Wu elite found themselves excluded from positions in the Western Jin central government, and treated condescendingly—even subjected to ridicule for their differences in language and customs.¹³ Many may have harbored considerable resentment. A southern children’s verse current after 280 anticipated a day when “the Middle Kingdom [*Zhongguo*, meaning the Western Jin dynasty] will be defeated, and Wu shall rise again.” Even the pre-existing ethnic Chinese inhabitants of the South, therefore, retained a consciousness of difference.¹⁴

When Sima Rui first crossed south of the Yangzi in 307, his military power was “close to zero,” and southern natives initially showed little inclination to gravitate toward the future emperor. Reportedly, it was only after the sagacious adviser Wang Dao (276–339) took advantage of a spring outing to have Sima Rui observed surrounded by a dazzling array of illustrious northerners, and after Wang Dao made personal visits of encouragement, that southern notables began to be impressed and swing their support behind Sima Rui. To help bridge the chasm between northern émigrés and native southerners, Wang Dao also learned a little of the local southern dialect and even proposed a marriage alliance between his own and a prominent southern family (which was, however, declined).¹⁵ Wang Dao deserves much of the credit for the stabilization of the early Eastern Jin regime. It was said that “there were few

¹¹ Cheng Youwei, “Nanbeichao shiqi de Huai Han Manzu,” *Zhengzhou daxue xuebao (zhexue shehui kexue ban)* 2003.1, p. 16; Taniguchi Fusao, “Nanbokuchō jidai no Banshū,” in *Gi Shin Nanbokuchō Zui Tō jidai shi no kibon mondai*, ed. Gi Shin Nanbokuchō Zui Tō jidai shi no kihon mondai henshū i-in-kai (Tokyo, 1999), p. 120; Zhu Dawei, “Nanchao shaoshu minzu gaikuang ji qi yu Hanzu de ronghe,” in *idem*, *Liuchao shilun* (Beijing, 1998), p. 406.

¹² WS 96.2093.

¹³ Wang Jian, “Dong Jin de jianguo,” in *idem*, *Han Tang shi lungao* (Beijing, 1992), pp. 223–225; Tang Changru, “Du Baopuzi tuilun nanbei xuefeng de yitong,” in *idem*, *Wei Jin Nanbeichao shi luncong* (Beijing, 1955), p. 358.

¹⁴ JS 28.844. For southern consciousness, see David R. Knechtges, “Sweet-peel orange or southern gold? Regional identity in Western Jin literature,” in *Studies in Early Medieval Chinese literature and cultural history*, ed. Paul W. Kroll and David R. Knechtges (Provo, UT, 2003), pp. 44–66.

¹⁵ Kawakatsu Yoshio, “Tō Shin kizokusei no kakuritsu katei: Gunjiteki kiso no mondai to kanrenshite,” in *idem*, *Rikuchō kizokusei shakai no kenkyū* (Tokyo, 1982), pp. 212–213; JS 65.1745–1746; *Shishuo xinyu*, compiled by Liu Yiqing (403–444), annotated by Yu Jiaxi (Shanghai, 1983) (hereafter SSXY), Chapter 5.24, pp. 305–306; Richard B. Mather, trans., *Shih-shuo hsin-yü: A new account of tales of the world* (Minneapolis, 1976), p. 163. For the Wu dialect, see JS 77.2024; SSXY, Chapter 25.13, p. 792; Mather, *Shih-shuo hsin-yü*, pp. 407–408.

who could resist Wang Dao's welcome" and that he greeted everyone "like an old friend."¹⁶

Nonetheless, tensions remained. Zhou Ji, the head of the powerful Zhou family of Yixing (west of Lake Tai in modern Jiangsu), for example, did not get along well with the émigré coterie surrounding Sima Rui. After Zhou died in 313, indignantly blaming "all the émigrés" (literally "outcasts," *cangzi*) for his frustration, his son Zhou Xie plotted rebellion. An uncle, Zhou Zha, whose name, without his knowledge, was invoked as leader of this rebellion, informed the authorities instead and the rebellion was suppressed. Even so, Zhou family military power remained formidable, and Sima Rui continued to treat them cautiously. Zhou family influence was only finally eliminated after 322, when the émigré warlord Wang Dun (266–324) successfully turned the forces of a rival southern magnate family against them.¹⁷

This episode illustrates the possibility that native southern strongmen might align with members of the northern émigré elite against their fellow southerners. Southern natives might well resent domination by recent arrivals from the North, but both idealism and pragmatism could also favor some accommodation. The Confucian virtue of "loyalty" was supposed to be directed toward the legitimate dynasty, which was now the Eastern Jin. Upon arriving south in 307, Sima Rui had reportedly expressed chagrin at having to "sojourn in the lands of [other] people's countries," but he was reassured by one southerner, "I have heard that the king takes all Under Heaven as his home."¹⁸ These were the smooth words of a courtier (and dialogue recorded in old texts should always be regarded with skepticism), but this actually was the contemporary Chinese ideal.

Native southerners might reasonably have hoped for greater representation at court than they received under the Southern Dynasties. Despite an Eastern Jin edict of 325 ordering those responsible for official selection to seek out worthy descendants of old southern families, until as late as the early sixth century, during the Liang dynasty, native southerners still only constituted 13 percent of leading Southern Dynasties officials.¹⁹ However discontented native southerners may have been with this situation, though, rebellion was risky, and other alternatives were limited. There was a recognized social and political hierarchy in the empire, and regardless of how geographically compressed (small) that "empire" might become, locally prominent families could only expect to be overshadowed at court by the imperial-level elite. There were

¹⁶ SSXY, Chapter 3.12, p. 175, n.; Mather, *Shih-shuo hsin-yü*, p. 86, quoting the fourth-century *Jin yangqiu*.

¹⁷ JS 58.1573–1575. ¹⁸ SSXY, Chapter 2.29, pp. 91–92; Mather, *Shih-shuo hsin-yü*, p. 44.

¹⁹ JS 6.164; Zhu Dawei, "Liang-mo Chen-chu haoqiang qiushuai de xingqi," in *idem*, *Liuchao shilun* (Beijing, 1998), p. 209.

also very real military threats from non-Chinese northern regimes, from southern aboriginal uprisings, and potentially also from the many southern commoners who were even more socially and economically disadvantaged than native southern elites. In the end, both émigré and local elites were to some extent “in the same boat.”

If achieving harmony between émigrés and natives presented one difficulty, the large numbers of northern refugees, by themselves, also posed a complex administrative problem. After the collapse of civil order in the North, people had left their homes and fled south. There, many became sojourners who were not officially enrolled in the household registries—the essential apparatus for government administration and taxation.²⁰ In order to accommodate large groups of refugees, northern administrative units were artificially re-created in the South as “sojourning” (or “lodged,” *qiao*) provinces (*zhou*), commanderies (*jun*), and districts (*xian*), in many cases without any actual territory to administer. The first such community was a Southern Langye commandery established just north of Jiankang by over a thousand households that had followed Sima Rui south from his old principality in Shandong.²¹ Many such “sojourning” administrative units were eventually created. In addition, possibly beginning in 341, refugees were enrolled in separate “white registries” (*bai ji*) that were distinct from the normal “yellow registries” (*huang ji*) of the native southerners. Enrollment in these émigré white registries may have conferred certain special tax or service exemptions, although the details are murky.²²

All such measures naturally increased the administrative complexity of the Eastern Jin government, and were inimical to efficiency. As early as 389, it was observed that although the refugees originally had often fully expected to return home to the North someday, making separate registration initially understandable, over time they had gradually become accustomed to life in the South—evidenced by the fact that the graves of their family members buried in the South were beginning to form rows.²³ To help clarify the administrative confusion, a series of “residence determination” (*tudian*) procedures were implemented, possibly beginning around 329, then again in 341, 364, and 413. The residence determination of 341 may have actually been responsible

²⁰ SSXY, Chapter 3.23, p. 185, n.; Mather, *Shih-shuo hsin-yü*, p. 90, quoting the fifth-century *Xu Jin yangqiu*.

²¹ William G. Crowell, “Northern émigrés and the problems of census registration under the Eastern Jin and Southern Dynasties,” in *State and society in early medieval China*, ed. Albert E. Dien (Stanford, 1990), p. 178; Qin Dongmei, “Lun Dong Jin beifang shizu yu nanfang shehui de ronghe,” *Beijing shifan daxue xuebao* (*shehui kexue ban*) 2003.5, p. 138; *SaD* 35.1039.

²² Yano Chikara, “Dotan to hakuseki: Nanchō no seiritsu,” *Shigaku zasshi* 79.8 (1970), p. 47; Zhang Xuefeng and Fu Jiang, *Dong Jin wenhua*, pp. 198–200.

²³ *JS* 75.1986.

for initiating the separate refugee white registries (since white registries at least recorded the refugees somewhere). After 389 there began to be proposals to abolish the white registries altogether, and separate white registries may have finally been eliminated by the residence determination of 413.²⁴

Members of elite émigré families, meanwhile, represented a somewhat different constituency than commoner refugees. Many of these elite refugees congregated in the capital area. Evidence from their tombs in and around Jiankang indicates that elite attitudes toward the question of making a permanent home in the South, or returning north eventually, varied considerably based on individual circumstances. The tomb of one émigré (Wang Yi, 276–322), for example, who died very soon after the founding of the Eastern Jin dynasty, is already on a scale and thoroughness of preparation that indicates there was never any intention of a later northern reburial. Other tombs, however, specifically indicated that they were only intended to be temporary. As late as 407, a term indicating temporary interment (*cuo*) was still used in one tomb inscription at Jiankang.²⁵

Regardless of whether or not, and when, the émigré elite eventually reconciled themselves to permanent life in the South, they continued to hold themselves haughtily aloof, and did not intermarry with the native southern elite. The Eastern Jin dynasty remained, to the end, very much an exilic regime. Indeed, although northerners who went south in later periods found themselves also excluded from power, descendants of the original generation of northern émigrés continued to dominate Southern Dynasties courts until the time of the final, brief, Chen dynasty (557–589), and every Southern Dynasties imperial house, with the possible exception of the last, sprang from émigré families.²⁶

The émigré elite cloaked themselves “with an aura of cultural superiority in their new southern environment,” one particularly conspicuous emblem of which was their self-conscious preservation of the old pre-exilic northern dialect that had been spoken at the Western Jin capital of Luoyang.²⁷ As early as the beginning of the Eastern Jin dynasty, Ge Hong (c.284–363) was already ridiculing the tendency of some southerners trying ineffectually to

²⁴ Crowell, “Northern émigrés,” pp. 187–199. Zhang Xuefeng and Fu Jiang, *Dong Jin wenhua*, pp. 200–202, 205.

²⁵ An Ran (Annette Kieser), “Hun fan gutu haishi jituo yixiang: Cong muzang he muzhi kan Dong Jin de liuxi shizu,” *Dongnan wenhua* 2002.9, pp. 45–49.

²⁶ Chen Yinke, “Weishu Sima Rui zhuan Jiangdong minzu tiaozhi shizheng ji tuilun,” in *idem*, *Jinming guan congkao chubian* (Beijing, 2001), pp. 106–107; Yao Dazhong, *Nanfang de fenqi*, p. 115; Zhou Yiliang, “Nanchao jingnei,” pp. 55–56, 58.

²⁷ Michael C. Rogers, “The myth of the Battle of the Fei River,” *TP* 54.1–3 (1968), p. 56; Richard B. Mather, “A note on the dialects of Lo-yang and Nanking during the Six Dynasties,” in *Wen-lin: Studies in the Chinese humanities*, ed. Chow Tse-tsung (Madison, WI, 1968), p. 248.

imitate the prestigious sounds of northern speech.²⁸ Over time, the old northern dialect itself may have gradually changed somewhat, and use of the northern speech became more an affectation of class than an indication of actual place of ancestry. It long remained, however, a hallmark of the Southern Dynasties elite. In the sixth century, Yan Zhitui (531–591) famously remarked that, even if you change their clothing, gentlemen and commoners in the South could still easily be distinguished from each other after speaking only a few words.²⁹

WANG DUN'S REBELLION

The first great military challenge to the Eastern Jin dynasty came from neither non-Chinese regimes in the North, native southern Chinese, nor aborigines, but from within the ranks of the émigré elite itself. As the Western Jin dynasty had tottered on the brink of destruction, Wang Yan (256–311), the last Western Jin Chief Minister, had sent his cousin Wang Dun south to the area of modern Jiangsu to consolidate a place of refuge in 309.³⁰ There, despite an early reputation for being somewhat rustic and speaking with the inelegant “Chu” pronunciations of the Huai river region,³¹ Wang Dun nonetheless cut a prominent figure as a son-in-law of the founding Western Jin emperor and a cousin of Wang Dao, the leading adviser at the early Eastern Jin court. After the enthronement of Sima Rui as emperor, Wang Dun was entrusted with a strategic military command based up the Yangzi river at Wuchang. Control over the middle reaches of the Yangzi was crucial to the defense of the capital downriver, and conflict between upriver garrisons and the capital would prove to be a recurrent theme throughout the Southern Dynasties.

As emperor, Sima Rui (Emperor Yuan) understandably aspired to restrain excessively powerful individuals and to reassert a degree of central governmental control. In the process, the emperor turned to new favorites, and there was a growing estrangement between the emperor and the entire Wang family, including not only Wang Dun but also Wang Dao.³² In 321, the emperor overruled a recommendation by Wang Dun, and appointed, instead, an imperial family member, Sima Cheng, as prefect (*cishi*) of Xiangzhou (based at modern Changsha), in a position from which to challenge Wang Dun's

²⁸ *Baopuzi waipian jiaojian* (Beijing, 1991), 26, 2.12.

²⁹ *Yanshi jiaxun* (Taipei, 1960) 18.120a; Ssu-yü Teng, trans., *Family instructions for the Yen clan: Yen-shih chia-hsün* (Leiden, 1968), p. 189.

³⁰ *JS* 43.1237–1238.

³¹ Andrew Chittick, “Vernacular languages in the medieval Jiankang empire,” *SPP* 250 (2014), p. 15. *SSXY*, Chapter 13.1, p. 595; Mather, *Shih-shuo hsün-yü*, p. 301.

³² *JS* 49.1364, 69.1837–1838, 98.2556; Kawakatsu Yoshio, “Tō Shin kizokusei,” p. 230.

domination over the central Yangzi area.³³ These developments contributed to provoking Wang Dun into raising his army at Wuchang in 322 and marching on the capital, in the name of chastising allegedly villainous imperial favorites.³⁴ Wang Dun's assault on the capital was successful. Although Dun refrained from usurping the throne at this time, he returned upriver with his position greatly strengthened. The forty-six-year-old (by Chinese reckoning) Emperor Yuan died that winter, supposedly of frustration.

After Emperor Yuan's son, Sima Shao (299–325, r. 323–325), posthumously Emperor Ming, ascended the throne, Wang Dun shifted his garrison downriver to Gushu, which was not far from the capital, and began to act as if he were the effective ruler.³⁵ Over the next few months, as Wang Dun's personal ambitions became increasingly apparent, a nephew of Dun's informed his father, Wang Shu (c. 266–330), that Dun was plotting to usurp the throne. The father, together with Wang Dao, reported this information to the emperor, and they began making preparations for resistance.³⁶ At one point the intrepid young emperor—who was said to have inherited light-colored (*huang*) hair from his non-Chinese Xianbei mother—secretly observed Wang Dun's camp in disguise, and only narrowly escaped capture.³⁷

In the summer of 324, a large army under the command of Wang Dun's brother, Wang Han (d. 324), marched in rebellion to the banks of the Qinhuai river, just south of Jiankang. The pontoon bridge across the river was burnt by the defenders in an effort to hinder the rebel advance, and the emperor, assuming personal military command, sent a small force across the river at night in a surprise attack. Despite an imperial victory in that battle, the rebels pressed on across the river and advanced to the south central gate in the bamboo hedge surrounding the city. There, they were counterattacked from the side by recently arrived imperial reinforcements, and decisively defeated. Wang Dun, meanwhile, was already seriously ill and died while these events were unfolding. Dun's brother Han was killed by his cousin Wang Shu while fleeing back to Jingzhou, at modern Jiangling, Hubei, and the rebellion was crushed. Afterwards, Wang Dun's corpse was exhumed and his head hung in display on the bridge (although he was later permitted a private burial).³⁸

Wang Dun's rebellion had put his cousin Wang Dao in an awkward position. The emperor was advised to eliminate the entire Wang family; Wang Dao reportedly daily led his kinsmen to the palace to “await

³³ JS 98.2557. ³⁴ JS 6.155, 98.2558. ³⁵ JS 98.2560. ³⁶ ZZTJ 92.2918.

³⁷ JS 6.161. In descriptions of hair color, the word *huang* has been known to refer to anything from blond to dark brown.

³⁸ JS 6.161–162, 98.2565–2566.

punishment.”³⁹ Wang Dao initially seems to have even felt some sympathy for a rebellion that was ostensibly intended only to check the policies of unpopular imperial favorites.⁴⁰ However, when the rebel army marched again on Jiankang in 324, Dao wrote to its commander, Dun’s brother, “previously, when sycophantic ministers were disrupting the court, people harbored disquiet,” and Dao confessed that, like others, he had “contemplated external relief” in the form of military intervention: “But now it is otherwise.”⁴¹ Even as the emperor was personally directing the campaign against the rebels, Wang Dao was commissioned as Commander of the Various Armies (*dudu zhujun*) and prefect of Yangzhou—the core region around the capital. After the rebel defeat, Wang Dao’s titles and honors were further elevated.⁴² Loyalist members of the Wang family, therefore, survived the misadventure of Wang Dun’s rebellion with their family’s stature largely undiminished.

Emperor Ming died soon afterwards and his heir, the five-year-old child Sima Yan (321–342, r. 326–342), posthumously known as Emperor Cheng, was enthroned. The empress dowager served as nominal regent, while her older brother Yu Liang (289–340), together with Wang Dao, shared actual authority. Becoming suspicious of a commander named Su Jun (d. 328) who had achieved distinction in the fighting against Wang Dun’s rebellion, Yu Liang tried to separate him from his military power base with a summons to a high civilian office at court. This plan backfired, however, provoking Su Jun into open rebellion in 327. Su’s army occupied the capital in early 328, capturing the emperor and whisking him away to a fortified position on the river just west of Jiankang. Wang Dao had stood by the emperor while the palace fell, and, out of respect for Wang Dao, Su Jun refrained from harming him. Later that same year, Wang Dao managed to escape with some disaffected rebel officers and join a loyalist base southeast of the capital. When Su Jun sortied out against the imperial camp with a light cavalry force, his horse was brought down, and Su Jun was killed. By early 329, the emperor had been freed from captivity, and the rebellion suppressed. However, the devastation to Jiankang was so extensive that there was serious consideration of relocating the capital.⁴³

Despite this, and a seemingly endless string of other rebellions that continued to punctuate its history, the Eastern Jin dynasty enjoyed a surprisingly prolonged period of relative stability and prosperity, enduring not only far

³⁹ JS 65.1749; ZZTJ 92.2899; SSXY, Chapter 2.37, p. 98, n. (Mather, *Shih-shuo hsin-yü*, p. 49), citing the fifth-century {Jin} *Zhongxing shu*.

⁴⁰ Tang Changru, “Wang Dun zhi luan yu suowei kesui zhi zheng,” in *idem*, *Wei Jin Nanbeichao shi lun shiyan* (Beijing, 1983), p. 164; Tian Yuqing, *Dong Jin menfa zhengzhi* (Beijing, 1989), p. 27.

⁴¹ ZZTJ 93.2926. ⁴² JS 65.1750.

⁴³ JS 7.171–174, 65.1750–1751, 73.1918, 100.2628–2631; ZZTJ 94.2968.

longer than any of its fourth-century contemporaries in the war-torn North, but also nearly twice as long as any subsequent southern dynasty. Oddly enough, it may have been the very weakness of the Eastern Jin emperors, to a certain extent, that enabled a precarious balance to be maintained by an array of powerful families for so long. The Eastern Jin equilibrium proved to be surprisingly resilient, because whenever any one individual made a grab for supreme power, others tended to jealously join forces against him, effectively restoring the balance.⁴⁴

GREAT-FAMILY POLITICS

At the beginning of the Eastern Jin dynasty, Emperor Yuan (Sima Rui) had reportedly urged Wang Dao to ascend the throne together with him, although Wang Dao judiciously declined to actually do so.⁴⁵ Despite the allegation that it was attempts by Emperor Yuan to strengthen imperial power that provoked Wang Dun's rebellion, Emperor Yuan is usually portrayed as rather passively following the guidance of his advisers. Over the 104 years of the Eastern Jin dynasty there were four periods of regency by dowager empresses, the first, 325–328, under Empress Dowager Yu (297–328), and the last three occasions, 344–357, 364–365, and 373–376, all under the same Empress Dowager Chu (324–384). These regencies totaled more than eighteen years, or nearly a sixth of the duration of the entire dynasty. Unlike other examples of such regencies by empress dowagers in both earlier and later periods of Chinese history, moreover, in none of the Eastern Jin cases did the empress dowager wield actual power.⁴⁶ Throughout the remainder of the dynasty, even ostensibly “reigning” emperors were usually little more than figureheads. Only the short-lived Emperor Ming (Sima Shao) showed much evidence of energetic leadership.

One defector to an alien regime in the North described the Eastern Jin as a dynasty where “governance issues from many gates.”⁴⁷ The Eastern Jin dynasty was a period when real imperial power had been very severely eroded. Illustrious members of great families enjoyed much independence, and emperors were frequently little more than firsts among equals. Even the imperial court sometimes seemed less central to Eastern Jin life than the estates (and military bases) of great individuals.

⁴⁴ Tian Yuqing, *Dong Jin menfa*, pp. 23, 276, 294–295.

⁴⁵ SSXY, Chapter 22.1, p. 715; Mather, *Shih-shuo hsin-yü*, p. 369; JS 65.1749.

⁴⁶ Yasuda Jirō, “Tō Shin no bokō rinchō to Sha An seiken,” in *idem*, *Rikuchō seijishi no kenkyū* (Kyōto, 2003), pp. 203–204.

⁴⁷ JS 117.2980.

In north China, after a degree of stability had finally been restored, a remarkable system of government farmland allocation known as the “equal fields” (*juntian*) was instituted beginning in 485. In south China, by contrast, it was the private villa or estate, at first known as *shu*, and later often called *zhuang*, or *zhuangyuan*, that was most characteristic. Under the Southern Dynasties, private landownership was the norm, with land becoming increasingly concentrated in the hands of wealthy families. Even the relatively weak regulations of the land during the Western Jin dynasty were increasingly evaded.

The Western Jin dynasty had attempted to impose some restrictions on landholding in 280, under the so-called “occupation of fields” and “levying of fields” (*zhantian* and *ketian*) systems. These were apparently intended to limit each adult male and female couple to one hundred *mu* (roughly twelve English acres) of farmland—with variations for age, and generous additional provisions for official rank. Even before then, however, in 273, the claim had already been asserted that, except for sumptuary distinctions, imperial law could not be used to restrict private property.⁴⁸ After the loss of the North, and the development of vast new tracts of farmland in the South, the regulations became more difficult to enforce.

Small independent farm families may have still formed a majority of the population under the Western Jin dynasty, but after the flight to the South, many poor people concealed themselves as “guests” (*ke*) of great families, paying a share of their harvest to those great families to avoid becoming government-registered tax-paying households. In 321, the Eastern Jin attempted to investigate and register some of these “guests,” but with little success. Such dependents (later often called *buqu*) are interpreted by some modern scholars as evidence of “feudal” tendencies in Chinese history.⁴⁹ The emergence of private estates in south China was, however, tied into a growing process of commercialization, which had both rural and urban dimensions. An examination of the markets in one Eastern Jin city done by Wang Biaozi (305–377), for example, brought a complaint that people were obtaining trade profits under the names of powerful patrons, taking advantage of ordinary folk. This type of commercial development helped fuel the rise to social and political significance of a new class of wealthy commoners by the late fifth century.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ *JS* 46.1310–1311.

⁴⁹ *NQS* 14.255; Tang Changru, “Clients and bound retainers in the Six Dynasties period,” pp. 119–120, 135.

⁵⁰ Zhang Chengzong, Tian Zebin, and He Rongchang, *Liuchao shi*, pp. 171–178.

As the phenomenon of an emerging class of wealthy commoners suggests, the development of private economic resources did not exclusively benefit the established hereditary great families, who still closely identified with imperial government office holding. This persistent official orientation, indeed, is one of the more conspicuous differences between the Six Dynasties Chinese great families and the medieval European aristocracy.⁵¹ Although the Six Dynasties are commonly thought of as having been a particularly “aristocratic” period in Chinese history, the Chinese great families remained a hereditary elite without feudal-style enfeoffment.⁵² Even after the reintroduction in 264 of actual titles of nobility drawn from the ancient Bronze Age Zhou dynasty,⁵³ the real authority of these titled aristocrats still largely depended upon governmental office holding. Indeed, even the princes of the imperial family itself, who notoriously destroyed the Western Jin dynasty during the “Disturbances of the Eight Princes,” owed much of their power to official appointment as commanders (*dudu*) in important regions, rather than to their hereditary status as princes.⁵⁴

Furthermore, official government titles typically were not directly hereditary. Elite status and access to government office had, however, become thoroughly hereditary, and largely independent of any merit earned in conscientious state service. After the fall of the Han dynasty, when novel methods had to be found to identify prospective candidates for office, the original goal had supposedly been that “only talent be promoted.”⁵⁵ Examinations, moreover, also continued to be administered to candidates who were recommended for “Flourishing Talent” (*xiu cai*)—who, by Jin dynasty statute, were required to pass all five examination questions.⁵⁶ Yet, under the new Nine Ranks (*jiupin*) system that was inaugurated in 220, evaluations were performed and ranks assigned by already established members of the great-family elite, and by the time of the Western Jin dynasty this Nine Ranks system had ossified into a self-perpetuating mechanism for great-family self-promotion. The great families of the Six Dynasties had not necessarily already been prominent

⁵¹ See Nakamura Keiji, “Rikuchō kizokusei to kanryōsei,” in *Gi Shin Nanbokuchō Zui Tō jidai shi no kibon mondai*, ed. Gi Shin Nanbokuchō Zui Tō jidai shi no kibon mondai henshū i-in kai (Tokyo, 1999), pp. 203, 223–224.

⁵² Miyakawa Hisayuki, “An outline of the Naitō hypothesis and its effects on Japanese studies of China,” *FEQ* 14.4 (1955), p. 538; Mou Fasong, *Han Tang lishi bianqian zhong de shehui yu guojia* (Shanghai, 2011), p. 42.

⁵³ *SGZ* 4.150; *JS* 48.1349.

⁵⁴ Rafe de Crespigny, “The Three Kingdoms and Western Jin: A history of China in the third century AD,” *EAH* 2 (1991), p. 163, n. 89; Tang Changru, “Xi Jin fenfeng yu zong wang chu zhen,” in *idem*, *Wei Jin Nanbeichao shilun shiyi* (Beijing, 1983), pp. 123, 138–139.

⁵⁵ *SGZ* 1.32. ⁵⁶ *Beitang shuchao*, compiled by Yu Shi’nan (Beijing, 1998), 79.5a, *sub wu ce*.

during the Han dynasty, but they now constituted an effectively closed and hereditary elite, enjoying privileged access to government office.⁵⁷

By the mid-fifth century, “the distinction between gentlemen and commoners” could even be cited as a fundamental “regulation of the state.”⁵⁸ Yet this emphatic fifth-century assertion may have come precisely because the distinction was already in some danger of blurring. One late fifth-century authority (Shen Yue, 441–513), for example, complained that there had been much falsification of family status after about 450, so that “gentlemen and commoners were not distinguished.”⁵⁹ The Eastern Jin dynasty, in the fourth century, seems to have coincided with the peak period of real great-family power. Afterwards, although the social and cultural prestige of the great families long remained towering, it was increasingly merely prestige only, divorced from actual power.⁶⁰

The peculiar characteristic of the Eastern Jin dynasty was that a number of hereditary great families were independently so powerful that they did not necessarily feel very subordinate to any particular emperor, yet their elite status remained bound to imperial office holding. Some of these men—especially those holding strategic upriver military commands—periodically felt strong enough to openly challenge the throne. Yet, because of jealousies and rivalries with the other great families (and also, perhaps, certain idealistic motivations), such threats to the throne usually failed.

HUAN WEN

The mid-fourth century was dominated by the figure of Huan Wen (312–373). In 345, Yu Yi, one of Yu Liang’s younger brothers, had made a deathbed request that his command of an important position on the middle reaches of the Yangzi river be inherited by his son. An opponent at court countered that the post was too critical to trust to a mere youth, and recommended Huan Wen instead, as someone who could both overcome potential resistance from the Yu family and capably defend the dynasty’s vital “western gate.”⁶¹ Huan Wen was appointed General Pacifying the West (*anxi jiangjun*), and he soon became another example of the recurring pattern of upriver military strongmen posing a threat downriver to the capital.

⁵⁷ Tang Changru, “Shizu de xingcheng he shengjiang,” in *idem*, *Wei Jin Nanbeichao shilun shiyi* (Beijing, 1983), pp. 54, 58–59.

⁵⁸ NS 23.630. ⁵⁹ NS 59.1461–1462.

⁶⁰ Dennis Grafflin, “The great family in medieval south China,” *HJAS* 41.1 (1981), p. 73; Mao Hanguang, “Zhongguo tongzhi jieceng zhi shehui chengfen,” in *idem*, *Zhongguo zhonggu shehui shilun* (Taipei, 1988), p. 41.

⁶¹ JS 77.2030.

Huan Wen had married a sister of Emperor Cheng, and, as commander of upriver military forces, was now a very powerful figure. In late 346, Huan began to enhance his reputation still further by striking west against the Cheng-Han state in modern Sichuan. Cheng-Han was reportedly weak and vulnerable at the time, and represented a natural westward extension of Huan's existing power base on the central Yangzi. It was, however, protected by spectacular river gorges, and not easily accessible to Eastern Jin armies. The campaign against Cheng-Han was therefore potentially risky. Leaving behind his heavy equipment, Huan personally led his infantry against the Cheng-Han capital at Chengdu. A counterattack against his supply base was repulsed, but when Huan Wen was nearly forced to retreat during the climactic battle at a bridge near Chengdu, a signals officer mistakenly sounded "advance" rather than "retreat," and this renewed attack carried the day. Cheng-Han fell to Huan Wen in early 347.⁶²

Huan's triumph in Sichuan was followed by a period of flux among the northern "Sixteen Kingdoms," which Huan viewed as a golden opportunity for northern reconquest. However, the court was slow to respond to his recommendations, and tensions simmered with the capital. In an effort to counter Huan Wen's growing influence, the court launched a northern expedition in 353 under a different commander. When this ended in disaster, Huan Wen was finally allowed to begin his own northern campaign in 354. Huan's army advanced from the southeast up the line of the Dan river toward the old Western Han dynasty capital at Chang'an, while a subordinate's force took a cliff road from the southwest. Huan's expeditionary force approached very near to Chang'an, and was reportedly welcomed there by most of the local population, but a handful of defenders inside the city walls adopted a scorched-earth policy, depriving Huan's army of necessary supplies, and compelling him to withdraw after about a half-year of campaigning.⁶³

Huan began a second northern expedition in 356. This time he successfully recaptured the former Western Jin capital at Luoyang, where he repaired the old imperial tombs, and proposed the relocation of the Eastern Jin capital.⁶⁴ That proposal was not adopted because such a move would have destabilized the status quo and made Huan Wen an irresistibly dominant figure. Luoyang was, in any case, lost again to a northern regime's counterthrust in 365.

In 369, Huan launched a third northern campaign that penetrated to the north of the Yellow River. Because his men had been unable to open a new water supply route, and his stores were exhausted (again), Huan eventually burnt his boats and withdrew southward on foot. Pursued by northern cavalry,

⁶² *JS* 8.192–193, 98.2569. For Cheng-Han, see Chapter 7 in this volume.

⁶³ *JS* 8.199–200, 98.2569–2571. ⁶⁴ *ZZTJ* 100.3155.

Huan's army suffered a disastrous defeat at a place called Xiangyi in modern Henan.⁶⁵ Thereafter, Huan Wen shifted his attention south toward court politics rather than toward northern reconquest.

In 371, Huan Wen acted against the (soon to be) "Dethroned Emperor" Feidi (Sima Yi, 342–386, r. 366–371). Based on the rumor that Sima Yi was impotent and that his three sons were therefore illegitimate, Huan Wen deposed the allegedly disgraced emperor (through the authority of the empress dowager).⁶⁶ A surviving son of the first Eastern Jin emperor, Sima Yu (320–372), posthumously known as Emperor Jianwen, was placed on the throne, but lived only one more year. He was succeeded by his son, Sima Yao (362–396, r. 373–396), who was posthumously styled Emperor Xiaowu. Allegedly, Huan Wen next tried to intimidate the court into awarding him the Nine Bestowals (*jiuxi*), which would have preceded his open usurpation of the throne. Huan was, however, seriously ill by this time, and the suave gentleman Xie An (320–385) was able to defuse Huan Wen's menace with his own unflappable composure. The awarding of the Nine Bestowals was effectively delayed until after Huan had died, thus saving the dynasty.⁶⁷

Chinese primary sources unambiguously portray Huan Wen as a would-be usurper. He is even described as passing the rebel Wang Dun's tomb and exclaiming, "A capable man, a capable man."⁶⁸ It is possible, however, that this negative depiction is the result of slanderous propaganda from the pro-Xie An faction that emerged triumphant after Huan Wen's death.⁶⁹ Since the mid-third century, there existed a pronounced ideological polarization in China between partisans of broadly conventional Confucian behavior and Daoist-influenced proponents of "nonaction."⁷⁰ At the beginning of the Eastern Jin, Wang Dao had set a distinctively Daoistic tone by stabilizing the dynasty through "tranquility," and Xie An continued in that Daoist vein by "using the soft to conquer the hard."⁷¹ By contrast, Huan Wen was a more conventionally activist figure. During one of his northern campaigns, Huan

⁶⁵ JS 98.2576. ⁶⁶ JS 8.214–215, 98.2577.

⁶⁷ SSXY, Chapter 2.101, pp. 151–152, n.; Mather, *Shih-shuo hsin-yü*, p. 76. JS 79.2074, 98.2579. On the Nine Bestowals, see Rafe de Crespigny, *Imperial warlord: A biography of Cao Cao, 155–220 AD* (Leiden, 2010), pp. 384–390; Carl Leban (posthumously ed. by Albert E. Dien), "The accession of Sima Yan, AD 265: Legitimation by ritual replication," EMC 16 (2010), pp. 10, 38.

⁶⁸ JS 98.2576.

⁶⁹ See Bielenstein, "The Six Dynasties, Volume 1," p. 83; Michael C. Rogers, *The chronicle of Fu Chien: A case of exemplar history* (Berkeley, 1968), pp. 60–62.

⁷⁰ See Richard B. Mather, "The controversy over conformity and naturalness during the Six Dynasties," HR 9.26–3 (1969), pp. 160, 173–174, 176.

⁷¹ For Wang Dao, see *Taiping yulan*, 248.10b, p. 1302b, citing the fifth-century *[Jin] Zhongxing shu*; JS 65.1746. Wan Shengnan, *Wei Jin Nanbeichao shi lungao* (Hefei, 1983), pp. 156–170. For Xie An, see Liang Mancang, "Xie An chushi de rou yu gang," in *idem*, *Han Tang jian zhengzhi yu wenhua tansuo* (Guiyang, 2000), pp. 166–167.

was said to have gazed upon the Central Plain and castigated those practitioners of philosophical nonaction who had presided over the court at the end of the Western Jin “for causing China to be engulfed, and become a wasteland for a hundred years.”⁷² To modern tastes, Huan Wen’s activism may even seem to be the more admirable persona.⁷³

If Huan Wen had struck decisively to usurp the throne while at the peak of his power, there would have been little to stop him. Since he did not, it may be that he was innocent of disloyal ambitions. According to one anecdote, Huan Wen once invited Xie An to a feast at which he had positioned armed men for the purpose of killing Xie. Without losing his composure, Xie calmly remarked, “I’ve heard that the feudal lords [of antiquity] who were virtuous were protected by their neighbors on all sides. Why is it necessary for Your Excellency to place all these fellows inside the walls of this room?” Huan supposedly laughed and dismissed his guards, ending the threat. Xie had predicted beforehand that the fate of the dynasty would hang on this moment, but his conversational agility surely was a thin defense on which to depend.⁷⁴ However, Huan may have been astute enough to realize that a successful usurpation would require engineering some appearance of legitimacy. Whatever his aspiration, he may have felt himself unable to overcome Xie An’s daunting *savoir faire*.⁷⁵

THE BATTLE OF THE FEI RIVER

After Huan Wen’s death in 373, Xie An emerged as the leading figure at court—perhaps in part because of the influence of his cousin, the Empress Dowager Chu, who was the nominal regent for the youthful Emperor Xiaowu.⁷⁶ In an effort to better protect the capital from upriver strongmen, and also to confront the power of the increasingly formidable Former Qin dynasty (351–384) in the North, in 377 Xie An stationed his nephew Xie Xuan (343–388) at Jingkou (modern Zhenjiang), not far downriver from the capital, in command of all military affairs north of the Yangzi. There, they began organizing a new army from the large refugee population of the area, which became known as the Northern Headquarters Troops

⁷² JS 98.2572; SXXY, Chapter 26, number 11, p. 834; Mather, *Shih-shuo hsin-yü*, p. 433.

⁷³ See Wu Zhuzhu, “Haomen zhengzhi zai nanfang de yizhi: Wang Dao de ‘kui-kui zhi zheng,’” *Fujian shifan daxue xuebao (zhexue shehui kexue ban)* 1992.2, p. 111.

⁷⁴ SXXY, Chapter 6.29, p. 369; Mather, *Shih-shuo hsin-yü*, pp. 190–191.

⁷⁵ For another analysis of Huan Wen’s reputation, and his “endgame at court,” see Andrew Chittick, “Dynastic legitimacy during the Eastern Chin: Hsi Tso-ch’ih and the problem of Huan Wen,” *AM*, 3rd series 11.1 (1998), pp. 36–38.

⁷⁶ Yasuda Jirō, “Tō Shin no bokō rinchō,” pp. 208–209, 223–224.

(*beifu bing*).⁷⁷ Under the growing threat from Former Qin, even Huan Wen's younger brother, who had succeeded to Wen's position upriver, was by this time co-operating with Xie An in defense of the dynasty.⁷⁸

In 383, Former Qin launched a massive invasion south against the Eastern Jin. According to the conventional account, after some initial skirmishing, and before the full weight of the Former Qin armies could assemble, the Former Qin vanguard confronted the Eastern Jin defenders across the line of the Fei river, in what is now Anhui. The Former Qin commander attempted to lure the Eastern Jin forces into crossing the river—where he hoped to annihilate them in mid-stream—by pulling back slightly, but the Former Qin soldiers panicked, and their tactical withdrawal turned instead into a disorganized rout.⁷⁹ The story continues that Xie An was playing encirclement chess or go (*weiqi*) when news of the victory arrived, and, after silently reading the battlefield dispatch, Xie continued playing without expression. When asked about the letter's contents, Xie replied with equanimity, "My little boys have greatly defeated the bandits."⁸⁰

This clash at the Fei river has long been regarded as one of the most decisive battles in all of Chinese history, but the modern scholar Michael C. Rogers has cast doubt on the veracity of the traditional story. Rogers skillfully marshals convincing reasons for suspecting that generations of Chinese historians may have had motives for exaggerating their accounts of the battle, and he points out discrepancies in the records. However, Rogers does not actually offer proof that there was no battle, and the large number of different textual sources available at the time the standard dynastic history was compiled, and large number of people involved in the project, make whole-cloth fabrication seem unlikely.⁸¹ Even eyewitness accounts of modern battles are often mutually inconsistent—and every historical account should always be read with some skepticism—but there seems little reason to doubt that the Eastern Jin really did win an important victory in 383.

In the aftermath of the Fei river victory, Xie An's prestige soared. His elevated stature, however, only invited jealousy and suspicion from within the

⁷⁷ The existence of Northern Headquarters Troops at Jingkou can be traced to c. 329. They were assisted in the defense of the capital by a less well-known Western Headquarters Army, based further upriver. See Tian Yuqing, "Beifu bing shimo," in *Jinian Chen Yinke xiansheng danchen bainian xueshu lunwenji*, ed. Beijing daxue Zhongguo zhonggushi yanjiu zhongxin (Beijing, 1989), pp. 199, 201, 207–210.

⁷⁸ Zhou Nianchang, "Dong Jin Beifu bing de jianli ji qi tedian," in *Wei Jin Sui Tang shilunji*, ed. Huang Lie (Beijing, 1983), 2.153–155.

⁷⁹ *JS* 114.2918. ⁸⁰ *SSXY*, Chapter 6, number 35, p. 374; Mather, *Shih-shuo hsin-yü*, p. 192.

⁸¹ Rogers, "The myth of the battle," pp. 50–72; Rogers, *The chronicle of Fu Chien*, pp. 64–69. For a rebuttal, see Sun Weiguo, "Feishui zhi zhan: Chu Tang shijiamen de xugou? Dui Maik'e'er Luojesi yong houxian dai fangfa jieyou Zhongguo guanxiu zhengshi ge'an de jieyou," *Hebei xuekan* 2004.1, pp. 77–78, 81–83.

imperial family itself, particularly from Emperor Xiaowu's younger brother, the Prince of Kuaiji, Sima Daozi (364–403). Acutely sensitive and apparently sincerely loyal to the throne, Xie An soon yielded supreme executive authority on his own volition and withdrew from court to the nearby garrison at Guangling.⁸² Within two years of the Fei river battle, by 385 he was dead. This left Sima Daozi, and Daozi's son, Sima Yuanxian (382–402), in charge of court affairs, especially after Emperor Xiaowu died young in 396 under somewhat mysterious circumstances (suspicion fell upon a concubine who may have feared that she was losing favor, but there was no subsequent investigation). He was succeeded by his eldest son, Sima Dezong (382–418, r. 397–418), posthumously known as Emperor An, who was reportedly incapable even of speaking.⁸³

THE END OF THE EASTERN JIN

In 397, the then commander of the Northern Headquarters Troops, Wang Gong (d. 398), rebelled, targeting Sima Daozi's favorites and successfully engineering their deaths. In 398, he rebelled again, this time joined by some major upriver commanders, including Huan Wen's youngest son, Huan Xuan (369–404). Liu Laozhi (d. 402), the leader of Wang Gong's vanguard, defected to Sima Daozi's side, however, and Wang Gong perished. The remaining rebel forces then withdrew to the West, agreeing upon Huan Xuan as head of their coalition. Before long, Huan Xuan turned on, and eliminated, the other leading commanders, consolidating his own enormous upriver military power.⁸⁴

Meanwhile, in 399, a devastating Daoist religious rebellion had erupted in the east, led by Sun En (d. 402).⁸⁵ Sun En's family had been adherents of Five Bushels of Rice Daoism (*wudoumi dao*) for generations. One of his uncles had supposedly acquired certain "secret arts," and although this uncle was banished to remote southern Guangzhou by Sima Daozi, he was honored there with an office by the local prefect. Before long Emperor Xiaowu summoned Sun En's uncle back to the capital because it was believed he had mastered arcane methods for nourishing prolonged life. Around 398, in response to the climate of political uncertainty, Sun En's uncle began raising an armed personal following, and Sima Daozi then had him killed.

⁸² Wang Xinyang, *Dong Jin shizu de shuangchong zhengzhi xingge yanjiu* (Shanghai, 2010), pp. 176–179.

⁸³ JS 9.241–242, 10.267.

⁸⁴ JS 10.250–252, 84.2184–2186, 84.2189, 99.2587–2589.

⁸⁵ For religious background, see Miyakawa Hisayuki, "Local cults around Mount Lu at the time of Sun En's rebellion," in *Facets of Taoism: Essays in Chinese religion*, ed. Holmes Welch and Anna Seidel (New Haven, 1979), pp. 83–101.

After this, Sun En fled to an island in the Zhoushan archipelago off the coast of northeastern Zhejiang, from where he persuaded supporters that his uncle had not really died but had merely shed his mortal body to become a “transcendent” (*xian*). Sun En soon led an attack on the coast opposite his stronghold, which incited a bloody popular uprising against the Eastern Jin. This was fueled, in part, by widespread outrage at a recent government plan to conscript manumitted former slaves, who were now the personal dependents of wealthy families, into military service at the capital.⁸⁶ The plan was apparently deeply unpopular among both the wealthy families and their dependents. Rebellion swept across much of the east coast. Despite the strong religious coloration of Sun En’s rebellion, it lacked any clear Daoist ideological motivation, and it was probably really driven more by various grievances and resentments than by specifically religious beliefs.⁸⁷ Wang Ningzhi (d. 399)—the second son of the calligraphic genius Wang Xizhi (303–379)—was the administrator stationed at what is now Shaoxing, Zhejiang. He, too, was a fervent believer in Five Bushels of Rice Daoism. Rather than joining the rebellion, or dispatching a regular army to oppose Sun En’s assault, he prayed instead for the supernatural assistance of spectral troops—and paid for this faith with his life.⁸⁸

Coming under swift imperial counterattack, the untrained and ill-equipped rebel forces were driven back. According to the dynastic history, “their women, who were burdened with infants and unable to go, put the babies into bags and trunks and threw them into the water, telling them: ‘congratulations on ascending to the halls of the transcendents first; I will seek to follow you later’.”⁸⁹ Sun En retreated to his ships and continued to raid the coast, at one point even seriously threatening the capital. After his final defeat and drowning in 402, some of the faithful claimed that he had become a “water transcendent” (*shui xian* 水仙), and over a hundred people threw themselves into the sea to follow him. The surviving rebels then turned to Sun En’s younger sister’s husband Lu Xun (d. 411) for leadership. He prolonged the insurgency for nine more years (with intervals of temporary reconciliation).

By 403, the rebels had been chased away from the more developed regions near the capital, and driven south toward Guangzhou. After they made one last, nearly successful, thrust against the Eastern Jin capital, by 411 Lu Xun’s rebels had lost control of Guangzhou and withdrawn even further south,

⁸⁶ *JS* 64.1737.

⁸⁷ Chi-tim Lai, “Daoism and political rebellion during the Eastern Jin Dynasty,” in *Politics and religion in Ancient and Medieval Europe and China*, ed. Frederick Hok-ming Cheung and Ming-chiu Lai (Hong Kong, 1999), pp. 79, 91.

⁸⁸ *JS* 80.2102–2103; *WS* 96.2106–2107. ⁸⁹ *JS* 100.2633.

toward Jiaozhou, near modern Hanoi. The surviving rebel army of about 3,000 men was reinforced by 5,000 or 6,000 aboriginal warriors recruited along the way, but Lu Xun's ships were intercepted by imperial forces on a river not far from modern Hanoi. The rebel fleet scattered as Lu Xun was struck by an arrow and died after either falling or jumping into the river.⁹⁰

Earlier, when Sun En's rebels were actively threatening the capital, Huan Xuan had mobilized his army in the west under the pretext of saving the throne, to exploit the opportunity for his own benefit. After the threat from Sun En receded, Huan Xuan's forces were ordered to stand down. Instead, Huan blocked the shipment of supplies down the Yangzi to the severely stricken capital region. In early 402, therefore, Sima Yuanxian, who had assumed much of his father's authority at court, launched an imperial campaign against Huan Xuan, but Huan promptly defeated the imperial army near the capital. Soon afterwards, Liu Laozhi, the commander of the imperial vanguard—and the same man who had defected from Wang Gong to Sima Daozi in 398—now defected to Huan Xuan's side, taking with him the Northern Headquarters Troops. This enabled Huan to easily occupy the capital. Sima Yuanxian was killed, and Sima Daozi banished (and killed a few months later).⁹¹

Whatever his father's true ambition had been, in late 403 Huan Xuan did openly usurp the throne, founding a new dynasty called Chu. Following Huan Xuan's triumph, Liu Laozhi, the same turncoat former imperial vanguard commander, now began to suspect Huan of plotting to separate him from his military command. He then contemplated switching sides yet a third time. Abandoned by many of his own aides, and mistakenly believing that his eldest son had been killed, he soon committed suicide in despair instead.⁹²

With most of the senior Northern Headquarters Troops commanders now in one way or another eliminated, a relatively junior officer named Liu Yu (363–422, r. 420–422 as Emperor Wu of Song) was elevated to a position of leadership. Liu—a fourth-generation émigré from the area of modern Zhenjiang—was originally so impoverished that he reportedly “made selling shoes his occupation,” and was once arrested by a wealthy family to whom he had been unable to repay a loan on time.⁹³ Liu had proven his military ability in action against Sun En's rebellion, and now, less than three months after Huan Xuan's usurpation, he led the Northern Headquarters Troops units against the new dynasty.

⁹⁰ *JS* 100.2631–2636; *SsS* 92.2264. For Sun En's rebellion, see Werner Eichhorn, “Description of the rebellion of Sun En and earlier Taoist rebellions,” *MIO* 2 (1954), pp. 325–352; Miyakawa Hisayuki, “Son On, Ro Jun no ran ni tsuite,” *Tōyōshi kenkyū* 30.2–3 (1971), pp. 1–30.

⁹¹ *JS* 10.254–255, 64.1739–1740, 84.2190–2191, 99.2589–2591. ⁹² *JS* 84.2191.

⁹³ *ZZTJ* 111.3499; *NS* 1.1–2.

Huan Xuan was driven from the capital, and withdrew upriver with the person of the Eastern Jin emperor An in his custody. During a river battle east of Wuchang in the fifth month of 404 Huan's men lost their fighting spirit—allegedly because Huan too obviously revealed his fear of defeat by keeping a small escape boat moored alongside his flagship—and were beaten. Huan was soon thereafter killed, and the Eastern Jin emperor recovered—but then recaptured by remnant rebel forces. The emperor was not permanently rescued until early the next year.⁹⁴

The Eastern Jin dynasty had been restored, but with Liu Yu as an unchallengeable strongman. Following the pattern previously set by Huan Wen, in an effort to make himself even more indispensable Liu Yu launched another series of northern expeditions. His military successes in the North included retaking the area of Shandong in 410, and the old northern capitals of Luoyang in 416 and Chang'an in 417. Although Chang'an was almost immediately lost again, these campaigns brought much of the area south of the Yellow River under southern dynasty control.⁹⁵

In 418, Liu was ennobled as Duke of Song and awarded the Nine Bestowals.⁹⁶ He had the Emperor An strangled and replaced by his younger brother, Sima Dewen (386–421, r. 419–420), posthumously known as Emperor Gong—reportedly in order to fulfill a prophecy that there would be two Jin dynasty emperors after Xiaowu.⁹⁷ In 420, he engineered the abdication of the hapless final Eastern Jin emperor, founding his own new dynasty, which is known as the (Liu-)Song. The last Jin emperor is said to have meekly accepted his dethronement with the observation that the Jin Mandate had already really ended with Huan Xuan's usurpation in 403, and that the last two decades had merely been a temporary reprieve that was owed to Liu Yu.⁹⁸ Despite his willing abdication, Liu Yu set a new and horrifying precedent by having the ex-emperor murdered in late 421.⁹⁹

AN EVALUATION

The Eastern Jin dynasty—quite strikingly, in retrospect—was relatively little marred by the kind of vicious internal imperial family power struggles that had led to the demise of the Western Jin dynasty during the Disturbances of the Eight Princes, and which would become shockingly characteristic of the

⁹⁴ JS 10.256–257, 99.2600–2601.

⁹⁵ Chen Shuliang, *Liuchao ru meng niao kong ti* (Changsha, 2000), pp. 21–22; Yi Yicheng, “Bei Wei de nanjin zhengce yu guoshi de xiaozhang,” in *Zhongguo zhonggu shi lunji*, ed. Zhang Guogang (Tianjin, 2003), p. 443.

⁹⁶ JS 10.266; SsS 2.44. ⁹⁷ JS 10.267. ⁹⁸ SsS 2.46.

⁹⁹ JS 10.269; Cao Wenzhu, *Hu Han fenzhi: Nanbeichao juan* (Hong Kong, 1992), p. 12.

later Southern Dynasties. In part, this may be explained by the extreme weakness, to the point of irrelevance, of Eastern Jin emperors, but it may also have been partly due to an awareness of the desperateness of their situation, as beleaguered sojourners in the still somewhat exotic south. Such a consciousness of vulnerability may have also contributed to a perceptible reawakening of the Confucian virtue of political loyalty during the Eastern Jin.¹⁰⁰ Even Wang Dao, that paragon of great family power who was once invited to sit on the throne by an emperor, honorably refused to do so, and won explicit praise for his “loyal” service.¹⁰¹ The dynasty was also, of course, simply fortunate to have been blessed with such outstanding statesmen as Wang Dao and Xie An.

Perhaps because contemporary standards for elite behavior emphasized cultural accomplishments, the Eastern Jin dynasty was conspicuous for its achievements in literature and the arts. By any standard, but especially for a relatively brief dynasty that ruled only a portion of China, the Eastern Jin produced some truly iconic cultural figures. These included the calligraphic genius Wang Xizhi (303–379), the famous painter Gu Kaizhi (341–402), and the poets Tao Yuanming (365–427) and Xie Lingyun (385–433). In addition, the incipient commercial vitality that was stirring in south China at this time may have marked both the tentative beginnings of that economic ascent that would soon make China the most prosperous society in the premodern world, and initiated the long-term demographic and economic shift in China’s center of gravity away from the northern Central Plain to the lower Yangzi basin.

Moreover, the Eastern Jin dynasty could plausibly claim to be the sole legitimate holder of China’s imperial Mandate. After Liu Yu’s usurpation, Southern Dynasties governments regained a considerable measure of direct central imperial control. Yet no subsequent southern dynasty survived nearly as long as the Eastern Jin, and each was founded by a military usurper. In many people’s minds, despite their undeniable economic prosperity and cultural splendor, the Southern Dynasties thereafter lost the Eastern Jin’s ability to claim superior legitimacy, and the mantle of legitimate Chinese imperial succession may have even passed instead to the (originally “non-Chinese,” Xianbei-ruled) dynasties of the North.¹⁰²

¹⁰⁰ Wang Xinyang, *Dong Jin shizu*, pp. 167–69, 200–202; Wang Xinyang, “Jia yu guo de jueze: Dong Jin shiren dui zhong jun guannian de tichang,” *Taida lishi xuebao* 39 (2007), pp. 117–125.

¹⁰¹ *Taiping yulan* 248.10b, p. 1302b, citing the fifth-century *[Jin] Zhongxing shu*.

¹⁰² *Wenzhongzi zhongshuo* by Wang Tong (c. 584–617) (Taipei, 1965) 7.2a–b; Kawamoto Yoshiaki, *Chūka no hōkai to kakudai: Gi Shin Nanbokuchō* (Tokyo, 2005), pp. 77–79.

CHAPTER 6

THE SIXTEEN KINGDOMS

Charles Holcombe

THE EMERGING THREAT

Following the disintegration of the briefly unified Western Jin dynasty in the early fourth century, the subsequent Sixteen Kingdoms era in north China became one of the most complicated periods in all of Chinese history. One hundred and thirty-six years elapsed between the establishment of the first “Sixteen Kingdoms” regime in 304 and the next reunification of the North in 439 by the Northern Wei dynasty (386–534). During that period, there were actually as many as twenty-two significant states in northern China (rather than literally sixteen), ranging from true empires (that is, relatively large multiethnic military-conquest polities ruled by monarchs bearing the Chinese title *huangdi* or “emperor”) to territories administered independently by so-called “governors” who maintained a pretense of loyalty to the still theoretically legitimate Jin dynasty.¹ Beyond these, innumerable fortified villages and other local areas existed, often effectively independently. In one frequently cited late fourth-century case, for example, over 3,000 fortified places “Within the Passes” (Guanzhong)—the strategic region surrounding Chang’an—formed an alliance to assist a certain emperor.² Despite its extreme complexity, the overall pattern of this era can be boiled down to either a geographic rivalry between a sequence of particularly powerful regimes in the Northwest and an opposing sequence in the Northeast, or to two chronological sub-

¹ The name “Sixteen Kingdoms” derives from the title of an early history called the *Spring and Autumn of the Sixteen States* (*Shiliuguo chunqiu*), compiled by Cui Hong (d. 525) between 508 and 522, but later lost. It survives today only as reconstructed from quotations. The English term “kingdoms” used here is conventional but inaccurate, because it translates a Chinese word that only more generically means “states” or “countries”—and these regimes were as frequently really empires or mere warlord bands as they were literal kingdoms. For the fragmentary state of contemporary sources, see Wang Zhigang, *Jia guo, Yi Xia yu tian ren: Shiliuguo Beichao shixue tanyan* (Beijing, 2013), p. 86. For a table listing twenty-two regimes in this period, see Zhang Hequan, *Wei Jin Nanbeichao shi: yige fenlie yu ronghe de shidai* (Taipei, 2010), pp. 203–204.

² JS 114.2926. Michael C. Rogers, *The chronicle of Fu Chien: A case of exemplar history* (Berkeley, 1968), p. 184, following the ZZTJ, reads the number of fortified places as only thirty.

periods before and after a nearly successful effort to reunify all of China, including the South, by the Former Qin empire (351–384) in 383.

During the Sixteen Kingdoms era, education was frequently neglected, production and trade were severely disrupted, and even victorious conquerors were sometimes reduced to such desperate expedients as digging up wild taro roots to avoid starvation.³ The Sixteen Kingdoms period was also, conspicuously, a time when a majority of the regimes had identifiably non-Chinese rulers.⁴ These non-Chinese peoples are known as the “Five Hu” (*wu hu*), Hu being a generic Chinese term for northern and northwestern foreigners. The five were: the Xiongnu, Xianbei, Qiang, Di, and Jie.

The Xiongnu had forged the first great steppe nomadic empire in what is present-day Mongolia (c. 209 BCE–155 CE). They are also a cautionary example of the difficulty posed by some of these ostensibly straightforward ethnic labels, because Xiongnu (related to the name Hun) was probably more “a socio-political designation” than the name of a homogeneous people having any uniform cultural, ethnic, linguistic, or genetic identity.⁵ The Xianbei (which is the Chinese transcription of a native name that may have been pronounced something more like *Sārbi) were divided into multiple separately named subgroups, and probably originated in the general vicinity of modern Manchuria and northeastern Inner Mongolia. The Xianbei spoke languages that may have been related to later Mongolic (but with tantalizing hints of Turkic), and may have begun more as forest hunters and agriculturalists than as steppe pastoral nomads.⁶ The Qiang and Di peoples, meanwhile, are commonly identified as proto-Tibetan. They inhabited wide swathes of the west, including modern Tibet, Qinghai, and portions of Gansu and Shaanxi. Scholars have

³ For taro roots, see *JS* 121.3035–3036. For education, see *JS* 113.2888. On the economy, see Cao Xiaoli, “Shiliuguo Beichao de qianbi wenti,” *Zhongguo jingji shi yanjiu* 2004.1, pp. 118–120.

⁴ David B. Honey, “Sinification as statecraft in conquest dynasties of China: Two early medieval case studies,” *JAH* 30.2 (1996), p. 115, n. 1. Ethnic Chinese people are today called “Han,” and this label was already in use by the sixth century—but probably without precisely the same modern ethno-national connotations. See Huang Yongnian, *Liu zhi jiu shiji Zhongguo zhengzhi shi* (Shanghai, 2004), pp. 34–39. For the Sixteen Kingdoms period, when Chinese people were more likely to be called “Jin (dynasty) people,” the term “Han” was still anachronistic. Aside from the lingering memory of the original Han dynasty itself, and the third-century Three Kingdoms state of Shu-Han, two of the fourth-century Sixteen Kingdoms also specifically called themselves Han, though neither had ethnic “Han Chinese” rulers. For all these reasons, I prefer the vagueness of the English word “Chinese” to the pseudo-ethno-national precision of “Han.”

⁵ Ursula Brosseder and Bryan K. Miller, “State of research and future directions of Xiongnu studies,” in *Xiongnu archaeology: Multidisciplinary perspectives of the first steppe empire in Inner Asia*, ed. Ursula Brosseder and Bryan K. Miller (Bonn, 2011), p. 30.

⁶ Charles Holcombe, “The Xianbei in Chinese history,” *EMC* 19 (2013), pp. 1–38. *Sārbi (or *Sirvi) is a reconstruction of the Chinese transcription that in modern Mandarin is pronounced “Xianbei”; see E. G. Pulleyblank, “The Chinese and their neighbors in prehistoric and early historic times,” in *The origins of Chinese civilization*, ed. David N. Keightley (Berkeley, 1983), p. 452.

identified as many as thirty-six different names used by early Chinese sources for assorted groups of Qiang.⁷ The Jie (but caution is again necessary, because this label was sometimes applied indiscriminately) may have originated very much farther to the west in Central Asia—possibly even as Indo-European speakers—sometimes reportedly having distinctive facial appearances featuring high noses, deep-set eyes, and thick beards. These Jie may have been relocated to the north of China much earlier as part of the Xiongnu empire.⁸ By the Sixteen Kingdoms period, the center of Jie activity lay in modern Shanxi, not far from the traditional heartland of Chinese civilization.

How it came to pass that there were significant numbers of non-Chinese people living on, or within, the borders of the Chinese empire by the beginning of the fourth century is, obviously, a key question.⁹ There is a wide belt of transitional borderland—suitable for both farming and pasturage—that stretches across much of the north of China, approaching surprisingly close in places to the political and population centers of the early Chinese empire.¹⁰ In the late third century, for example, there was much pasturing of animals, including sheep and horses, in what is now northern Henan.¹¹ Although a “Chinese” identity (designated by terms such as *Huaxia* 華夏) had certainly begun to emerge in classical antiquity, it was a somewhat fluid and potentially inclusive identity. Even after the first imperial unification in 221 BCE, the empire remained multicultural and multilingual (in speech, if not in writing).¹² Over four and a half centuries of the unified Qin and Han dynasties (221 BCE–220 CE), there may have been some internal Chinese cultural consolidation, but non-Chinese people also drifted south into China, and Chinese people moved outward to the borderlands in substantial numbers, creating a mixed population on the frontiers.¹³

⁷ Xing Yitian, “Dong Han de Hu bing,” *Guoli zhengzhi daxue xuebao* 28 (1973), p. 153. For the Qiang and Di, see also Pulleyblank, “The Chinese and their neighbors in prehistoric and early historic times,” pp. 418–423.

⁸ Bai Cuiqin, *Wei Jin Nanbeichao minzu shi* (Chengdu, 1996), pp. 181–187; Lin Meicun, “Ji Hu shiji kao: Taiyuan xin chu Suidai Yu Hong muzhi de jige wenti,” *Zhongguo shi yanjiu* 2002.1, p. 72; Liu Xueyao, *Wu Hu shi lun* (Taipei, 2001), pp. 34–37; Tang Changru, “Wei Jin za hu kao,” in *idem*, *Wei Jin Nanbeichao shi luncong* (Beijing, 1955), pp. 414–427.

⁹ See Jin Fagen, “Dong Han zhi Xi Jin chuqi (xiyuan 25–280) Zhongguo jingnei youmu minzu de huodong,” *Shibao yuekan* 13.9–10 (1984), pp. 364–375.

¹⁰ Jonathan Karam Skaff, *Sui–Tang China and its Turko-Mongol neighbors: Culture, power, and connections, 580–800* (Oxford, 2012), p. 30.

¹¹ *JS* 51.1431.

¹² Chun-shu Chang, *The rise of the Chinese Empire*, Volume 1, *Nation, state, and imperialism in early China, ca. 1600 B.C.–A.D. 8* (Ann Arbor, 2007), p. 265; Hori Toshikazu, *Chūgoku to kodai bigashi Ajia sekai: Chūka teki sekai to shominzoku* (Tokyo, 1993), p. 37; Wang Mingke, *Huaxia bianyuan: lishi jiyi yu zuqun rentong* (Taipei, 1997), p. 188.

¹³ Ma Changshou, *Wubuan yu Xianbei* (Shanghai, 1962), p. 36.

The Di people had long inhabited parts of northwestern Sichuan, south-eastern Gansu and southwestern Shaanxi, and one mid-third-century account noted that although the Di had learned to speak Chinese and were under Chinese administration, they still spoke their own language among themselves and retained their own indigenous hierarchy.¹⁴ The Lushui Hu people, whose Juqu clan would establish one of the Sixteen Kingdoms (Northern Liang, 397–439), may have already been living in the Lushui (Black River) area of modern Gansu for some 500 or 600 years.¹⁵

The Xiongnu in Mongolia had been the great alien “other” confronting Han dynasty China, but it is possible that the Xiongnu identity may have originated on the edge of China in the Ordos bend area of the Yellow River, and the Xiongnu long remained active near the top of the Yellow River loop.¹⁶ In 48 CE, the Southern Xiongnu submitted to the Han dynasty, and were permitted to move their grazing areas inside Han imperial borders into northern Shanxi and the Ordos.¹⁷ In the early third century, Cao Cao (155–220) reorganized some 29,000 Southern Xiongnu camps into five divisions concentrated now in southern Shanxi, under native chieftains but with Chinese supervision.¹⁸ Population totals can only be guessed at, but were surely in the hundreds of thousands.¹⁹ Over the course of the third century, still more Xiongnu moved south into China, and those in Shanxi began to shift from pastoral nomadism to a more settled form of animal husbandry that mixed livestock raising with agriculture.²⁰

A complex process of cultural mixing and exchange had begun. Many of the frontier peoples had long been exposed to aspects of Chinese culture, including Chinese-language literacy for members of their elite. By the end of the Han dynasty, it was sometimes becoming difficult to even distinguish Southern Xiongnu culturally from Chinese people.²¹ In the sense of being subjects of the Han empire, at least, some Xiongnu had literally become “Han Chinese.” Going in the other direction, meanwhile, by the late third century, ethnic non-Chinese paraphernalia and cuisine had reportedly become fashionable among Chinese elites.²² During the Sixteen Kingdoms period, non-Chinese

¹⁴ Bai Cuiqin, *Wei Jin Nanbeichao minzu shi*, p. 234; SGZ 30.858–859, quoting the *Weilüe*.

¹⁵ Wang Zhongluo, *Wei Jin Nanbeichao shi* (Shanghai, 2003), p. 268.

¹⁶ Wang Gaoxin, “Handai de minzu jiaowang yu minzu ronghe,” *Xuexi yu tansuo* 2013.1, p. 139; Wang Mingke, *Youmuzhe de jueze: miandui Han diguo de Bei Ya youmu buzhu* (Taipei, 2009), pp. 123, 165.

¹⁷ Tamura Jitsuzō, *Kita Ajia ni okeru rekishi sekai no keisei* (Kyoto, 1956), pp. 12–13.

¹⁸ Wan Shengnan, *Wei Jin Nanbeichao shi lungao* (Hefei, 1983), p. 132.

¹⁹ Liu Xueyao, *Wu Hu shi lun*, Taipei, 2001, p. 32. Tamura Jitsuzō, *Chūgoku shijō no minzoku idōki: Goko, Hoku-Gi jidai no seiji to shakai* (Tokyo, 1985), p. 88.

²⁰ JS 97.2549. Tamura Jitsuzō, *Chūgoku shijō no minzoku idōki*, p. 15.

²¹ Ma Liqing, “Nan Xiongnu Hanhua wenti yanjiu,” *Guoxue xuekan* 2012.4, pp. 54–62.

²² JS 27.823. Cai Xuehai, “Xi Jin zhongzu bianluan xulun,” *Guoli bianyiguan guanankan* 15.2 (1986), p. 49.

influences on Chinese culture could sometimes be as substantial as the reverse.²³ In the long run, this mutual blending process eliminated most of the old ethnic distinctions and generated a new “Chinese” synthesis, one in which the Chinese language ultimately emerged triumphant, but some originally non-Chinese elements (such as tunics, trousers, and boots for male clothing) also prevailed.²⁴

From the early first century, the Han dynasty had increasingly relied upon non-Chinese military auxiliaries for defense along its northern frontier.²⁵ Even earlier, a possibly Mongolic-speaking people known as the Wuhuan (alternatively known as the Wuwan) had been encouraged to concentrate just outside the Han borders, from southern Manchuria west to the vicinity of modern Beijing, to perform reconnaissance against the Xiongnu for the Han.²⁶ In 49 CE, more than eighty Wuhuan chieftains were given Han titles and settled inside the borders, forming a northern buffer zone stretching from southern Manchuria west to the top of the Yellow River loop. The Wuhuan provided not only frontier defense but also a substantial contingent for the Han imperial bodyguard.²⁷ After Cao Cao decisively defeated the Wuhuan in battle in 207, however, they were absorbed into other population groups, and a distinct Wuhuan identity gradually disappeared.²⁸

The southward movement of the Wuhuan had encouraged the closely related Xianbei to follow along behind. These Xianbei now occupied former Wuhuan territory and fanned out along the entire line of the Han northern frontier. After the final defeat of the Northern Xiongnu leadership and their departure from Mongolia north of the Gobi in 91 CE, some of the Xianbei entered Mongolia, where they absorbed large numbers of former Xiongnu people (who became “Xianbei”) and adapted to the pastoral nomadic lifestyle of the steppes.²⁹

In the mid-second century, a Xianbei chieftain named Tanshihuai (c. 136–181 CE) succeeded in welding together scattered populations throughout the extensive former Xiongnu lands into a mighty new Xianbei empire.

²³ Liu Xueyao, *Lidai Huzu wangchao zhi minzu zhengce* (Taipei, 2005), p. 19.

²⁴ For clothing, see Kate A. Lingley, “Naturalizing the exotic: On the changing meaning of ethnic dress in medieval China,” *AO* 38 (2010), pp. 50–80.

²⁵ Xing Yitian, “Dong Han de Hu bing,” p. 143–166.

²⁶ *HHS* 90.2981. For the Wuhuan, and their possible identification with the Avars, see Pulleyblank, “The Chinese and their neighbors,” p. 452–454.

²⁷ *SGZ* 30.833, quoting the *Weishu*. Lin Gan, *Dong Hu shi* (Hohhot, 2007), pp. 39–40; Uchida Ginpū, “Ugan Senbi no genryū to shoki shakai kōsei: kodai kita Ajia yūboku minzoku no seikatsu,” in *idem*, *Kita Ajia shi kenkyū: Senbi Jūzen Tokketsu ben* (1943; Kyōto, 1975), pp. 46–47.

²⁸ *SGZ* 30.835; Li Dalong, “Jianlun Cao Cao dui Wuhuan de zhengtao ji yiyi,” *Shixue jikan* 2005.3, pp. 35–40.

²⁹ *HHS* 90.2986.

Not long after his death, however, his empire dissolved, because the practice of hereditary leadership succession was not yet firmly established among the Xianbei.³⁰ By the early third century, there were apparently several tens of Xianbei tribes, organized under three major chieftains, dominating the borderlands from the Yellow River loop eastward to the Yalu river facing what is now Korea.³¹

Meanwhile, many of the people in Shanxi who retained non-Chinese identities, such as the Xiongnu, had been reduced to tenant farmers or other positions of servitude to wealthy Chinese, brewing potential dissatisfaction.³² At the same time, the introduction of horse armor in late Han dynasty times, and of the stirrup by the fourth century, made available—especially to people already accustomed to life on horseback—a formidable new type of heavy cavalry.³³ Although such heavy cavalry was only employed at first on a small scale, by the end of the fourth century some 60,000 armored horses (*kaima*) could allegedly be captured in a single campaign.³⁴

These developments helped establish the preconditions for the imposition of “non-Chinese” military rule by the Five Hu peoples in fourth-century north China. The actual events, however, were less a case of “foreign invasion” than of internal Chinese governmental collapse and domestic rebellion. The most significant non-Chinese conquerors all began their rise in the early fourth century as allies of opposing Chinese forces in the Chinese civil wars.³⁵ Even before then, moreover, the accelerating collapse of the Western Jin dynasty had driven large numbers of people of all ethnicities to become either refugees or rebels. For example, in 296, a Di and Qiang rebellion in modern Gansu and Shaanxi created famine conditions, which forced many people onto the roads in search of food. One such group of refugees that fled into what is now Sichuan included a man named Li Te (d. 303). Li Te’s family had originally been part of the indigenous population of eastern Sichuan (the Cong subgroup of the Ba people). In the early third century, they had been resettled in the vicinity of modern Tianshui, Gansu. There, among the local Di population, they came to be known by the hyphenated ethnic designation “Ba-Di.” Li Te now led a refugee band back to Sichuan, where, by about 302, they had established what could be considered the first of the Sixteen Kingdoms: Cheng-Han (304–347). It would not be until 304, however, that Li Te’s son claimed the (Chinese) title of king, and not until 306 that he became emperor.³⁶

³⁰ HHS 90.2989–2990, 2994. ³¹ SGZ 26.727. ³² HHS 87.2899; JS 93.2412.

³³ Albert E. Dien, “A study of early Chinese armor,” AA 43.1–2 (1981), pp. 36–40; *idem*, “The stirrup and its effect on Chinese military history,” AO 16 (1986), p. 38.

³⁴ JS 117.2981. ³⁵ Tian Yuqing, *Dong Jin menfa zhengzhi* (Beijing, 2005), pp. 24–29.

³⁶ JS 4.94–95, 120.3021–3022. On Cheng-Han, see Chapter 7 by Terry Kleeman in this volume.

THE ROADS TO THE FEI RIVER

Han/Former Zhao (304–329)

The Cheng-Han state in Sichuan may have begun slightly earlier, but it was the rebellion of Liu Yuan (251–310) in Shanxi in 304 that is conventionally said to mark the beginning of the Sixteen Kingdoms.³⁷ Liu Yuan claimed descent from the founders of both the Xiongnu and the Han empires, and his family had taken the Han dynasty Chinese imperial surname Liu.³⁸ Despite his Xiongnu ancestry, Liu Yuan had studied under a renowned Confucian scholar and spent years living in the Chinese capital. When the Western Jin prince Sima Ying (279–306) became ascendant during the “Disturbances of the Eight Princes,” he made Liu Yuan commandant of the garrison cavalry (*tunqi xiaowei*). Meanwhile, Liu Yuan’s Xiongnu relatives in Shanxi were contemplating a restoration of the vanished Xiongnu imperium and secretly informed Liu Yuan that they had named him great *shanyu* (the supreme Xiongnu title). In 304, when rival Western Jin forces attacked Sima Ying at his base in Ye (in modern south Hebei near the Henan border), Liu Yuan persuaded Sima Ying to give him leave to go mobilize support from among the five Xiongnu divisions in southern Shanxi. Instead of aiding Sima Ying, however, Liu Yuan rebelled, establishing his capital just north of modern Lishi in central Shanxi.³⁹

Claiming that the Mandate of Heaven was based on merit alone, and that the legendary founders of the ancient (“Chinese”) Xia and Zhou dynasties had also sprung from non-Chinese peoples—and appealing to his own Han dynasty imperial family surname—Liu Yuan proclaimed himself founding king of a new state, which, furthermore, he pointedly named “Han.”⁴⁰ In 308, he moved his capital to Pingyang,⁴¹ in southern Shanxi, and promoted himself to emperor. Two years later, in 310, he appointed his fourth son Liu Cong (d. 318) as great *shanyu* to administer the non-Chinese population of his realm, while simultaneously also establishing a separate parallel organization to administer his Chinese subjects as a Chinese-style emperor.⁴²

³⁷ JS 101.2644. For Liu Yuan, see Li Ping, “Liu Yuan yu Shi Le,” in *idem*, *Beichao yanjiu cun gao* (1994; Beijing, 2006), pp. 181–195; David B. Honey, *The rise of the medieval Hsiung-nu: The biography of Liu Yüan* (Bloomington, IN, 1990).

³⁸ JS 101.2644–2645. The most favorable of three possible ancestries was publicized, as David B. Honey demonstrates in “Lineage as legitimization in the rise of Liu Yüan and Shih Le,” *JAOS* 110.4 (1990), pp. 616–621.

³⁹ JS 101.2647–2648.

⁴⁰ JS 101.2649. For differing contemporary views on the conceivability of non-Chinese sovereigns, see Kawamoto Yoshiaki, *Gi Shin Nanbokuchō jidai no minzoku mondai* (Tokyo, 1998), pp. 29–33.

⁴¹ On Pingyang, and other Sixteen Kingdoms capitals, see Nancy Shatzman Steinhardt, *Chinese architecture in an age of turmoil, 200–600* (Honolulu, 2014), pp. 18–28.

⁴² Lü Yifei, “Xiongnu Hanguo de zhengzhi yu Di, Qiang,” *Lishi yanjiu* 2001.2, p. 171.

When Liu Yuan died in 310, Liu Cong quickly moved to kill Yuan's designated successor and install himself instead (r. 310–318). Liu Cong continued the pattern of dual administration, appointing left and right directors of dependents (*jili*) to rule the Chinese, and a *shanyu* with left and right assistants to command the non-Chinese camps.⁴³ In 311, the main Western Jin army was annihilated in Henan by a rebel Xiongnu “Han” regime force under the command of an ethnic Jie named Shi Le (274–333), and, in the sixth month of 311, the Western Jin capital at Luoyang fell. The Western Jin emperor Huai (r. 307–313) was captured, and, on New Year's Day in 313, Liu Cong forced the captive Emperor Huai to pour wine at his feast. Not long after, in early 313, Liu Cong had Emperor Huai poisoned.⁴⁴ In 316, the alternate Western Jin capital at Chang'an was also captured, and the last Western Jin emperor was put to death in 318.

Although Liu Cong's so-called “Han” state had captured both of the Western Jin capitals, the territory he actually controlled remained fairly limited. Earlier, in 312, Liu Cong had dispatched his kinsman Liu Yao (d. 329) north to attack what is now Taiyuan, in central Shanxi, where the Western Jin loyalist official Liu Kun (270–317) was holding out. Although the city fell, Liu Kun turned for assistance to his nomadic fictive “brother” Tuoba Yilu (d. 316). The Tuoba (pronounced Tabgač in Old Turkic) were a subgroup of the Xianbei who had established themselves in the Dai region outside the northeastern corner of the Yellow River loop. Tuoba Yilu responded to Liu Kun's request, striking south against present-day Taiyuan. In the resulting battle, Liu Yao's horse fell, and he was wounded multiple times. An officer gave Liu Yao his horse, however, and Yao escaped, retreating south with Tuoba Yilu in pursuit.⁴⁵

Despite an education in the Chinese classics and history,⁴⁶ Liu Cong was allegedly besotted with the hunt and his harem, and entrusted affairs of state to favorites. When Liu Cong died in 318, he was succeeded by his son Can (d. 318), who is similarly said to have indulged himself, allowing a Xiongnu named Jin Zhun (d. 318) to exercise active command. Jin Zhun soon staged a coup and murdered Liu Can, massacring members of the Liu family and desecrating Liu Yuan's and Liu Cong's tombs. Jin Zhun then proclaimed himself heavenly king (*tian wang*) of “Han,” and made overtures of allegiance toward the Eastern Jin dynasty in the South—even offering to return the captured imperial seal to Eastern Jin, with the explanation that “since

⁴³ JS 102.2665; Liu Xueyao, *Wu Hu shi lun*, pp. 275–276. ⁴⁴ JS 5.123, 125; 102.2663.

⁴⁵ JS 5.123–124, 102.2662–2663.

⁴⁶ Tang Changru, “Wei Jin za hu kao,” p. 402, suspects that such recurrent claims to Confucian erudition for Hu leaders are fabrications.

antiquity no Hu [non-Chinese] person had ever been a Son of Heaven.”⁴⁷ Within four months of this coup, however, the deceased Liu Cong’s cousin, Liu Yao, had marched on the “Han” capital at Pingyang from his own power base at Chang’an and put Jin Zhun and his family to death. Liu Yao then proclaimed himself emperor (r. 319–328), relocated the capital to Chang’an, and changed the name of the state from “Han” to Zhao (invoking the name of one of the ancient Warring States). This regime is known to history as the Former Zhao (319–329).

Liu Yao was a relative of Liu Yuan who had been orphaned in youth and raised by Yuan. While still young, he had reportedly once been implicated in a crime in Luoyang for which he would have been executed, but escaped—traveling part of the way concealed in a book chest—to what is now northern Korea, remaining there in hiding until there was an amnesty.⁴⁸ After becoming emperor, Liu Yao promoted schools and examinations, and enjoyed some military successes in the west. However, in a climactic battle with Shi Le’s rival army outside Luoyang in 328, Liu Yao was allegedly too drunk to command effectively, and was defeated, captured, and killed.⁴⁹ By 329, the last remnants of Former Zhao had been eliminated, and replaced by Later Zhao.

Later Zhao (319–351)

Later Zhao was founded by Shi Le, who was said to be a Jie. His regime may therefore represent a relatively rare example of Central Asian—possibly even Indo-European—rule on China’s Central Plain.⁵⁰ Whatever his remote ancestry, however, Shi Le’s family home had been located in southeastern Shanxi for generations now, where his immediate forebears had been minor leaders. As a teenager, he had once traveled to Luoyang to trade. During a famine around 303, he narrowly escaped being sold by a Jin dynasty official into slavery through concealment by a man for whom he had previously farmed north of modern Taiyuan. Despite this escape, Shi Le nevertheless soon found himself among a group of ethnic non-Chinese people who were shackled and sold as slaves in the east, in what is now Shandong, by a prominent Western Jin leader. There, Shi Le’s new master was supposedly so impressed by Shi Le that he manumitted him. Striking up a relationship with a leader of a nearby horse pasture (who is credited with first bestowing on him the surname Shi), they assembled a small band of mounted bandits. In 306, they led several hundred

⁴⁷ ZZTJ 90.2862; JS 6.151, 63.1708, 102.2678–2679; Rogers, *The chronicle of Fu Chien*, p. 102, n. 281.

⁴⁸ JS 103.2683, 2688. ⁴⁹ JS 103.2688, 2692, 2695, 2700–2701.

⁵⁰ Wang Qing, “Shi Zhao zhengquan yu xiyu wenhua,” *Xiyu yanjiu* 2002.3, p. 91 and n. 1.

horsemen to aid the cause of one of the warring Western Jin princely factions. By 307, Shi Le had attached himself to Liu Yuan's "Han" dynasty, becoming one of its most successful military commanders.⁵¹

After the enthronement of Liu Yao in 319, he had sent an emissary to Shi Le, offering Shi such exalted titles as Grand Steward (*taizai*) and King of Zhao, but Liu Yao soon became suspicious and withdrew the offer—putting Shi Le's representative to death, and provoking implacable enmity between the two leaders. Shi Le in that same year independently proclaimed himself King of Zhao (known to history as Later Zhao), ruling much of northeast China from his capital at Xiangguo, near modern Xingtai in Hebei. Shi had initially often indiscriminately slaughtered the inhabitants of captured cities, but, after he became king, he issued orders against the mistreatment of Chinese elites, appointing many to office, and he restored the Chinese Nine Ranks official selection system. Shi also established Chinese-style reign periods and altars to the soil and grain, and, despite being personally illiterate, promoted Chinese educational institutions. He designated Luoyang his southern capital because of its profound Chinese historical associations, and he banned the nomadic practices of levirate—that is, marrying one's deceased elder brother's widow—as well as marrying while in mourning, which were offensive to Chinese sensibilities. Parallel to these concessions to Chinese culture, however, he also maintained the old Xiongnu title of *shanyu*, designated the non-Chinese Hu people as his fellow "countrymen" (*guoren*), and strictly tabooed any use of the word "Hu."⁵²

This hybrid approach would become characteristic of the Sixteen Kingdoms, which typically maintained a dual appearance with Hu-style rulers over the Hu population and Chinese-style rulers over the Chinese, while relying upon their own ethnic group and other allied Hu for a military core, and Chinese farmers for an agricultural base. Concessions to Chinese culture may have been motivated less by admiration for Chinese civilization than by its being the most efficient way to control conquered Chinese subjects.⁵³ Nevertheless, the identity of these Hu rulers could also be intriguingly ambiguous. Shi Le is simultaneously the very epitome of a Sixteen Kingdoms-era "barbarian" chieftain, but also a quintessential example of a sinicized

⁵¹ JS 104.2707–2709; WS 95.2047–2048.

⁵² JS 104.2728–2729, 105.2735–2736, 105.2748, 105.2751; SSXY, 7.7, pp. 391–392, Richard Mather, trans., *Shih-shuo hsin-yü: A new account of tales of the world* (Minneapolis, 1976), p. 200; *Yiwen leiju*, Ouyang Xun (557–641), comp. 624 (Shanghai, 1982), p. 85.1453, quoting the *Ye zhong ji*. See also Tang Changru, "Jindai beijing gezu 'bianluan' de xingzhi ji wu Hu zhengquan zai Zhongguo de tongzhi," in *idem*, *Wei Jin Nanbeichao shi luncong* (Beijing, 1955), pp. 169–170.

⁵³ Gao Min, *Wei Jin Nanbeichao bingzhi yanjiu* (Zhengzhou, 1998), p. 176; Liu Xueyao, *Lidai Huzu*, pp. 137–143; Tamura Jitsuzō, *Chūgoku shijō no minzoku idōki*, p. 80; Utsunomiya Kiyoyoshi, "Nanchō to Hokuchō," in *idem*, *Chūgoku kodai chūseishi kenkyū* (1968; Tokyo, 1977), pp. 437–439.

“barbarian” who “stripped off felt and fur, and dressed in [Chinese-style] cap and sash,” becoming a member of Chinese civilization.⁵⁴ Shi (though illiterate) apparently spoke Chinese, while it is unclear how well, or even if at all, he could speak his own “native” tongue. There is a tantalizing story of the western Buddhist monk Fotucheng (d. 348) reportedly once speaking several words of the Jie language to Shi Le, which were then immediately translated into Chinese in the written record. This can be interpreted either as evidence that Shi could understand the Jie language (the translation merely being for the benefit of later Chinese readers), or that he could not and needed a Chinese translation.⁵⁵

After his conquest of Former Zhao in 329, Shi Le’s Later Zhao state controlled nearly all of north China except for the extreme northeast and extreme northwest. In 330, Shi proclaimed himself heavenly king, and then emperor. When Shi Le died in 333, he was succeeded by a son, but real power lay in the hands of a nephew named Shi Hu (295–349), who deposed the son and killed him in 334, moving his capital from Xiangguo to Ye (the strategic city in modern Hebei that had earlier been Cao Cao’s military base) in 335.

Interestingly, Shi Hu did not take the Chinese imperial title until the last year of his life in 349, for most of his reign contenting himself instead with merely being heavenly king. Heavenly king is a title that appears in the ancient Zhou dynasty classics, and conforms well to venerable Chinese ideals of sovereignty, but it also resonates with widespread Inner Asian concepts of endowment by the sky-god Tängri. The exceptionally frequent use of this title “heavenly king” during the Sixteen Kingdoms and Northern Dynasties period may, therefore, in part reflect non-Chinese steppe cultural influences—or at least a consciousness of rupture from recent Chinese imperial traditions.⁵⁶ Shi Hu is also said to have explicitly claimed that Buddhism should be tolerated in his kingdom precisely because Buddha, like himself, was not Chinese.⁵⁷ Yet,

⁵⁴ David B. Honey, *Stripping off felt and fur: An essay on nomadic sinification* (Bloomington, IN, 1992), p. 3; *JS* 107.2798. As Christopher I. Beckwith argues, the Chinese did not actually have a concept that was precisely identical to our “barbarian.” See his *Empires of the Silk Road: A history of Central Eurasia from the Bronze Age to the present* (Princeton, 2009), pp. 358–359.

⁵⁵ *JS* 95.2486; *Gao seng zhuan*, Huijiao (c.530), comp., T.50.9.384b; Arthur F. Wright, “Fo-t’u-têng: A biography,” *HJAS* 11.3–4 (1948), pp. 322–323, n. 6, 344. For discussion, see Honey, “Lineage as legitimation,” p. 618; Liu Xueyao, *Wu Hu shilun*, p. 128; Zhang Chengzong, *Zhongguo fengsu tongshi: Wei Jin Nanbeichao juan* (Shanghai, 2001), p. 559.

⁵⁶ Edward H. Schafer, “The Yeh chung chi,” *TP* 76.4–5 (1990), pp. 156, 169; Sanping Chen, *Multicultural China in the early Middle Ages* (Philadelphia, 2012), pp. 140–142. There is a story (*WS* 95.2051) that soon after seizing power, Shi Hu dressed in robe and crown for state sacrifices, but saw his reflection in a mirror headless and was too frightened to take imperial titles, limiting himself to king. *JS* 106.2765 states that the title of heavenly king followed Shang and Zhou dynasty precedent.

⁵⁷ *JS* 95.2487–2488; *Gao seng zhuan*, 9.385c; Wright, “Fo-t’u-têng,” p. 356.

although Shi Hu was among the most notoriously cruel and “barbarous” rulers of the Sixteen Kingdoms, he also respected Confucian scholarship, and even sent an Erudite to copy the Confucian classics that were engraved on stone in Luoyang.⁵⁸

Shi Hu had two of his own sons killed, and after he died in 349 a brutal struggle for succession erupted. Power was fairly quickly seized by an adopted grandson of Shi Hu named Ran (or Shi) Min (d. 352), who was of Chinese descent but had taken the Shi family surname. Perhaps simply because he feared that he could not trust them, Ran (Shi) Min turned savagely on the non-Chinese population—offering a reward for the heads of Hu people—and orchestrated a horrific ethnic slaughter. In 350, he ascended the throne as emperor of what would prove to be an ephemeral state called Wei (350–352), and reverted to his original surname Ran.⁵⁹ The Central Plain now collapsed into chaos as several million people of various ethnicities who had been forcibly relocated to the Later Zhao heartland attempted to return home, clashed with each other on the roads, and suffered from famine and disease.⁶⁰ In 352, Ran Min was captured, and soon put to death, by the Former Yan.

Former Yan (349–370)

The Former Yan dynasty was founded by the Murong branch of the Xianbei. The Murong identity had originally coalesced around a strongman in the central portion of Tanshihuai’s great second-century Xianbei empire.⁶¹ In the early third century, the Murong chieftain led his people into southwestern Manchuria, where, in 238, they assisted the Three Kingdoms Wei dynasty in their defeat of an independent Chinese family of warlords (the Gongsun) who had dominated that area for some five decades. As a reward, the Murong chieftain was given a Chinese princely title, and he established a Murong state in the area. A grandson of this chieftain was elevated to the title of “*shanyu* of the Xianbei” by the Western Jin dynasty in 281. Perhaps under pressure from other peoples, he relocated his base further east in Manchuria (Liaodong; that is, east of the Liao River). In 285, a son named Murong Hui (269–333) inherited the chieftaincy, and, in 294, returned to the Murong base in southwestern Manchuria (modern Liaoning), where they began to introduce agriculture and Chinese-style institutions. One estimate

⁵⁸ JS 106.2774.

⁵⁹ JS 107.2791–2793. See Kawamoto Yoshiaki, *Chūka no hōkai to kakudai: Gi Shin Nanbokuchō* (Tokyo, 2005), pp. 85–86.

⁶⁰ JS 107.2795. ⁶¹ Lin Gan, *Dong Hu shi*, p. 77.

of the Murong population around this time is ten to twenty thousand people.⁶²

Like a number of other frontier states in this period, the Murong adopted a pose of loyalty to the theoretically legitimate Chinese Jin dynasty as a way to strengthen their own position. In 289, Murong Hui submitted to Western Jin, and was rewarded with the title Area Commander (*dudu*) of the Xianbei. Sometime after 313, the last Western Jin emperor further appointed him garrison commander and duke (*gong* 公) of two northeastern states. In 319, Murong Hui conquered Liaodong, to his east, and drove the local Chinese regional inspector into exile in the proto-Korean state of Koguryō. In 321, the Eastern Jin dynasty (which had succeeded the Western Jin in 318), from its new base of refuge in the South, commissioned Murong Hui with a string of titles including governor (*mu*) of Liaodong.⁶³ An appearance of Murong subordination to Eastern Jin was sustained until as late as 352. These Chinese titles perpetuated an illusion of continued Chinese rule in the Northeast, but the reality was of an independent Murong Xianbei state.⁶⁴

With the collapse of Western Jin government throughout north China, Murong Hui offered a relatively stable Chinese-style administration in the far northeast, and large numbers of refugees sought shelter with the Murong.⁶⁵ As ruler, Murong Hui attempted to appeal to Chinese elites by invoking the claim that the founders of the ancient Xia and Zhou dynasties had also originally been non-Chinese, and he asked why, under the circumstances, anyone should have reservations about serving the Murong based on ethnic differences?⁶⁶ By invoking shared political beliefs and interests, this Murong regime seems to have won an unusually high degree of identification with, and support from, the Chinese population.⁶⁷ Despite much Chinese participation, however, from first to last the Murong regime that is known to history as Former Yan also maintained a distinctive Murong identity.⁶⁸

Murong Hui died in 333, and was succeeded by his third son, Huang (297–348), who took the title King of Yan (an ancient Chinese name for states

⁶² JS 108.2803–2804; WS 95.2060. For the Murong population, see Li Haiye, “Han shizu yu Murong shi zhengquan,” *Nei Menggu shida xuebao* (zhixue shehui kexue ban) 2001.4, p. 104.

⁶³ Li Chunhao, “Shiliuguo shiqi de ‘qin wang’ ji qi zhengzhi gongneng,” *Jinyang xuekan* 2001.1, pp. 84–85, 89; BS 94.3112; JS 6.152–153, 6.155, 14.427, 108.2804–2806; WS 95.2060.

⁶⁴ Peng Fengwen, *Liang Jin shiqi guojia rentong yanjiu* (Beijing, 2009), pp. 233–234.

⁶⁵ JS 108.2806; Ma Changshou, *Wubuan yu Xianbei*, pp. 37–38.

⁶⁶ JS 108.2813; Gerhard Schreiber, “The history of the Former Yen dynasty,” MS 14 (1949–1955), p. 416, and MS 15.1 (1956), p. 124.

⁶⁷ Peng Fengwen, *Liang Jin shiqi guojia rentong yanjiu*, pp. 219–271.

⁶⁸ Li Haiye, “Han shizu yu Murong,” pp. 107–110; Tian Likun, “San Yan wenhua muzang de leixing yu fenqi,” in *Han Tang zhi jian wenhua yishu de hudong yu jiaorong*, ed. Wu Hong (Beijing, 2001), pp. 205–230.

in the Northeast) in 337. Murong Huang promoted Chinese-style education, and reduced the proto-Korean kingdom of Koguryō to a vassal state, sacking its capital around 342 and capturing over 50,000 of its people, including the king's mother and wife and the king's father's corpse.⁶⁹ From the early fourth through the late fifth centuries there was much interaction between the Murong and Koguryō. Cultural exchange included a distinctive shared style of cap ornamentation known as "pace shaking" (*buyao*) leaves or filaments, which also showed some tantalizingly far-flung affiliations.⁷⁰ Under Murong Huang's rule, the Former Yan state also consolidated control over a number of other neighboring peoples.

After Huang died in 348 and was succeeded by his second son, Jun (d. 360), Former Yan took advantage of chaos on the Central Plain to strike south and conquer Ran (Shi) Min's troubled Wei regime in 352. Murong Jun promoted himself to emperor, and relocated his capital to Ye in 357 in order to more centrally dominate northeastern China. At its peak, Former Yan controlled much of modern Hebei, Henan, Shanxi, and Shandong, as well as southern Manchuria, and divided north China between itself and the Former Qin state (351–384) in the west. At the time of its fall, Former Yan is reported to have claimed a registered population of 9,987,935 persons.⁷¹

Former Yan's success proved tenuous, however. In 369, Huan Wen (312–373), acting in the name of the Eastern Jin dynasty in the South, launched an invasion that penetrated to north of the Yellow River. The youthful Former Yan emperor Murong Wei (c.350–384, r. 360–370) panicked, but his uncle Murong Chui (325–396) capably led a force to cut Huan Wen's water supply route. When the supplies were exhausted, Huan Wen retreated south with Murong Chui in pursuit. In the end, the Eastern Jin army was badly defeated. Instead of being rewarded for this notable victory, however, Murong Chui encountered jealousy at court, and, fearing for his life, he fled to the rival Former Qin regime in the west, where he subsequently even served as a guide against his own kinsmen.⁷² In a climactic battle in 370, allegedly because the Former Yan regent, Murong Ping (dates unknown; Ping was a son of Murong Hui and dominated the Former Yan court after 367), monopolized mountain springs and sold firewood and water to his own people

⁶⁹ JS 109.2817, 2826; LS 54.803; WS 95.2060, 100.2214; Jin Yufu, "Murong shi yu Gaogouli," *Yu gong banyuekan* 7.1–3 (1937), p. 183.

⁷⁰ Xu Bingkun, *Xianbei, sanguo, gufen: Zhongguo, Chaoxian, Riben gudai de wenhua jiaoliu* (Shenyang, 1996), pp. 94, 157–163. For a careful study of the wider affiliations, see Sarah Laursen, "Leaves that sway: Gold Xianbei cap ornaments from northeast China" (PhD dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 2011).

⁷¹ JS 113.2893. Rogers, *The chronicle of Fu Chien*, pp. 227–228, n. 256, believes this figure is "excessively high."

⁷² JS 113.2891; WS 95.2061.

for a profit, the Former Yan army lacked fighting spirit and was defeated.⁷³ In 370, Former Yan was conquered by Former Qin.

Former Liang (301–376), and the Tuyuhun

Shifting geographic focus to the extreme northwest, in 301 a Chinese official named Zhang Gui (255–314) had been appointed regional inspector of Liangzhou, in the Gansu corridor, by the Western Jin court.⁷⁴ As the Western Jin government disintegrated, when Zhang Gui died in 314 his eldest son inherited his position. The Zhang family went on to establish an independent regime that is known to history as Former Liang, with its capital located at Guzang (modern Wuwei), in Gansu. Despite the reality of Former Liang independence, the nine successive rulers of Former Liang usually contented themselves with such subordinate titles as governor, or at most prince (*wang*), and they maintained a pose of loyalty to the Jin dynasty. Except for a short period between about 320 and 329 when Former Liang was militarily forced to submit to Liu Yao's Former Zhao regime based in Chang'an, the Zhang family remained nominally officials of the Jin, and continued to use the last Western Jin reign period for dating purposes until as late as 361, when it was finally replaced by the current Eastern Jin reign period.⁷⁵

Nevertheless, Former Liang endured for seventy-six years, longer than any of the other Sixteen Kingdoms. Under its rule the remote and arid Gansu corridor became a haven for refugees from the war-torn Central Plain, and Former Liang played a major role in preserving Chinese elite culture in an age of widespread devastation.⁷⁶ In 335, the Former Liang ruler Zhang Jun (305–346, r. 324–346) sent an expedition across the sands to conquer Kucha and the Western Regions. For a time in the mid-fourth century, Former Liang may have controlled most of modern Gansu and Xinjiang, as well as parts of Qinghai and Ningxia.⁷⁷ After 353, however, Former Liang was weakened by internal family power struggles, and the last Former Liang ruler, Zhang Tianxi (ruled 363–376, d. 398), was obliged to acknowledge himself a vassal of the Former Qin empire (based at Chang'an), and in 376 was conquered by it.⁷⁸

⁷³ *Taiping yulan* (TPYL), compiled by Li Fang, 983 (Taipei, 1968) 334.2a, p. 1663b, quoting the lost *Shilunguo chunqiu*.

⁷⁴ JS 86.2221.

⁷⁵ JS 86.2248–2249, 103.2695, 103.2699–2700; Hans Bielenstein, "The Six Dynasties, Volume 1," *BMFEA* 68 (1996), pp. 54–55, 74.

⁷⁶ Chen Yinke, *Sui Tang zhidu yuanyuan luelungao* (Shijiazhuang, 2002), pp. 22–30.

⁷⁷ JS 86.2237; Yu Taishan, ed., *Xiyu tongzhi* (Zhengzhou, 1996), pp. 81. ⁷⁸ JS 113.2894, 2898.

Meanwhile, to the south of the Former Liang in what is now Qinghai, the Tuyuhun also formed a long-lived state, but one that is not included among the conventional list of Sixteen Kingdoms, and which is also not usually considered part of mainstream Chinese history. Tuyuhun was originally merely the name of an individual (ruled c. 285–318), who was the illegitimate older brother of a Murong Xianbei chieftain in southern Manchuria. To avoid conflict with his brother, he led his personal following west around 285, arriving in the area of Qinghai in the early fourth century. There, his following became known as “the Tuyuhun” people. These Tuyuhun forged a significant nomadic empire, which continued to be mentioned in Chinese histories until as late as the eleventh century.⁷⁹ The Tuyuhun provide an interesting example of the proliferation of ethnic identities in this period—in this case from a branch of the Xianbei that took the name of a particular leader.

Former Qin (351–384)

As the Western Jin government disintegrated in the early fourth century, a Di tribal leader named Fu Hong (285–350), in the area of modern Tianshui, Gansu, attracted a following of both local non-Chinese and Chinese people by distributing his personal wealth.⁸⁰ His surname reportedly had originally been Pu, but he changed it in response to a prophecy involving the written form of the Chinese character—suggesting a significant degree of Chinese cultural influence already upon this ethnic Di leader.⁸¹ After the Xiongnu Former Zhao regime had consolidated its base in Chang’an, not far to his east, Fu Hong submitted to it. When Former Zhao was replaced by Shi Le’s Later Zhao in 329, Fu Hong submitted again. In 333, Later Zhao moved Fu Hong eastward to a new base at Fangtou, north of the Yellow River in modern Henan, where he was placed in charge of dislocated persons (*liuren*). Fu Hong eventually fell under suspicion from the Later Zhao court, and in 350 he switched his allegiance to Eastern Jin. He also began to show signs of independence, styling himself great *shanyu* and king.⁸²

Fu Hong was soon thereafter succeeded by his third son Fu Jian^a (307–355), after being poisoned at a feast by one of his own officers. Hong’s dying advice

⁷⁹ Thomas D. Carroll, trans., *Account of the T’u-yü-hun in the history of the Chin dynasty*. Chinese dynastic histories project no. 4. (Berkeley, 1953); Gabriella Molè, *The T’u-yü-hun from the Northern Wei to the time of the Five Dynasties* (Rome, 1970). See also Liu Xueyao, *Xianbei shi lun* (Taipei, 1994), pp. 102–105.

⁸⁰ TPYL 121.714b, quoting the lost *Shiliuguo chunqiu*; JS 112.2867.

⁸¹ JS 112.2868; Liu Xueyao, *Wu Hu shi lun*, pp. 173–174. Lü Simian is skeptical of the name-change story, and observes that there were already Di people with the surname Fu. See *Liang Jin Nanbeichao shi* (1948; Shanghai, 1983), p. 172.

⁸² JS 112.2867–2868.

to his heir was to return west to the region “Within the Passes” around Chang’an, which would provide a more secure base. Initially, however, Fu Jian^a renounced the title of king, claiming instead to be a loyal Eastern Jin subject. To put his enemies off guard, he also accepted titles from Later Zhao, repaired his residence in Fangtong, and ordered his men to plant crops—all to suggest that he had no intention of going anywhere. Then, in late 350, he proclaimed himself Senior General Conquering the West (*zhengxi da jiangjun*) on behalf of the Eastern Jin dynasty and abruptly led his following southwest across the Yellow River on a pontoon bridge he had constructed near Luoyang, burning the bridge behind him. Fu Jian^a captured Chang’an, and reported his victory to the Eastern Jin. By 351, however, he was already claiming the independent titles of heavenly king and great *shanyu*, and in 352 he assumed the imperial throne (r. 352–355) of what is known to history as the Former Qin state.⁸³

In 354, Fu Jian^a’s bastion in the region “Within the Passes” was threatened by an Eastern Jin attack under the command of Huan Wen. Much of the population of the area allegedly welcomed the Eastern Jin army. Nonetheless, Fu Jian^a held out with a small number of men behind the deep moats of the inner city of Chang’an, while a mobile Former Qin field army harassed Huan Wen’s forces, and a scorched-earth policy deprived Huan’s army of supplies. For lack of food, Huan Wen was soon obliged to give up the assault and withdraw south.⁸⁴ Not long after this victory, Fu Jian^a died and was succeeded by his third son Sheng (335–357, r. 355–357). Fu Sheng, who is portrayed in the standard histories as having been remarkably depraved, was overthrown and killed in 357 in a coup led by his cousin Fu Jian (338–385), a grandson of the founding patriarch Fu Hong, and nephew of the earlier Fu Jian. Fu Jian made a gesture of offering the throne to an elder brother by a concubine, who declined it (but nonetheless continued to be viewed as a threat, and was soon compelled to commit suicide). In 357 Fu Jian became Heavenly King of Former Qin.⁸⁵

Early in his reign, Fu Jian was greatly assisted by a Chinese adviser named Wang Meng (325–375). Wang came from a poor family—he had once sold bamboo baskets for a living—but he became well educated. Wang Meng’s approach to government was to create order through a strict application of the law, and within a few weeks’ time had executed more than twenty of the ruler’s kinsmen and other strongmen, reducing the survivors to obedience.⁸⁶ Earlier, under the first Fu Jian^a, the dynasty had already begun to win popular support through diligent administration and respect for Confucian values.⁸⁷ Fu Jian

⁸³ JS 112.2868–2870. ⁸⁴ JS 98.2571, 112.2871.

⁸⁵ JS 112.2879, 113.2884. See Rogers, *The chronicle of Fu Chien*, pp. 201–202, n. 61.

⁸⁶ JS 113.2885–2887, 114.2929–2930. ⁸⁷ ZZTJ 99.3143.

now made an effort to smooth over ethnic differences and promote Chinese-style ceremonies and learning.⁸⁸ According to the standard history, the areas of modern Shaanxi and Gansu under his control “were orderly and peaceful and the common people prosperous and happy,” and tree-lined streets radiated out from Chang’an, with rest stops placed at regular intervals, along which merchants traded.⁸⁹

For a number of years after 351 north China was divided between two powerful states: Former Qin in the west, and the Murong-ruled Former Yan in the east. After consolidating his base “Within the Passes,” however, Fu Jian embarked on a program of conquest that would soon reunify all of north China. In 370, he defeated and absorbed Former Yan. In 373, he took what is now Sichuan. In 376, he subdued Former Liang in the far northwest, and then turned on the Tuoba Xianbei in the North, conquering them too. In 383, he even dispatched an army to conquer much of what is now Xinjiang. At the peak of Fu Jian’s power it is said that sixty-two foreign rulers sent him tribute, including blood-sweating horses from Central Asia, arrows from the far north-east, and fire-retardant cloth (presumably asbestos) from India.⁹⁰

Fu Jian presented himself as a representative of the cultivated Middle Kingdom in contrast to the “wild customs” (*huangsū*) of his captive northern Tuoba Xianbei leader.⁹¹ Like a number of other fourth-century states, he established Chinese-style offices for the administration of non-Chinese subject peoples, including a Commandant for the Protection of the Southern Indigenes (*Hu nan Man xiaowei*) that was targeted at the ethnically Chinese Eastern Jin dynasty.⁹² As Fu Jian contemplated the conquest of the Eastern Jin, in the South, it was not impossible to imagine his dynasty as the legitimate rulers of China.⁹³ In 380, when Fu Jian dispatched 150,000 households of his own Di people from the region “Within the Passes” to garrison important locations in the conquered east, his officials hailed this as the same colonization strategy that had enabled the glorious ancient Zhou dynasty to flourish for eight centuries after conquering the Shang—though one prophetic voice did caution Fu Jian that sending his Di kinsmen far away, while

⁸⁸ JS 113.2888, 2895; Kawamoto Yoshiaki, *Chūka no būkai to kakudai*, p. 90; Liu Xueyao, *Wu Hu shi lun*, p. 178; Wang Zhigang, *Jia guo, Yi Xia yu tian ren*, p. 99.

⁸⁹ JS 113.2895.

⁹⁰ JS 113.2904. Berthold Laufer identifies this material as asbestos in “Asbestos and salamander: An essay in Chinese and Hellenistic folk-lore,” *TP* 2nd ser. 16.3 (1915), pp. 309, 349.

⁹¹ JS 113.2899.

⁹² Misaki Yoshiaki, “Iminzoku tōgyokan ni arawareta Goko shokoku no minzokukan,” *Tōyōshi kenkyū* 54.1 (1995), pp. 34–35, 39, 52–54.

⁹³ See Luo Zhitian, “‘You jiao wu lei’: zhongguo wenhua yu zhengzhi de hudong—du Chen Yinke Sui, Tang, liang lun zhaji,” *Shehui kexue yanjiu* (2004.2), p. 128.

gathering large numbers of Xianbei, Qiang, and Jie people around his capital, was a recipe for potential disaster.⁹⁴

In 379, the southern city of Xiangyang, in modern Hubei, fell to Former Qin after a year-long siege, and became a staging ground for further attacks on Eastern Jin. In the seventh month of 383, Fu Jian launched a full-scale invasion, with the vanguard under the command of his youngest brother Fu Rong (d. 383), Murong Chui, and others. The danger that Eastern Jin might evade conquest by adopting a defensive scorched-earth policy behind the formidable natural barrier of the Yangzi river had previously been considered.⁹⁵ Perhaps out of concern for that possibility, after taking the gateway city of Shouchun in modern Anhui, Fu Jian rushed to engage the Eastern Jin army before his own full force had assembled—and suffered a disastrous defeat that is known to history as the Battle of the Fei River.⁹⁶ Although the modern scholar Michael Rogers has argued that the scale of this battle is vastly exaggerated in the traditional Chinese sources, even Rogers acknowledges that Fu Jian's failure to conquer the South, and the subsequent rapid disintegration of his empire, really was a major turning point in Chinese history.⁹⁷

Fu Jian was wounded in the battle, and only narrowly escaped. He rejoined the contingent commanded by Murong Chui, which was the only intact remnant of his once mighty army. During their retreat north, Fu Jian's army gradually began to reassemble, but Murong Chui detached himself before re-entering the region "Within the Passes" on the pretext of visiting his ancestral temples in the Northeast. A welter of rebellions soon erupted, and in 385 Fu Jian was surrounded on a mountain with only a handful of remaining followers, captured by a Qiang commander named Yao Chang (330–393), and strangled to death.⁹⁸

AFTER THE FEI RIVER ENCOUNTER

Later Qin (384–417)

After killing Fu Jian, Yao Chang occupied Chang'an in 386, proclaiming himself emperor of what is known as the Later Qin.⁹⁹ Yao Chang was a Qiang

⁹⁴ JS 113.2903, 114.2913; Rogers, *The chronicle of Fu Chien*, pp. 148, 159–160. For the Di garrisons, see also Jin Fagen, *Yongjia luanbou beifang de baozu* (Taipei, 1964), p. 72.

⁹⁵ JS 114.2915.

⁹⁶ JS 114.2917–2918. For the battle, see Chapter 5 on the Eastern Jin in this volume.

⁹⁷ Rogers, *The chronicle of Fu Chien*, pp. 3, 64–69, 72–73. ⁹⁸ JS 114.2918–2919, 2928–2929.

⁹⁹ JS 116.2965–2967.

person from the area of modern Gansu. His grandfather had assisted Three Kingdoms Wei in some of its campaigns, and his father had commanded a Di and Qiang contingent in Hebei in the service of Later Zhao. After the fall of Later Zhao, at the time of his own death in 352, this father supposedly instructed his forty-two sons that because there had never before been a non-Chinese emperor, they should revert to Eastern Jin and loyally serve that Chinese dynasty. Under the leadership of one of Yao Chang's older brothers, they actually did form the vanguard of an Eastern Jin Northern Expedition in 353, but Chang's older brother split with the Eastern Jin, proclaimed himself great *shanyu*, and marched north—where he was killed in battle against Former Qin in 357. After that, Yao Chang joined Fu Jian's service.¹⁰⁰ In 385, however, he obtained belated revenge as we have seen by killing Fu Jian and establishing his own empire, the Later Qin, based in the region "Within the Passes."

Once again, Chang'an became the capital of a major state in north-western China. Especially after Yao Chang died in 393 and was succeeded by his son Yao Xing (366–416, r. 393–416), the last pretenders to the defeated Former Qin throne were eliminated, Luoyang was retaken, and independent regimes in the far northwest offered their submission. Later Qin became not only a powerful empire, but also one that was notable for both Buddhist and Confucian scholarship. The renowned Kuchean Buddhist monk Kumārajīva (344–413) was respectfully installed in a monastery in Chang'an in 401, where he embarked on his unprecedented Chinese-language translation project of the Buddhist scriptures.¹⁰¹ Yao Xing also encouraged Confucian learning, and upheld the law—so that, at the time, it was said there was "no injustice."¹⁰² Reflecting the cultural level at Yao Xing's court, an emissary who was sent from the Tuoba Xianbei and detained for some years in Chang'an, where he was exposed to Chinese-language literary culture, was executed after returning to the Tuoba around 407 because the Tuoba ruler was outraged over his emulation of (sophisticated Chinese-style) "Qiang manners."¹⁰³ Despite these achievements, after Yao Xing died, internal power struggles soon weakened the Later Qin, which fell when Chang'an was taken during an Eastern Jin northern expedition in 417. At the time, the Eastern Jin conquerors found only a meagre 4,000 scrolls of books in the Later Qin archives—testimony to the dismal state of literature under even the most cultivated of the Sixteen Kingdoms.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁰ JS 116.2961–2962; WS 95.2081. ¹⁰¹ JS 95.2501–2502, 117.2984–2985.

¹⁰² JS 117.2979–2980. ¹⁰³ WS 28.685–686. ¹⁰⁴ SS 32.907, 49.1299.

Yan Revivals

Of the various states established in north China in the aftermath of the Fei river battle, the most significant were Later Qin (384–417) in the west and Later Yan (384–409) in the east. Later Yan was established by Murong Chui (325–396, r. 384–396) as a revival of the earlier Murong-ruled Former Yan state, with its capital at Zhongshan, modern Dingxian in modern Hebei. There were also several other, lesser, Yan revivals. When Fu Jian had conquered Former Yan in 370, he had brought its ruler, Murong Wei, and large numbers of other northeasterners west to his capital in Chang'an.¹⁰⁵ After the Fei river debacle, in 384, a younger brother of Murong Wei escaped from Chang'an and assembled an army a short distance to its east, founding what is known as the Western Yan (384–394)—a regime that is not included in the conventional list of Sixteen Kingdoms. He was soon killed by his own followers and replaced by his younger brother Chong (r. 384–386), who then besieged Chang'an. Fu Jian attempted to force the captive Murong Wei to order his kinsmen to lay down their arms, but Wei only encouraged them instead. Murong Wei was therefore put to death, together with most of the other Xianbei remaining in Chang'an.¹⁰⁶

Fu Jian abandoned Chang'an in 385, and Murong Chong briefly took the city, letting his troops plunder it.¹⁰⁷ After some further internal bloodshed, including the death of Chong, the Western Yan regime Murong forces marched east from Chang'an into Shanxi in 386, where they were defeated and absorbed by Murong Chui's Later Yan in 394. Murong Chui, who was an uncle of Murong Wei, had proclaimed himself king of a restored (Later) Yan dynasty in 384, and in 386 he took the imperial throne. Under Murong Chui, Later Yan temporarily reconsolidated control over much of northeast China. We will return to its story later.

The Far Northwest

Whatever the true magnitude of Fu Jian's defeat at the Fei river in 383, its repercussions quickly rippled across all of north China. In late 383, there was a rebellion in Henan by the proto-Turkic Dingling people, which Murong Chui was instructed to suppress but instead joined. It was apparently also in 383 that Qifu Guoren (d. 388) rebelled in Gansu, in the far northwest.¹⁰⁸ The Qifu were a branch of the Xianbei who had moved west, eventually establishing themselves in Gansu, between the late second and early fourth centuries.

¹⁰⁵ JS 113.2893. ¹⁰⁶ JS 114.2921, 2924–2925. ¹⁰⁷ WS 95.2063–2064.

¹⁰⁸ Rogers, *The chronicle of Fu Chien*, p. 280, n. 688.

Following Qifu Guoren's revolt, the Qifu established a Sixteen Kingdoms regime called the Western Qin (385–431) that was intermittently independent, and sometimes powerful, until it was finally extinguished by the Xia state (see below) in 431.¹⁰⁹

Not long after the Qifu-ruled Western Qin state was established, another regime called Later Liang (386–403) was founded by one of Fu Jian's generals named Lü Guang (338–400). Lü Guang was a Di person from the vicinity of modern Tianshui, Gansu. Supposedly acting in response to the request of certain western rulers for a Han dynasty-style protectorate over the Western Regions, Fu Jian had dispatched Lü Guang with a large force in 383 to subdue what is now Xinjiang. Winning the submission of much of the region—and, notably, capturing Kumārajīva in Kucha, beginning that monk's celebrated Buddhist mission to China—Lü Guang intended to remain there, but his troops persuaded him to return east instead. Transporting the enormous loot they had extracted from the Western Regions eastward on the backs of 20,000 camels, in 385 Lü Guang encountered a hostile Former Qin force near the Jade Gate (Yumen). He defeated those Former Qin troops, and established himself in the city of Guzang, Gansu, as regional inspector of Liangzhou. After learning of Fu Jian's death in 385, Lü Guang became openly independent. In 389 he took the title of king, and in 396 he proclaimed himself heavenly king. Although a capable military man, Lü was apparently a very poor ruler. After Lü Guang's death in 400, his Later Liang regime quickly succumbed to internal power struggles, and fell to Later Qin in 403.¹¹⁰

Yet another contemporary northwestern state is called the Southern Liang (397–414). Southern Liang was established by the Tufa Xianbei, a branch of the Tuoba Xianbei that had moved into the Qinghai area around the mid-third century. The name Tufa may even be a variant transcription of Tuoba. These Tufa eventually established a Chinese-style state in what is now Qinghai, with Chinese-style institutions, reign periods, and schools, but also consciously placed their Chinese subjects in fixed residences to engage in agriculture and textile production, while the Tufa held themselves apart to concentrate on military activities.¹¹¹ Southern Liang was conquered by the Qifu-ruled Western Qin in 414.

Also in the far northwest, Juqu Mengxun (368–433) was a Lushui Hu from Gansu, whose surname may have derived from an old Xiongnu title. His

¹⁰⁹ Lin Gan, *Dong Hu shi*, p. 121; Zhang Hequan, *Wei Jin Nanbeichao shi*, pp. 194–195.

¹¹⁰ Richard B. Mather, trans., *Biography of Lü Kuang*. Chinese dynastic histories project no. 7 (Berkeley, 1959); *JS* 114.2911, 122.3053–3064. *WS* 95.2085 puts the number of camels at only 2,000, which Yu Taishan thinks is more credible (*Xiyu tongshi*, p. 86, n. 1). *WS* also reports the number of Lü Guang's troops as only 7,000.

¹¹¹ Lin Gan, *Dong Hu shi*, pp. 106–109, 119–120; *JS* 126.3145.

uncles had campaigned with Lü Guang, but fell out with him and were killed. In the aftermath, Juqu Mengxun led his kinsmen against Lü Guang in 397, marking the beginning of a state known as Northern Liang (397–439). Initially, they installed another man as governor (of Liangzhou, in central Gansu), but in 401 Juqu Mengxun killed that man and assumed the title himself. The new Northern Liang regime was at first very weakly positioned. Merely in what is now Gansu alone, Northern Liang had to confront a Western Liang regime to its west (400–421, established by a Chinese family named Li), and also Lü Guang's Later Liang and the Qifu-ruled Western Qin states to its east, as well as the Tufa-ruled Southern Liang regime just southeast of Gansu in Qinghai. By 412, however, Juqu Mengxun had securely established his capital at Guzang, styling himself King of West of the (Yellow) River (*Hexi wang*). By the time Northern Liang absorbed Western Liang in 421, it had expanded to control nearly all of the Gansu corridor.¹¹² Northern Liang would turn out to be the last survivor of the Sixteen Kingdoms.

Somewhat further to the east, the Ordos desert region inside the great loop of the Yellow River formed another potential independent warlord base, where Helian Bobo (d. 425) established a state called Xia (407–431). Helian Bobo was related to Liu Yuan, the Xiongnu founder of the first Sixteen Kingdoms regime (Han/Former Zhao). Bobo's great-grandfather had been driven beyond the northern frontiers of China in the early fourth century by the Tuoba Xianbei, and it was not until Bobo's father's time that the family returned to north China. When Fu Jian conquered the Tuoba in 376, Bobo's father was given control over the former Tuoba people living west of the northward bend of the Yellow River. After Fu Jian's death and the restoration of Tuoba power, the Tuoba defeated and killed Bobo's father in 391, but Bobo escaped to join Yao Xing's Later Qin regime. When Yao Xing made peace with the Tuoba in 406, Helian Bobo rebelled, establishing himself at the top of the Yellow River loop, in 407 proclaiming himself heavenly king and great *shanyu*. Claiming to be a descendant of the founder of the legendary ancient Xia dynasty, he named his new state Xia (407–431), and replaced his Chinese surname Liu (inherited through the maternal line) with the auspicious new surname Helian, signifying (in Chinese) the "glorious connection" of the sovereign with Heaven.

Cautious about attacking the Later Qin capital at Chang'an while it was still flourishing under Yao Xing's rule, Helian Bobo adopted a strategy of mobile guerrilla warfare. He dispensed altogether with the local administrative network of commanderies and counties, ruling instead from military garrisons without a fixed capital. In 413, however, he built a new capital

¹¹² JS 129.3189–3199; Liu Xueyao, *Wu Hu shilun*, 205.

city at Tongwan, on the edge of the Ordos in the center of the Yellow River loop. The strength of its pounded-earth walls was supposedly ensured by putting to death those who worked on any place where an awl could penetrate an inch. Bobo also reportedly ensured the quality of his weaponry by executing the makers of bows that failed to penetrate armor, and executing the makers of the armor if it was penetrated.¹¹³

Chang'an fell to an Eastern Jin army in 417, terminating the Later Qin state, but the Eastern Jin commander soon withdrew the main part of his army south to pursue his own imperial ambitions, and the remaining Eastern Jin garrison was easily overrun by Helian Bobo, who occupied Chang'an and proclaimed himself emperor in 418. Despite Chang'an's venerable historical significance, however, Helian continued to use Tongwan as his capital, as a counter to the rising threat posed by the Tuoba nearby to his east. After Helian Bobo's death in 425, two sons were defeated in rapid succession by the Tuoba (with assistance from the Tuyuhun), and the Xia dynasty ceased to exist in 431.¹¹⁴

The Tuoba Future

For providing military assistance to the crumbling Western Jin dynasty, in the early fourth century a Tuoba Xianbei chieftain had been rewarded with the Chinese title of duke, and, by 315, King of Dai. The fledgling Tuoba state was then conquered and disbanded by Fu Jian's Former Qin in 376, but, after Fu Jian's death, a successful Tuoba claimant revived the title King of Dai in 386. A few months later he changed the name of his country from Dai to Wei (because Wei had been the name of historically famous Chinese states, while Dai was merely an administrative region).¹¹⁵ In 398, he elevated his title to emperor, of what becomes a major dynasty that is known to history as the Northern Wei.¹¹⁶

The Tuoba Xianbei may have been distinguishable from the Murong Xianbei, in part, because the Tuoba wore their hair in a queue—earning the derisive nickname “rope heads” (*shuo tou*)—while the Murong drew their hair together under a cap.¹¹⁷ Nonetheless, the new Tuoba ruler was a nephew of Murong Chui of Later Yan, and he initially benefited from Murong Chui's

¹¹³ JS 130.3205–3206.

¹¹⁴ JS 130.3201–3213; Liu Xueyao, *Wu Hu shilun*, pp. 119–125; Tang Changru, “Jindai beijing gezu ‘bianluan’ de xingzhi,” 167.

¹¹⁵ WS 2.20, 24.620–621. ¹¹⁶ See Chapter 8 on the Northern Wei in this volume.

¹¹⁷ Huang Xueyin, *Zhui meng Zhongyuan: cong Gaxiandong dao Longmen shiku de Xianbei ren* (Hohhot, 2008), p. 96.

support.¹¹⁸ Relations soon deteriorated, however, and Murong Chui sent his son with an army against the Tuoba in 395. After months of campaigning without being able to bring the Tuoba decisively to battle, the Murong army withdrew—only to be intercepted and annihilated in battle by the Tuoba in what is now Inner Mongolia. Murong Chui responded with a second Later Yan invasion against the Tuoba in 396, but the aging Murong Chui was no longer fit for the rigors of campaigning, and he died of illness. The Tuoba quickly assumed the offensive, in 397 capturing the Later Yan capital at Zhongshan, and rapidly overrunning much of north China.

The remnants of Later Yan withdrew to southwestern Manchuria (Liaoxi), where, in 407, the last Murong ruler was killed in a coup. A scion of the royal family of proto-Korean Koguryō, who had been adopted by the Murong, was installed as the next Heavenly King of Yan. Meanwhile, a younger brother of Murong Chui had escaped from the Tuoba invasion south to the area of modern Shandong, where he established a short-lived Southern Yan regime (398–410) that was conquered by the Eastern Jin in 410.¹¹⁹

A leading instigator of the Later Yan coup in 407 had been a man named Feng Ba. After the newly installed (proto-Korean) heavenly king was murdered by his own favorites in 409, Feng Ba placed himself on the throne as heavenly king (r. 409–429) of a regime in southwestern Manchuria that becomes known to history as the Northern Yan (409–436). Although Feng Ba supposedly was Chinese rather than Xianbei, he had acquired “foreign customs” (*sui tong Yi su* 遂同夷俗). For example, he gave his heir the distinctly non-Chinese title great *shanyu*. Like the various other Sixteen Kingdoms regimes called Yan that had been ruled by the Murong Xianbei, this “Chinese” Northern Yan was also actually culturally mixed.¹²⁰

In 436, Northern Yan was conquered by the Tuoba-ruled Northern Wei. In 439, on the pretext that the Juqu-ruled Northern Liang state, in the far northwest, was interfering with foreign trade through the Gansu corridor, Northern Wei conquered Northern Liang as well, completing the reunification of north China.¹²¹ Among the refugees from defeated Northern Liang, notably, were the future founders of what would become the sixth-century Türk (Tujue) Qaghanate in Mongolia.¹²² This Northern Wei dynasty

¹¹⁸ Wan Shengnan, *Wei Jin Nanbeichao shi lungao*, pp. 253–254; David A. Graff, *Medieval Chinese warfare*, 300–900 (London, 2002), pp. 69–70.

¹¹⁹ See Jennifer Holmgren, “The last of the Mu-Jung: Southern Yen and the history of Shantung peninsula, AD 399–410,” *PFEH*, 42 (1990), pp. 1–46.

¹²⁰ *WS* 97.2126; Misaki Yoshiaki, *Goko jūrokkoku no kisoteki kenkyū* (Tokyo, 2006), pp. 121–135. See also Albert E. Dien, *Six Dynasties civilization* (New Haven, 2007), pp. 104–115.

¹²¹ *WS* 4a.90, 99.2207; Maeda Masana, “Hoku Gi Heijō jidai no Orudosu-sabaku nan'enro,” *Tōyōshi kenkyū* 31.2 (1972–1973), pp. 74–78.

¹²² *Tong dian* 197.1067.

reunification of North China in 439 marks the final end of the Sixteen Kingdoms period.

The Sixteen Kingdoms had been an age of endemic warfare, widespread misery, and political and economic collapse. It was an episode of profound crisis in the long history of Chinese civilization. The Sixteen Kingdoms era was also, however, a time of fertile interactions and experimentation with new hybrid forms. It initiated the gradual formation of a new Chinese synthesis that would come to glorious fruition much later under the Tang dynasty (618–907). The first phase of that important new consolidation began under the Northern Wei.

CHAPTER 7

CHENG-HAN STATE

Terry F. Kleeman

The state of Cheng, later renamed Han and known to history as Cheng-Han (302–347), was the first of the non-Chinese states of the Northern and Southern Dynasties period, and in Chinese terms the first of the “Sixteen States founded by the Five Barbarians” (*wubu shiliuguo*).¹ Its founders were Cong,² descendants of the ancient Ba people of eastern Sichuan, though they had relocated in the early third century to the northwest.³ The Ba people were also members of the Celestial Master (*Tianshi*) Daoist church, China’s earliest indigenous organized religion, and their faith played a major role in the founding and development of their state.

The historiography of the non-Chinese dynasties is generally regarded as poor, with few contemporary accounts and many works compiled only in the early Tang from a hodgepodge of surviving partial accounts. In the case of Cheng-Han, however, we are fortunate to have a rather complete record from Chang Qu (c. 291–361), a state official who witnessed most of its history. His fullest account, the *Book of the Lis of Shu* (*Shu Lishu*) is lost,⁴ but significant

¹ The primary sources for the history of Cheng-Han are Chapters 8 and 9 of *HYGZ*, Chapter 121 of *JS*, and the relevant portions of *ZZTJ*. A more detailed account of this state’s history can be found in Terry F. Kleeman, *Great perfection: Religion and ethnicity in a Chinese millennial kingdom* (Honolulu, 1998). Yang Weili, *Cheng Han shi lue* (Chongqing, 1982), is useful but limited by its strongly Marxist approach.

² Early commentators are split on the pronunciation of this character. Li Xian (654–684), *HHS* 86.2831, gives the *fanqie* spelling *tsāng + tuong* 詳冬反, which would yield *tsuong*, modern *zōng*, whereas his contemporary Li Shan (630–689), in *Wenxuan*, gives *dz’ài + tsuong* 在宗反, which yields *dzong*, modern *cōng*; Li Shan, *Liuchen zhu Wenxuan* (Taipei, 1959), p. 6.23a. The Song dynasty *Guangyun* follows Li Shan, as do most modern dictionaries. I used “Zong” in my *Great perfection*, but here I choose to follow the modern consensus.

³ References to them as Ba Di, if not a mistake for Bashi (“the Ba clan”), mean only that they were Ba people living where the Di were the predominant non-Chinese minority. Many Chinese accounts wrongly claim on this basis that the Cong were a type of Di. On the early history of Sichuan see Tong Enzheng, *Gudai de Ba Shu* (Chengdu, 1979); Steven Sage, *Ancient Sichuan and the unification of China* (Albany, 1992); and Weng Jialie, “Cheng Han zhengquan ji qi zushu,” *Guizhou minzu yanjiu* 2006.5, pp. 140–145. Ren Naiqiang has many interesting ideas about the early Ba in his *Sichuan shanggushi xintan* (Chengdu, 1986), *passim*.

⁴ A modern reconstruction has been attempted in Kleeman, *Great perfection*, pp. 117–210.

portions of this material were preserved in Chang's regional history, the *Huayangguo zhi* (*Record of States South of Mount Hua*) and the work survived into the Tang, providing a primary source for Tang historians. Chang's work was, however, shaped by traditional Chinese historiographic conventions, so matters of ethnicity and religion are often elided.

By the beginning of the third century CE, the Ba people had occupied the area of eastern Sichuan and southwestern Hubei provinces (much of it now incorporated into Chongqing city) for over a thousand years. A hunter-gatherer people, the Ba were famous for their ability to kill tigers and adept at river travel, and were supported to some degree by the salt wells and salt springs of the region. They were also reputed as martial in spirit, and though they never established a political entity beyond their native region, the Ba were renowned mercenaries, providing armies of fierce warriors to the Han empire and the Zhou-era states of Qin and Chu; some sources even record their participation in the original Zhou conquest (c. 1045 BCE).

Conquest and active colonization of Sichuan by the state of Qin had begun at the end of the fourth century BCE but the descendants of the Ba, known by a variety of local names, were still ruled by local, perhaps tribal, leaders with only nominal allegiance to the Chinese state in the third century. Historical sources identify the ruling Li family as Cong, hailing from the area around modern Quxian, Sichuan, but tie this identity to older names like the Plank-Shield Man-barbarians (Banshun Man), the Lord of the Granaries Man-barbarians (Linjun Man), and the Ba. In any case, by the fourth century, however, the Lis and other elite Cong were highly sinicized, spoke and read Chinese, and were able to function within the document-centered world of medieval China.

The Li family and many, if not most, of their neighbors, who became their fellow migrants, were hereditary members of the Celestial Master church. This religion had been founded in the Chengdu plain during the mid-second century by Zhang Ling, his son Zhang Heng, and grandson Zhang Lu, as an organized salvific faith offering an alternative to the Chinese common religion. Rejecting the practice of sacrifice that defined that religion, members of this church promoted a new covenant with pure deities who transcended both traditional local cults and the majestic rites of the state cult. Organized originally into twenty-four dioceses (*zhi*) that blanketed the Chengdu plain, the church provided a hierarchy that sought to supplant the traditional social order; the nascent religion was evangelical, seeking to convert all it encountered, integrating noble and mean, Chinese and non-Chinese into this new religious community. It was immensely popular with the long-marginalized and often oppressed non-Chinese ethnic groups of the region. Members of the

Cong ethnicity constituted a significant portion of its followers and provided important military support in times of conflict.

The earliest extension of the church beyond the Chengdu plain had been east, into the Ba region, and northeast, into the Hanzhong region. When Liu Yan (d. 194), a member of the Han royal house, established himself in Chengdu in the position of governor (*mu*) of Yi prefecture with an eye to declaring independence, he sought to enlist the Celestial Master community in his service. He dispatched Zhang Lu and an army of Daoist militia together with a force of foreign troops from Central China called “soldiers from the eastern prefectures” (*dongzhou bing*) led by a local rebel named Zhang Xiu, who may himself have once espoused some sort of religious vision. Zhang Xiu and his henchmen slaughtered all representatives of the central government in Hanzhong in a plot to cut communication with the center while placing the blame on the Celestial Masters. Zhang Lu executed Zhang Xiu, then made Hanzhong into his new base, never explicitly rejecting fealty to the Han court, but using the de facto freedom from central control to build a true theocracy where all citizens were also church members. Diocesan officials called libationers (*jijiu*) replaced district magistrates (*xianling*) and commandery governors (*jun taishou*), and social position was determined not by birth or government office but by rank within the church.

Believers, many of them oppressed minorities like the Cong, flocked to the new kingdom, hoping that this would be the site where the millennial vision of a perfect world of Great Peace (*taiping*) would finally be realized. Among them was a man named Li Hu, who came at the head of a community of 500 families (around 2,000 to 3,000 individuals). Zhang Lu’s state maintained a precarious existence for twenty-odd years, never explicitly breaking ties to the last Han emperor while largely avoiding participation in the tumultuous quest for power among warlords seeking to replace the Han with their own regime. Finally, in 215, Cao Cao, who controlled the emperor and the strongest military force in north China, marched on Hanzhong and forced its surrender.

Cao Cao valued the Celestial Masters, awarding high rank to Zhang Lu and his sons, and arranging marriages between the two families. Celestial Master soldiers must have been integrated into what would become the army of the state of Wei. Cao Cao was, however, cautious about the danger of a revived religious state in Hanzhong. He transferred large numbers (though not all) of the faithful to other portions of the kingdom, moving some to the western edge of the Guanzhong region (today’s southern Shaanxi and Gansu) while others went to the region around the Wei capital of Ye (near today’s Handan, Hebei) and points east. Li Hu and his followers were among those sent to the northwest, settling around Tianshui, where Hu and his descendants enjoyed

high military appointments. Although the Celestial Master church expanded greatly over the next century, gaining converts across the breadth of north China, there is little evidence of effective central control.

The descendants of Li Hu and his entourage seem to have lived peacefully in the region for most of the third century. They emerge into history again at the close of the century amidst great political turmoil, which was compounded by natural disasters and epidemic disease. Briefly, when the Sima family finally usurped the Wei and assumed the throne as the Jin, they set about refeudalizing the state, appointing royal family members as regional kings (*wang*) who were permitted to maintain private forces. Modern scholar Mao Han-kuang has argued that this was a response to the power of regional great families (*haozu*), and this is at least partially borne out by the events of the 290s, when the Jia family used the position of empress to a mentally compromised Emperor Hui to almost usurp the throne. Empress Jia Nanfeng (256–300) was finally deposed and forced to commit suicide in 300, but the resulting struggle for power, known as the Disturbances of the Eight Princes, tore the state apart, leading directly to the fall of the Western Jin.

The six commanderies of northwest China had experienced repeated years of famine, locust infestation, epidemic disease, and civil unrest during the 290s.⁵ Unusual weather events may have played a role in this. The Jin court, realizing its strategic importance, regularly appointed members of the royal family to supervise this region, but princes like Sima Lun, King of Zhao, and later Sima Ying, King of Chengdu, possessed their own personal armies and were not easily restrained by the central administration. The Xiongnu leader He San rose in rebellion in 294, but surrendered and was executed by a local official. Two years later, facing another famine, his younger brother He Duyuan again rebelled. The rebellion spread to the Di and Qiang tribes, who united behind the Di leader Qi Wannian. This rebellion continued for two years, disrupting the entire region and exacerbating pressures on the populace.

By 299, conditions were untenable, giving rise to a huge wave of migration in search of food. It began as a group of “several tens of thousands of households,” perhaps as many as 200,000 to 300,000 individuals, including Chinese, transplanted Cong, and local Di moving as entire communities. The group grew as it moved, both attracting and pushing before it new refugees, until their numbers at least doubled. Members of the Li family aided their fellow travelers as well as those they encountered along the way, and thus assumed a leadership role within the group. Several of the grandsons of Li Hu had military training, but it was Li Te, a commanding figure adept at cavalry warfare, who became their spokesman.

⁵ I.e., Tianshui, Lüeyang, Fufeng, Shiping, Wudu, and Yinping, all in today's Gansu Province.

The migrants first entered the Hanzhong region, which the Li family remembered as their old home and perhaps also treasured as the site of the Daoist millennial kingdom of Zhang Lu, but their numbers were more than this area could support, and they soon moved on toward the Chengdu plain where there were still stores of grain. Entering the Jianmen Pass (Jianmenguan), the migrants encountered a contentious situation. Zhao Xin, prefect of Yi prefecture, had been summoned to the capital to take a position in the inner court, and Geng Teng, the seneschal of the kingdom of Chengdu, had been promoted to replace him, but Zhao was unwilling to take up his new post. Zhao's family were Daoists from Baxi commandery, and had participated in the Hanzhong community, like the Lis. Zhao opened the granaries to the migrants, thereby gaining their allegiance. Zhao entrusted the elimination of Geng Teng to Li Xiang, Li Te's younger brother, who had held high military position in the suppression of earlier rebellions and was adept at directing cavalry in battle. But when Li Xiang subsequently urged Zhao to declare independence, Zhao grew afraid and turned on him, killing a dozen or more of his immediate family members. Li Te retreated to Mianzhu, where he gathered forces and launched an assault on Zhao Xin's army, which had camped nearby, and then moved on to attack Chengdu. Zhao Xin fled, but was captured and killed, and the Lis dispatched an emissary to court to explain their actions.

The Jin court transferred Luo Shang, the prefect of Liang prefecture, to replace Zhao Xin, and he brought with him Xin Ran, a former ally of Sima Lun and an old enemy of the Lis from the Northwest, now appointed governor of Guanghan (south of today's Shehong, Sichuan). The Li family greeted Luo with gifts and a banquet, but the relationship would soon sour. In 301, no doubt at Luo's urging, the court dispatched two censors (*yushi*) bearing tallies to order the migrants to return to the Northwest. The migrants were scattered throughout the prefecture, many working as seasonal laborers counting on the coming harvest to survive. The Lis spoke for the migrants in requesting an extension, at least until the harvest was in. Moreover, Li Te and his younger brother Li Liu had been rewarded for defeating Zhao Xin with appointments as generals, but Xin Ran intercepted the messenger and hid the announcement. He then began setting up barriers on roads and rivers to limit the refugees' movement and confiscate their possessions. He also circulated "wanted posters" for the Lis, but they turned this to their advantage by altering the posters to include other prominent refugee families, thus solidifying their support. When Xin Ran and Luo Shang attacked, they found themselves facing 20,000 determined soldiers.

After successfully defending against this offensive, Li Te had de facto control of the areas north and east of Chengdu. In 302, Li Te assumed the

titles of senior commander (*da dudu*), senior general (*da jiangjun*), and prefect of Yi prefecture, and instituted a new, simplified legal code with only three articles. This is often taken as the founding of the Cheng state, even though no such claim was made at the time.⁶ Luo Shang built fortifications along the length of the Pi river, just north of Chengdu, and sought aid from neighboring provinces. In the fifth month, the central government sent forces to coordinate with Luo in a pincer attack on the rebels, but this was unsuccessful.

By early 303, Li Te controlled all the towns surrounding Chengdu, and Luo Shang, under siege, had sued for peace. However, in the second month a coordinated attack by Luo, joined by the governor of Jing prefecture and local village militias, succeeded. Li Te was captured and beheaded, and Li Liu assumed his titles. As Luo and the Jing forces pressed the attack, Li Liu was on the point of surrender when Li Te's eldest living son, Li Xiong, rallied the refugees to make a surprise attack on the Jin forces.⁷ This marked his de facto assumption of leadership, though he would not formally take the reins of power until his uncle Li Liu's death in the ninth month of 303. The court's attempt to suppress the rebellion by mobilizing forces from the central Yangzi region backfired when the demands on the local populace there gave rise to another major rebellion, centering on a non-Chinese leader named Zhang Chang. Luo Shang was given control of the three commanderies of eastern Sichuan.

It is at this point that the refugees first encountered Long-Lived Fan (Fan Changsheng), who commanded a Daoist community on Mount Green Castle (Qingcheng shan), northwest of Chengdu.⁸ Prolonged warfare had disrupted agriculture, leading to a famine. Fan reprovisioned the Lis' forces, which was key to their survival and continued resistance. Later that year, Li Xiong offered Fan the throne, an action that was in keeping with the ancient precedents of Yao and Shun but also sought to re-create a Daoist theocracy modeled on the Hanzhong millennial kingdom. Fan demurred, stating that a member of the Li clan should ascend the throne in 304, the first year in a traditional sixty-year cycle used in dating. Li Xiong resisted out of humility for a while, but eventually in 304 accepted the title of King of Chengdu with the reign name Established Rise (*jianxing* 建興). Like his father, Li Xiong promulgated a simplified legal code, this time in seven articles. Long-Lived Fan rode into

⁶ The reign name Established Beginning (*jianchu* 建初) is assigned to this period, but this was likely applied retroactively after Li Te's rank was raised first to king and then emperor when Li Xiong assumed similar titles in 304 and 306.

⁷ Xiong's elder brother Dang had been killed in battle earlier that year.

⁸ On Fan, see Tang Changru, "Fan Changshen yu Bashi ju Shu de guanxi," *Lishi yanjiu* 1954.4, pp. 115–122. A lost work on the *Yijing* is attributed to Fan under the name Shucai ("genius of Shu"). Green Castle Mountain is close to the site of the initial revelation to Zhang Ling in 142 CE.

the capital in a white cart; Li Xiong welcomed him at the city gate, personally led his cart, and installed him as Chancellor (*chengxiang*), with the honorific title Fan the Worthy (*xian*). Fan urged Li Xiong to claim the imperial title, which he finally did in 306, proclaiming the founding of the state of Great Cheng (Dacheng), i.e., Perfection. This name referred to a line in the *Classic of Poetry* that was associated with the concept of Great Peace (*taiping*), the latter being central to the early Daoist church.⁹ Fan was honored with the title Grand Master of Heaven and Earth (*tiandi taishi*), which again recalls the titles of the early leaders of the Celestial Masters.

The period from 304 to 306 seems to have been one of recuperation and rebuilding for the new Cheng state, and for Luo Shang in eastern Sichuan as well, whereas that of 307 to 310 was one of unrest. The court was occupied with strife among the Jin kings and the growing threat from Liu Yuan and his Xiongnu forces. At the end of 306, Li Xiong sought to expand his reach into the Hanzhong region again. In early 307 a group of refugees originally from the Northwest rebelled in Hanzhong against Jin control and sought support from Li Xiong. A Cheng army rescued them and moved large numbers into the Sichuan basin. Hanzhong was sparsely populated and presented no threat for several years thereafter. However, unrest among ethnic groups in the Southwest also occupied the central Jin government and prevented the reinforcement of Luo Shang in Ba commandery. Luo fortified the Yangzi, Min, and Tuo river approaches to the south and rebuilt his army from the three Ba commanderies as well as guest commanderies he set up there for refugees from the Chengdu plain. In 309 there was a rebellion in Zitong that threw off Cheng rule and in 310 Baxi commandery (today's Langzhong) also declared for Luo Shang. These attacks on the southern, eastern, and northeastern borders represented the most serious threat to Li Xiong's reign, but Luo Shang died in the seventh month of 310 and Zitong fell to Xiong's allies within the walled city. A new self-appointed governor regrouped at Badong (today's Fengjie) against Cheng but was too distant and too weak to present a serious threat.

Over the next seven years, rebellions in Jing prefecture (at modern Jiangling, Hubei) and the northwest, as well as conflict with the Xiongnu led now by Liu Cong, occupied the attention of the Jin court. This preoccupation allowed Cheng to grow and extend its control to the south, eventually controlling all of the upper Yangzi to the gorges. The power vacuum led local leaders as far away as areas in the modern provinces of Guizhou and Guangxi to

⁹ The passage had been cited by Han emperor Huan in 150 CE to express his resolve to reach Great Peace, and Zheng Xuan's commentary also makes this connection. See *Maoshi zhengyi* (*Shisanjing zhushu*) 10.3.7b, p. 369; *HHS* 7.296, n. 6; Anna Seidel, "The image of the perfect ruler in early Taoist messianism: Lao-tzu and Li Hung," *HR* 9.2 (1969–1970), p. 219.

turn to Li Xiong for support, and the Di leaders who had once betrayed him returned to allegiance with sizable armies. Long-Lived Fan died in 318 but was immediately replaced as Chancellor by his son Fan Ben, assuring continued religious support for the state. In 319 Cheng mounted a campaign to increase its control in the Southwest (today's Yunnan and southwestern Sichuan).¹⁰

Thus the state of Cheng enjoyed over a decade of relative peace and gradual expansion. Li Xiong was an active, engaged ruler, often leading troops into battle himself. Inheriting a famine-ravaged region from which sizable portions of the population had fled, he promoted agriculture and transferred populations from surrounding regions to repopulate the Chengdu plain. The historical record praises his magnanimity in accepting the surrender of former enemies, which won him many adherents, but the modern scholar Ren Naiqiang points out that high positions of state went almost exclusively to his kinsmen or affines.¹¹ He is also portrayed as anguishing over the death of his mother and abandoning a full three-year mourning period only after repeated remonstrance from his advisers, but the same passage remarks that he “observed many taboos,” whereas Daoists were known for the rejection of popular taboos. This passage occurs only in the *Jinshu*, raising the question whether this involves merely a misunderstanding of Daoist practice by the historians or a Tang didactic addition.¹² In fact, through much of Li Xiong's reign, no source records anything other than external battles, shifting alliances, and occasionally the death of a major figure. We learn little of how the state was run internally and the Chancellor's activities are never mentioned, despite the elaborate ritual and profound deference shown Long-Lived Fan and his son upon their installation. All evidence indicates that the state functioned effectively, maintaining Daoist institutions like a lenient legal system and charity for the poor and indigent.

The historical record highlights internal conflicts as a danger to Cheng rule. A campaign to chastise the Di ruler of Wudu at modern Chengxian, Gansu, Yang Nandi, in 323 resulted in the death of two sons of his deceased elder brother Li Dang. This persuaded Li Xiong to name Dang's surviving son, Li Ban, as the heir apparent.¹³ Ban had been adopted by Li Xiong's primary wife,

¹⁰ Ren Naiqiang, in a note to the *Huayangguo zhi jiaobu tuzhu* by Chang Qu (hereafter HYGZ), argues that the JS record of a campaign against the southwest in 323 was in fact this one campaign, the report of which from Jin officers in the southwest was delayed by problems in communication. See HYGZ 9.493–494, n. 4.

¹¹ HYGZ 9.493, author's comment.

¹² Michael Rogers, *The chronicle of Fu Chien: A case of exemplar history* (Berkeley, 1968).

¹³ On the Yang family, who may also have been Daoists, see Taniguchi Fusao, “Shindai no Teizoku Yōshi ni tsuite,” *Tōyō daigaku bungakubu kiyō* 30 (1976), pp. 31–57.

Lady Ren, but Xiong also had more than ten sons of his own. His uncle Li Xiang, after remonstrating with him unsuccessfully, commented, "This is the beginning of disorder."

The chronology is not clear, but sometime around 327, there was an exchange of letters between Li Xiong and Zhang Jun (307–346), the de facto independent ruler of the Former Liang (primarily controlling the Gansu region).¹⁴ Zhang Jun wished to send emissaries through Cheng to the recently re-established Eastern Jin court and urged Li Xiong to also acknowledge their authority. The *Jinshu* records multiple statements by Xiong in which he expresses a wish for the Jin state to be re-established and his desire to again be a loyal subject of the Jin, but if these accounts are accurate, Li Xiong never acted on this intention.¹⁵

In 328, Li Xiong's uncle, Li Xiang, who had been the primary military leader in the state, died. His eldest son, Li Shou, returned to the capital for the funeral and was eventually entrusted with a similar position. In 330 he led an expedition to the east, capturing Badong and driving Jin forces back to Yidu. In 332 he led a major campaign to the South, capturing Shushi (today's Zhaotong, Yunnan) and completing Cheng control of today's Guizhou and Yunnan. Shou was made a king and given control of this region.

In 334, Li Xiong fell ill, with ulcers on his back eventually leading to his death. Li Shou returned and acted as regent for Li Ban, the new ruler. Li Ban is portrayed as a gentle, scholarly man who attended to Li Xiong through his illness. Remaining in mourning after his ascension to the throne, Li Ban entrusted all practical matters to Li Shou. During the last years of Li Xiong's reign, Li Ban had repeatedly criticized the greed and violence of other members of the imperial family, advocating a classical program of land redistribution to counter their growing power.

Later that same year, two sons of Li Xiong, Li Qi and Li Yue, assassinated Li Ban, putting Li Qi on the throne with Li Yue as Chancellor. Li Shou was given a command on the northern border and succeeded in regaining control of Hanzhong, where he was named King of Han. In 338 he led a large force south to Chengdu, where he took the capital and killed Li Qi and Li Yue, and changed the name of the state to Han. All the remaining sons of Li Xiong were executed after a failed revolt. In 340 Li Shou assembled a large riverine force, planning an attack on the Jin in co-ordination with Shi Hu, ruler of Later Zhao, but was dissuaded at the last moment from launching the assault. Instead he devoted himself to rebuilding Chengdu, gathering craftsmen from across the region to construct lavish palaces. He entrusted key positions to his son, Li Shi.

¹⁴ On Zhang Jun, see *JS* 86.2233–2240.

¹⁵ *JS* 121.303.

Li Shou died in 343 and Li Shi came to the throne. As the last ruler of a dynasty, he is classically portrayed as dissolute, violent, and cruel. It is clear, though, that he both feared and rejected other members of the Li family, and often grew suspicious and killed his closest advisers. The state also suffered from famine and from the in-migration of Lao tribesmen from the south. When Huan Wen, the Eastern Jin commander of the central Yangzi area, led a large force against Cheng in 347, its defenses crumbled and Li Shi was forced to surrender. He was given a marquisate (*bouguo*) and died in the Eastern Jin capital in 361. Two years after the conquest, in 349, an abortive rebellion with the intention of putting the former Chancellor Fan Ben on the throne was soon crushed.

Cheng-Han was the first of the non-Chinese kingdoms of this era, and the only one established in south China by a southern ethnic group, though arguably the time spent in the Northwest had taught the Lis the advantages of armored cavalry warfare. The Lis were highly sinicized, valiant warriors of imposing stature, who were also skilled at administration. Their ethnic identity was one powerful rallying point for their adherents, but equally important was their Daoist faith. They were accustomed to living in a multiethnic society united by faith, and this facilitated constructing a state out of the ethnically diverse population of the Sichuan region. The charitable actions demanded by their religion toward those in need, many of whom were coreligionists, repeatedly proved effective in gathering popular support for their leadership. Cheng was an attempt to re-create the millennial kingdom that Zhang Lu had established in Hanzhong, and it had a Daoist religious leader as the head of government throughout its forty-five-year history. Perhaps because of this, it became an oasis of peace and good government, with simple, lenient laws and a concern for the welfare of its populace that was unparalleled in the tumultuous, strife-torn world of the first half of the fourth century. They did not in the end realize their goal of a utopian world of Great Peace, and personal rivalries among the battle-hardened warriors of the royal family led ultimately to their demise, but in many ways Cheng-Han must be judged one of the most successful of the competing states in this era of division.

CHAPTER 8

NORTHERN WEI

Scott Pearce

The founders of the Northern Wei dynasty (386–534) were the Tuoba, a branch of the Inner Asian Xianbei (*Sārbi) people, who spoke an Altaic language, probably an early form of Mongolian. Unfortunately there are no surviving texts in their native tongue, only scattered transcriptions of a few of their words and names into Chinese, in texts including the traditional history of Northern Wei, the sixth-century *Weishu*. One of these names was “Tuoba” itself, the modern Mandarin pronunciation of a contemporary Chinese transcription of an Altaic name rendered alphabetically as “Tabgač” on the eighth-century Turkic Orkhon inscriptions. It will be well for the reader to remember that, particularly in early Wei, quotations in *Weishu* are frequently Chinese translations of remembered statements made originally in the Tabgač tongue.¹

THE MAKING OF A DYNASTY

The legends translated and recounted—with some license—in the first chapter of the *Weishu* annals, juxtaposed against the work of modern

¹ Christopher I. Beckwith, “The Chinese names of the Tibetans, Tabghatch, and Turks,” *AEMA* 14 (2005), p. 9; and *idem*, *Empires of the Silk Road: A history of Central Eurasia from the Bronze Age to the present* (Princeton, 2009), p. 103; drawing on Louis Ligeti, “Le Tabghatch, un dialecte de la langue Sien-pi,” in *idem*, *Mongolian studies* (Amsterdam, 1970), pp. 265–308; and the early groundbreaking work of Peter Boodberg, in “The language of the T’o-pa Wei,” *HJAS* 1 (1936), pp. 167–185; rpt. in *Selected works of Peter A. Boodberg*, ed. Alvin B. Cohen (Berkeley, 1979), pp. 221–239. Perhaps even closer to the original is Taghbatch, the Turkic Tabgač (Taβγač) being a metathesis: Boodberg, “The language of the T’o-pa Wei,” pp. 237–239. For a general overview of the Xianbei, see Charles Holcombe, “The Xianbei in Chinese history,” *EMC* 19 (2013), pp. 1–38; and of the Tuoba, Peter B. Golden, *An introduction to the history of the Turkic peoples: Ethnogenesis and state-formation in medieval and early modern Eurasia and the Middle East* (Wiesbaden, 1992), pp. 73–76. Despite this issue of translation, from the point of view of the author of this essay, though of uneven quality *Weishu* is nonetheless a rich cornucopia of (at times biased or imperfectly relayed) tales depicting various aspects of the political and social history of the dynasty. For further discussion of the book, composed by Wei Shou during the early years of Northern Qi (550–577), see Albert E. Dien, “Wei Tan and the historiography of the *Wei shu*,” in *Studies in early medieval Chinese literature and cultural history*, ed. Paul W. Kroll and David R. Knechtges (Provo, UT, 2003), pp. 399–466; and Zhang Li, *Weishu yanjiu* (Beijing, 2009), esp. pp. 168–184.

archaeologists, suggest the Tuoba core came originally from the thickly forested lands of the eastern foothills of the northern Khingan mountains, in what is now the far northeastern corner of China's Inner Mongolia. In the first century CE, with the collapse of the Xiongnu empire, the Tuoba migrated south to a "great swamp." This may have been the Hulun Nur, a large lake on the grassy Inner Mongolian plateau, where archeological findings show populations of nomadic pastoralists, who lived by the art of horseback archery.² The populations there were mixed, and modern DNA studies show interbreeding of different groups; one modern scholar suggests the meaning of "Tuoba" was "Xianbei father, Xiongnu mother," which even if not the real etymology reflects the reality of a joining of disparate groups.³ This ethnic complexity would be a feature of the Tuoba throughout their history.

Unmentioned in the *Weishu* account is participation of the Tuoba ancestors in the great but short-lived Xianbei confederation of Tanshihuai (d. c. 180), though hints are found in *Weishu* and other texts.⁴ At any rate, it seems to have been shortly after the confederation's collapse that the Tuoba again migrated south to enter the "old lands of the Xiongnu," in the Yinshan region north of the great bend of the Yellow River. There the Tuoba leader had a mysterious one-night tryst with a "heavenly maiden" (*tiannü*), who a year later brought him a son. The child was Liwei, the first Tuoba lord clearly to be mentioned

² WS 1.2. For a review of archaeological sources, see Su Bai, "Dongbei, Nei Menggu diqu de Xianbei yiji: Xianbei yiji jilu zhi yi," *Wenwu* 1977.5, pp. 42–54 (trans. by David Fridley, "Xianbei remains in Manchuria and Inner Mongolia: Record of Xianbei remains, part one," *CSA* 2 (1980), pp. 3–43); *idem*, "Shengle, Pingcheng yidai de Tuoba Xianbei—Bei Wei yiji: Xianbei yiji jilu zhi er," *Wenwu* 1977.11, pp. 38–45; Chen Zhengxiang, *Caoyuan diguo: Tuoba Wei wangchao zhi xingshuai* (Hong Kong, 1991), p. 18; Huang Lie, *Zhongguo gudai minzu shi yanjiu* (Beijing, 1987), pp. 64–65. Albert Dien discusses different interpretations of the southward move in "A new look at the Xianbei and their impact on Chinese culture," in *Ancient mortuary traditions of China*, ed. George Kuwayama (Los Angeles, 1991), pp. 40–59.

³ Ma Changshou, *Wubuan yu Xianbei* (Shanghai, 1962), pp. 30–33. A recent study shows DNA linkages between the Tuoba and Xiongnu: Yu Changchun et al., "Tuoba Xianbei he Xiongnu zhi jian qinyuan guanxi de yichuanxue fenxi," *Yi chuan/Hereditas* 2007.10, pp. 1223–1229. For the diversity of constituent elements, see Ma, *Wubuan yu Xianbei*, pp. 248–254, and a key contribution to this field, Yao Weiyuan, *Beichao buxing kao* (Beijing, 2007), *passim*. For an example of the heterogeneity of another such group, see Scott Pearce, Audrey Spiro, and Patricia Ebrey, "Introduction," in *Culture and power in the reconstitution of the Chinese realm, 200–600*, ed. Scott Pearce et al. (Cambridge, MA, 2001), pp. 6–7. Regarding the annals of the Tuoba before establishment of Northern Wei, see Jennifer Holmgren, *Annals of Tai: Early T'o-pa history according to the first chapter of the Wei-shu* (Canberra, 1982).

⁴ See Thomas J. Barfield, *The perilous frontier: Nomadic empires and China* (Cambridge, MA, 1989), pp. 89–90; K. H. J. Gardiner and Rafe de Crespigny, "T'an-shih-huai and the Hsien-pi tribes of the second century A.D.," *PFEH* 15 (1977), p. 42. Reviews of various theories of how the Tuoba may have been involved with Tanshihuai are in Zhang Jinlong, *Bei Wei zhengzhi shi* (Lanzhou, 2008), 1.24–27. Zhang's multivolume collection of primary and secondary materials on Tuoba history is extremely useful.

outside *Weishu*.⁵ One wonders if this was a Xiongnu woman joining with a Xianbei man.⁶ Contemporaries, we are told, said the father had no wife's family, the son no uncle's family. While bolstering the authority of Liwei (or his descendants) with claims of divine birth, the story may also have provided precedent for the efforts of later Northern Wei emperors to avoid the entanglements of affines, which we shall see in detail below.

A generation or two before, Tanshihuai had attempted to re-create in Inner Asia the unity of the centuries-long Xiongnu empire. Things were different in the time of Liwei, in the third century. His was a world fragmented among hundreds of petty chieftains.⁷ Liwei was but one of them, who married the daughter of a powerful local leader, and then usurped the father-in-law's position when he died in 248.⁸ At this point, we are told, Liwei led 200,000 mounted archers. If we believe this figure, that would be all the adult men of a population of about half a million. Ten years later, having solidified his power, he summoned the nearby chieftains to his base camp at Shengle (near modern Horing, on the Tümed Plain in Inner Mongolia) for a great sacrifice to Tängri (Heaven), an assertion of lordly power recognized by many peoples in Inner Asia and beyond. Any who refused were put to death, terrifying the others.⁹ Buttressing the authority of symbols with the power of physical coercion, Liwei had established himself as leader of a regional confederation on the border of the declining Chinese empire.

Three years after the sacrifice to Tängri, Liwei sent his son down as hostage to that empire's capital at Luoyang, an early instance of the regular interaction the Tuoba would have with the Chinese. The son remained for sixteen years. When he returned from a second trip in 277, the chieftains complained that the young man had picked up new ways from the Chinese; what was unspoken may have been resistance to efforts to centralize power and establish a hereditary dynasty.¹⁰ Yielding to their demands, Liwei killed his son. When he himself died soon after, many groups abandoned the confederation.

But loyalty for the Tuoba lineage survived, at least among their core following. Over the next century their power repeatedly waxed and waned. In 310 the embattled Western Jin regime (265–316)—beset by civil war and the first appearance of the Sixteen Kingdoms—awarded the Tuoba leader Yilu

⁵ WS 1.2–3. Liwei is also mentioned in the independently produced *Jinshu*: JS 3.65, 67, and 36.1057. It must, however, be noted that though a history of the Jin dynasty (265–420), the book itself was compiled much later, during the Tang, and that there is some confusion of dating in mentions there of Liwei.

⁶ For background on the Tuoba relationship with the Xiongnu, see Barfield, *Perilous frontier*, p. 87; Kenneth Klein, "The contributions of the fourth century Xianbei states to the reunification of the Chinese empire" (PhD dissertation, University of California, Los Angeles, 1980), 99–102.

⁷ For discussion of the rise of petty chieftains on the steppe after the Xiongnu collapse, see Barfield, *Perilous frontier*, pp. 85–87.

⁸ WS 1.3. ⁹ WS 1.3. ¹⁰ WS 1.4–5.

the title Duke of Dai, as reward for military support. Yilu took the opportunity to push south from the Tümed Plain to take from its Chinese governor the upper Sanggan Valley. Five years later, having already lost its capital at Luoyang, the Jin court promoted Yilu to King of Dai.¹¹ It was said that this “King of Dai” could field a force of 400,000 horsemen. In 316, however, he was killed by a son, and the regime again descended into a series of power struggles. Underlying these were two issues: resistance among groups within the confederation to the growing power of the Tuoba leaders, and the nature of the ruling line itself, a constantly expanding kinship group in which lateral succession was the norm and there were many potential claimants to the throne.¹² Though father–son succession would be established under Northern Wei, not all accepted it and this second problem persisted.

The regime stabilized with the accession of Shiyijian (r. 338–376), who began the effective development from confederation to state that would be completed by his grandson, the first Wei monarch.¹³ In this they borrowed much from the Murong, another Xianbei group that had risen in southern Manchuria, with whom the Tuoba were junior marriage partners. In the mid-fourth century, the Murong under their Yan dynasty seized much of the territory of northern China, using a sophisticated form of rulership that applied different methods to govern the Chinese farming populations and their original Xianbei following, an early example of the dual system of government seen later among the Khitans and others.¹⁴

Shiyijian’s more modest efforts included establishing a capital at Shengle and assigning Chinese advisers to institute a rudimentary bureaucracy and law code.¹⁵ In his reign we also, however, see important early efforts to build increased cohesion and discipline in the army. In 342 a great gathering of the clans was held for military training, including archery contests. This would become regular practice under the Wei.¹⁶ But these efforts to build a strong army and stable state came to an end in 376, with the assassination of Shiyijian by a son.¹⁷ At this juncture, the Tuoba, and the Murong as well, were

¹¹ WS 1.6–9; JS 5.129.

¹² Luo Xin, “Bei Wei zhiqin kao,” in *idem*, *Zhonggu beizu mingbao yanjiu* (Beijing, 2009), pp. 104–105 (reprinted from *Lishi yanjiu* 2004.5).

¹³ WS 1.11–16.

¹⁴ For an overview of the Murong, see JS 5.123–124 and chs. 108–111; Gerhard Schreiber, “The history of the Former Yen dynasty,” MS 14 (1949–1955), pp. 374–480, and MS 15 (1956), pp. 1–141; Klein, “The contributions of the fourth century Xianbei states,” pp. 15–73. On “dual organization,” see Barfield, *Perilous frontier*, pp. 104–114, 172–177.

¹⁵ WS 113.2971, 111.2873. For an overview of the Tuoba state, see Wolfram Eberhard, *Das Toba-Reich Nordchinas: Eine soziologische Untersuchung* (Leiden, 1949).

¹⁶ WS 1.12. ¹⁷ ZZTJ 104.3278–3281.

conquered by the Former Qin (351–394) in the process of unifying northern China under their own rule.

THE MAKING OF A NATION

The Former Qin, however, collapsed within a decade. In 385 Murong Chui retook the Central Plain, placing the capital of a re-established Yan regime (conventionally called Later Yan) at Zhongshan (modern Dingzhou, Hebei), at the foot of the Taihang mountains.¹⁸ In the mountainous lands that rose abruptly to the northwest of Zhongshan, the Dai regime also re-emerged under Tuoba Gui, a grandson of Shiyijian.¹⁹ His personal name is given in the southern histories as “Shegui,” perhaps a more accurate Chinese transcription of the lost original.²⁰

During the period of Former Qin dominance, Tuoba Gui stayed with his mother’s people, the Helan, who lived to the north in the region of Niuchuan (“Ox Creek”), east of modern Jining, Inner Mongolia. In 386, with the fall of Former Qin, the Helan affines brought the fifteen-year-old before a great gathering at Niuchuan, where he made sacrifices to Tängri and took the title King of Dai.²¹ Returning south to Shiyijian’s capital at Shengle, the Tuoba lord then changed the name of his regime from Dai to Wei. He thus at one and the same time advertised his interest in greater involvement in the Chinese territories—the original Wei had been one of the seven major powers of China’s Warring States period (475–221 BCE)—while distancing himself from his in-laws.²²

Tuoba Gui’s accession was not accepted by all of his kinsmen and the rising of a rival claimant, an uncle, was put down only with help from the Murong at Zhongshan.²³ But he then commenced a successful, decade-long series of campaigns into the northern steppe, defeating many groups, including Gaoche (“High Wheel”) Türks, and at least temporarily subduing the new power of Inner Asia, the Avars (Ch. Ruanruan).²⁴ In the process, he captured

¹⁸ *JS* 123.3079–3086.

¹⁹ This is according to the official account given in *WS* 1.16, 2.19. It was suggested in Southern Dynasties histories that Gui was actually a son of Shiyijian; *SsS* 95.2321; *NQS* 57.983. See Zhang, *Bei Wei zhengzhi shi*, 1.169–77.

²⁰ *WS* 2.19. For the version of his name seen in the southern histories, see *SsS* 95.2321–2322; *NQS* 57.983. The name Shegui (in a different transcription) was held by other Inner Asian figures as well, including a third-century Murong lord; *JS* 97.2537.

²¹ *WS* 2.20. ²² *WS* 2.20; Zhang, *Bei Wei zhengzhi shi*, 2.14–16.

²³ *ZZTJ* 106.3368; *WS* 2.21; *BS* 15.579–81; *WS* 15.385–86.

²⁴ These culminated in the great campaign of 399: *WS* 2.34–35. For discussion of the Avars (Ruanruan), see Golden, *Introduction to the history of the Turkic peoples*, pp. 76–79. For the Gaoche, see Edwin G. Pulleyblank, “The ‘High Carts’: A Turkish-speaking people before the Türks,” *AM*, 3rd series 3 (1990), pp. 21–26; reprinted in his *Central Asia and non-Chinese peoples of ancient China* (Aldershot, 2002).

large numbers of livestock and humans—particularly Gaoche—for forcible transplantation to areas firmly under his control. Restive, these conquered populations would in later decades repeatedly rebel. Their horsemen, however, would also be used as important auxiliary units for the Wei military.

Having thus expanded his army of cavalrymen, and for a time at least secured the always dangerous northern frontier, Tuoba Gui was now able to turn south.²⁵ A breakdown of relations with the Later Yan led in 395 to the outbreak of fighting. The Murong had the advantage early on, but two failed invasions in 395 and early 396 led to major casualties and the death of Murong Chui himself.²⁶ The Later Yan would never recover. In late 396 Tuoba Gui responded by leading a cavalry force said to number more than 400,000 from the highlands down onto the Central Plain. The Tuoba still lacked developed siegecraft, and resistance in some centers was fierce. But by early 398 Zhongshan and the Central Plain had been taken.²⁷ At the end of the same year, the Tuoba lord assumed the Chinese imperial title *huangdi* (“emperor”);²⁸ from this point on we shall refer to him by his posthumous Chinese imperial title, Daowudi, or Emperor Daowu (r. 386–409).

Just before taking the imperial title, the emperor had relocated his capital from Shengle in the Tümed Plain to Pingcheng (today’s Datong, Shanxi), in the upper Sanggan region seized by Yilu eighty-eight years before.²⁹ Though less than 100 miles east-southeast from the previous capital, Pingcheng was a very different world. It was located in a highlands river basin, and though the most northerly extension of, and a thousand meters or so above, the vast and vastly productive Central Plain, it was firmly situated in the farmlands of the old empire. For the next century, Pingcheng would be the center of an inner royal domain—the “land of Dai”—that supported the huge military base from which the Tuoba conquered and controlled their larger empire.³⁰ Groups such as the Gaoche were settled in Pingcheng’s outlying grasslands with their original forms of social and political organization intact, though now providing tribute and service to the Tuoba lords. From the newly conquered lands of the Central Plain were transported hundreds of thousands of farmers, to feed

²⁵ Klein, “The contributions of the fourth century Xianbei states,” pp. 77–78; David A. Graff, *Medieval Chinese warfare, 300–900* (London, 2002), pp. 70–72.

²⁶ *WS* 2.26–27; *ZZTJ* 108.3421–3427.

²⁷ *WS* 2.27–31; *JS* 124.3094–3096; *ZZTJ* 108.3429, 109.3460.

²⁸ *WS* 2.31, 33–34; *ZZTJ* 110.3483.

²⁹ *WS* 2.33. For the city, see W. J. F. Jenner, *Memories of Loyang: Yang Hsüan-chih and the lost capital* (493–534) (Oxford, 1981), pp. 16–37; Li Ping, *Bei Wei Pingcheng shidai* (Shanghai, 2011).

³⁰ Scott Pearce, “The land of Tai: The origins, evolution and historical significance of a community of the Inner Asian frontier,” in *Opuscula Altaica: Essays presented in honor of Henry Schwarz*, ed. Edward H. Kaplan and Donald W. Whisenhunt (Bellingham, WA, 1994), pp. 465–498; and for broader discussion, Owen Lattimore, *Inner Asian frontiers of China* (Boston, 1967).

the new city by tilling the soil along the Sanggan, while members of the Chinese elite were brought to conduct administration.³¹ Widely used by its predecessors, these forcible resettlements were an important basis of Wei power and would continue for another seventy years.

But most important of those resettled in Emperor Daowu's newly created royal domain were groups such as the Helan (frequently called "tribes," Chinese *buluo*³²), traditionally associated with the Tuoba but heretofore led by their own hereditary chieftains. As mentioned above, the Helan had sheltered Emperor Daowu during the interregnum and played a role in his first enthronement up at Niuchuan. The in-laws, however, were among those defeated in the course of the steppe campaigns. Not allowed the autonomy given the Gaoche, they, along with many others, were subjected to "detrribalization." While treated with respect, the Helan leader—the emperor's mother's brother—"no longer had (his own) men to command."³³ Instead he became part of a newly created service elite—really an officer corps in an emerging army—with wealth and status derived through hereditary peerages awarded by the monarch. His former followers were settled around Pingcheng to engage in a mixed economy of cultivation and stock rearing. No longer formally the followers of a rival lordly line, they were now "men of Dai" (the name continued to be applied to the capital region long after the dynasty's name change). Subjects (Ch. *min*) of the Tuoba crown, the men of Dai were, however, quite different from the Gaoche and the Chinese farmers, being liable not only for taxation, but most importantly for regular duty in the heavy cavalry units that were the core of the Wei armies.³⁴ For generations, this was not only a duty but a privilege, bringing honor and booty and the possibility for merit-based advancement through the ranks, under a system of

³¹ For an overview of the numbers on this occasion transported, see Jenner, *Memories of Loyang*, p. 20 n. 10. For a list of Emperor Daowu's transportations, see Li Ping, *Bei Wei Pingcheng shidai*, pp. 270–271; and Su Bai, "Pingcheng shili de jiju he 'Yungang moshi' de xingcheng yu fazhan," in *idem*, *Zhongguo shikusi yanjiu* (Beijing, 1996), pp. 115–118 (originally in Yungang shiku wenwu baoguan suo, *Yungang shiku* (Beijing, 1991)).

³² For discussion of the meaning and limits of the term "tribe" in Inner Asian history, and the role within these units of hereditary leadership, see David Sneath, *The headless state: Aristocratic orders, kinship society, and misrepresentations of nomadic Inner Asia* (New York, 2007); and Peter Golden's review of the book, in which he disputes Sneath's attempt to wean the Inner Asian polity from the kin-based tribal entity: *JAS* 68.1 (2009), pp. 293–296. Sneath and Golden carry on the discussion in *JAS* 69.2 (2010), pp. 658–663.

³³ *WS* 83A.1812. For fuller discussion, see Zhang Jinlong, *Bei Wei zhengzhi shi*, 2.186–222; and the interesting suggestion by Klein that this may have been the continuation of policy imposed on the Tuoba by the Former Qin: Klein, "The contributions of the fourth century Xianbei states," p. 66.

³⁴ E.g., the call-up in 413 of "all the men within the domain twelve [*sui*] and above," *WS* 3.52; and Zou Da, "Bei Wei de bingzhi," *Dalu zazhi shixue congshu*, 1.4 (1970), p. 164. For the nature of the classic Tuoba cavalry—with both horse and man armored—see Graff, *Medieval Chinese warfare*, pp. 40–41. For a discussion of the important term "men of Dai" during Northern Wei and later into Sui, see Matsushita Ken'ichi, *Hokugi kozoku taiseiron* (Sapporo, 2007), pp. 159–207.

administration distinct from that imposed upon the Chinese farmers. These men and their army were the basis of the state.³⁵ Though groups such as the Gaoche were early on called up to serve in irregular auxiliary units, it would be a century before Chinese farmers were regularly drafted as infantry in the armies.

Another term applied to the men of Dai was, in Chinese, *guoren*, “men of the nation” or “compatriots,” implying that they formed not only an army but in some sense a “nation,” built around the Tuoba throne, with shared identity and interests. Here, particularly, it is unfortunate that we do not know the original Tuoba term.³⁶ *Guoren*, of course, for many generations may have remembered their original identity before the detribalization. Still, *Weishu* gives many anecdotes showing the fierce loyalty these men held for the Wei monarch, or for such symbols as their regimental flag. And they shared a passion for events such as the great hunts the emperors led them on or the archery contests begun by Shiyijian.³⁷ Furthermore, *guoren* leaders—generals and princes—would for a century play key roles as companions and advisers to the monarch in an “inner court,” generally wielding much greater influence than the growing bureaucracy, staffed increasingly by Chinese.³⁸ These loyalties and enthusiasms, this sense of nation and a voice in it, were an important basis of morale among these troops, the proof lying in their armies’ successes. The decay of these armies, and the nation from which they were drawn, would lead directly to the dynasty’s fall.

³⁵ Klein, “The contributions of the fourth century Xianbei states,” pp. 95–96. For allocation of land to these resettled populations, Hori Toshikazu, *Kindensei no kenkyū: Chūgoku kodai kokka no tochi seisaku to tochi shoyūsei* (Tokyo, 1975), pp. 94–95. For discussion of this dual administration, pioneered by the Murong, see note 14 above.

³⁶ Klein, “The contributions of the fourth century Xianbei states,” pp. 96–98. As is always the case with translation, the Chinese term *guo* almost certainly fails to convey all the meaning of the original term (as would the English term “nation”). But as *Hanyu da cidian* tells us, *guo* itself does contain an interesting overlap of “nation,” “state” and “dynasty,” as well as “land” and even “old homestead”; each a facet of the meaning of “land of Dai” as conveyed in our texts. We also see this with Jack Armstrong, in his *Nations before nationalism* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1982), who defines “nation” as “intense group identification” in “large agglomerations” (p. 3; see also his Chapter 2, “Sedentary versus nomad”).

³⁷ For anecdotes, see *WS* 34.799; *WS* 30.725; *WS* 51, p. 1127. For the prestige of officers of the hunt, see the comments of Hu Sanxing in *ZZTJ* 115.3624; Zhang Jinlong, *Wei Jin Nanbeichao jinwei wuguan zhidu yanjiu* (Beijing, 2004), 2.682–683, and Zhang Jinlong, *Bei Wei zhengzhi shi*, 2.401–406. More broadly, see Thomas Allsen, *The royal hunt in Eurasian history* (Philadelphia, 2006). For an example of the significance of the archery contest, see *WS* 5.119; Shanxisheng kaogu yanjiusuo and Lingxiuxian wenwuju, “Shanxi Lingxiu Bei Wei Wenchengdi ‘Nanxun bei,’” *Wenwu* 1997.12, pp. 70–80. See also Scott Pearce, “The way of the warrior in early medieval China, examined through the ‘Northern Yuefu,’” *EMC* 13–14.2 (2008), pp. 87–113.

³⁸ This is the underlying theme of an important contribution to the field by Yan Yaozhong, *Bei Wei qianqi zhengzhi zhidu* (Changchun, 1990); and see the figures provided by Klein, “The contributions of the fourth century Xianbei states,” pp. 107–108.

Pingcheng was the great strategic center from which these armies could descend to the flatlands below. But its strength also held a weakness; agricultural production in this high, dry region was unreliable, with recurring crop failure. And transportation of food from the plains up to the capital was difficult. These problems surfaced just seventeen years after establishment of the new capital, in 415, when famine broke out there during the reign of Emperor Daowu's successor, Tuoba Si, posthumously Emperor Mingyuan (r. 409–423). Many urged Emperor Mingyuan to move the capital down onto the plains. But a Chinese official, Cui Hao, put forth a counterargument. A member of a locally powerful gentry family from down on the Central Plain, Cui suggested that remaining remote augmented the power of the Tuoba, whose cavalry were viewed with terror when they came down from the mountains to the plains below (he may, of course, have also wished to keep that cavalry as far as possible from his old homestead there).³⁹ Emperor Mingyuan concurred and the capital was kept at Pingcheng, its most desperate inhabitants sent down as temporary refugees to the plain, where granaries were opened to feed them. It has been estimated that in the time of Emperor Daowu, the greater Pingcheng area already had a population of about one million.⁴⁰ These issues would grow more and more pressing with continuing population growth.

At any rate, Emperor Daowu had created an empire, echoing the substance of conquest with the symbolism of title. His last decade, however, was one of troubling decline in which he became increasingly brutal and capricious, purging and killing enemies real or imagined. *Weishu* suggests madness, though underlying this behavior was probably real concern for the succession, based on memory of struggle with his uncle. In 409 Emperor Daowu ordered the suicide of a cousin who had been a key commander in the conquest of the Central Plain.⁴¹

While the emperor did not want power to fall to a cousin, even less did he want it to fall to a wife, or a wife's father or brother, perhaps remembering the

³⁹ WS 35.808; 110.2850; 3.55. For the possibility of Cui's ulterior motive, see Yan Yaozhong, *Zhongguo lishi*, Volume 4, *Liang Jin Nanbeichao shi* (Beijing, 2009), pp. 263–264. Cui was a member of the Cui family of Qinghe, located near the modern Linqing, in western Shandong. The nature of these powerful Chinese lineages is much discussed; those interested could begin with Jennifer Holmgren, "The making of an elite: Local politics and social relations in northeastern China during the 5th century AD," *PFEH*, 30 (1984), pp. 1–79; and Patricia Buckley Ebrey, *The aristocratic families of early imperial China: A case study of the Po-ling Ts'ui family* (Cambridge, 1978).

⁴⁰ Li Ping, *Bei Wei Pingcheng shidai*, p. 275.

⁴¹ WS 2.44; BS 15.563; WS 15.372; ZZTJ 115.3619; and see the discussion of this in Zhang, *Bei Wei zhengzhi shi*, 2.323–327. In 404 Emperor Daowu began issuing princely titles to men of other lineages, to provide counterweight to his own kinsmen: WS 2.41–42; WS 113.2973; Luo Xin, "Bei Wei zhiqin kao," p. 103.

control earlier exercised over him by his mother and her Helan clan, or the story of his ancestor Liwei having “no uncle’s family.” Thus at the end of his reign Emperor Daowu established a deplorable policy called “elevating the son and so killing the mother,” a supposed “ancient practice” of ordering the suicide of the mother of the designated heir.⁴² This was first imposed in 409, when the Xiongnu mother of Tuoba Si, the future Emperor Mingyuan, was forced to commit suicide, leading the distraught seventeen-year-old to flee the palace. His father, the emperor, had then selected a fifteen-year-old son of a Helan wife as the new heir, but before he could compel the mother to die, the new appointee killed him. At this point, the original heir, Tuoba Si, returned, eliminated both his brother and the Helan woman, and took the throne as originally intended.⁴³

COMPLETION OF THE CONQUESTS

The fourteen years of Emperor Mingyuan’s reign saw a lull in military activity. Under his heir, Tuoba Dao, however, came a second great wave of Tuoba conquest that led to unification of the northern lands of the old empire. This is portrayed in the son’s posthumous Chinese imperial title, “Taiwudi,” which means “Great Martial Emperor” (r. 424–452). It is also seen in another, Inner Asian, appellation in his own tongue, Böri Beg, or “Wolf Lord.”⁴⁴

The Wolf Lord’s first campaign was against the Xia regime of the Xiongnu, which held the Yellow River loop as well as the Wei river valley to its south. By 427 he had taken the Xia capital at Tongwan (northwest of today’s Hengshan, Shaanxi). The Ordos region was converted into a huge government horse pasture, though the Xiongnu still held Chang’an.⁴⁵ Emperor Taiwu then turned north in 429 to rout the Avars. A million head of livestock were taken, and half a million encampment groups (*luo*)—mainly Gaoche, vassals of

⁴² See discussion of marriage alliance and Emperor Daowu’s resistance to it in Jennifer Holmgren, “Women and political power in the traditional T’o-pa elite: A preliminary study of the biographies of empresses in the *Wei-shu*,” *MS* 35 (1981–1983), p. 50; see a hypothesis of the origin of this practice in Valentin Golovachev, “Matricide among the Tuoba-Xianbei and its transformation during the Northern Wei,” *EMC* 8 (2002), pp. 1–41; and the response by Scott Pearce in *EMC* 9 (2003), pp. 139–144. For later use of this practice by palace women: Tian Yuqing, *Tuoba shi tan* (Beijing, 2003), pp. 15–68; Pearce, “Nurses, nurslings and new shapes of power in the mid-Wei court,” *AM*, 3rd series 22.1 (2009), pp. 287–309.

⁴³ *WS* 3.49; *BS* 13.493; *WS* 13.325; *WS* 16.389–390.

⁴⁴ For appearance of this name in Chinese transcription in southern histories, see *SoS* 95.2330; *NQS* 57.983. For analysis, see Peter A. Boodberg, *Selected works of Peter A. Boodberg* (Berkeley, 1979), pp. 74–78, 99–102; Luo Xin, “Bei Wei Taiwudi de Xianbei benming,” in his *Zhonggu beizu mingbao yanjiu* (Beijing, 2009), pp. 166–174 (originally in *Minzu yanjiu* 2006.4); “Beg,” *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, retrieved 29 July 2012.

⁴⁵ *ZZTJ* 120.3789–3791, 121.3799–3801; *WS* 4A.72–74, 95.2057–2059, 110.2857.

the Avars—forcibly resettled in a 600-mile-wide swathe of grasslands stretching from northeast of Beijing to the northern loop of the Yellow River. This sudden massive importation of men and animals caused a shock to the Pingcheng economy, with a precipitous drop in prices for livestock, felt, and hides.⁴⁶ From the military encampments established to control these groups—and serve as staging grounds for steppe campaigns—grew the Six Garrisons that would play a very important role at the dynasty's end.⁴⁷

Having given a crippling blow to the Avars, Emperor Taiwu turned south again. By 431 he had completed the destruction of the Xia regime and controlled Chang'an, the original capital of China's first empire, a key link to the Silk Roads, and the quite recent site of the great Buddhist translation project of the Central Asian monk Kumārajīva (344–413).⁴⁸ Afterward came a large-scale transportation of northwesterners up to Pingcheng, which among other things stimulated the spread there of Buddhism.

In 436 Emperor Taiwu destroyed the last holdout Yan regime in Manchuria (conventionally called Northern Yan), now ruled not by the Murong but by the Feng. Like many in this age, the Feng were a family of mixed descent, who described themselves as Chinese while showing heavy influences of Xianbei culture.⁴⁹ (As we shall see below, a daughter of this family would eventually enter the Wei harem and rise to enormous importance in the regime.) The last of the Sixteen Kingdoms was destroyed three years later, when Emperor Taiwu took Northern Liang (397–439), located in the Gansu corridor with its capital at modern Wuwei.⁵⁰ This was followed by more transportations. But Tuoba control of the northwest was shaky and in 445 a major rebellion broke out among “mixed barbarian” groups in the area north of the Wei river, led by a man named Gai Wu.⁵¹ As he generally did, the emperor himself led the

⁴⁶ WS 4A.75; ZZTJ 121.3811–3812.

⁴⁷ Yan Gengwang, *Zhongguo difang xingzheng zhidu shi*, Volume 2, *Wei Jin Nanbeichao difang xingzheng zhidu*, Part 2 (Shanghai, 2007), pp. 692–704; Pearce, “The land of Tai,” pp. 473–474.

⁴⁸ ZZTJ 121.3826. For Kumārajīva, see Valerie Hansen, *The Silk Road: A new history* (Oxford, 2012), Chapter 2.

⁴⁹ ZZTJ 123.3861–3862. Regarding the Feng family, see WS 4A.81, 97.2126–2129; JS 125.3127–3134; Jennifer Holmgren, “Social mobility in the Northern Dynasties: A case study of the Feng of Northern Yen,” *MS* 35 (1981–1983), pp. 19–32; Stanley K. Abe, *Ordinary images* (Chicago, 2002), pp. 181–182; and description of the tomb of a member of this family in Albert E. Dien, *Six Dynasties civilization* (New Haven, 2007), pp. 104–105.

⁵⁰ ZZTJ 123.3873–3874; WS 99.2207–2208, 114.3032; Leon Hurvitz, trans., *Wei Shou: Treatise on Buddhism and Taoism: An English translation of the original Chinese text of Wei-shu cxiv* (Kyoto, 1956), p. 61; Liu Shufen, *Zhongguo de Fojiao yu shehui* (Shanghai, 2008), pp. 30–32.

⁵¹ WS 40.902–3; ZZTJ 124.3921–3929. For an excellent study of this uprising, see Liu Shufen, *Zhongguo de Fojiao yu shehui*, pp. 1–45; and an abridged English version in *idem*, “Ethnicity and the suppression of Buddhism in fifth-century north China: The background and significance of the Gaiwu rebellion,” *AM*, 3rd series 15.1 (2002), pp. 1–21.

army in 446 to suppress the uprising, in the course of which he visited the ancient capital at Chang'an.

Emperor Taiwu's conquests were now complete, and for the next 150 years East Asia's international politics were largely defined by a balance of power between the Northern and Southern Dynasties. Recognizing this, the Wolf Lord launched one last great campaign, in the course of which he would look across the Yangzi at the southern capital.

This commenced in late 450, when, in response to Jiankang's seizure of a few key Wei border holdings on the south bank of the Yellow River, Emperor Taiwu led forth "an army of one million, the beating of the war drums shaking heaven and earth."⁵² Though the number given is hyperbole, the army was huge, consisting of hundreds of thousands of men from the core *guoren* units. Unusually for this period, Chinese were also called up to serve as support troops.⁵³ Numerous auxiliary units added to the numbers, drawn from groups of neither Chinese nor *guoren* origin, groups that had frequently been a source of rebellion within the Wei empire (and would continue to be so in the future). Emperor Taiwu listed these, and showed his feeling toward them, in a note sent to the defender of Xuyi, a walled town on the south bank of the Huai river that he would besiege in the course of his eventual retreat: "None of the fighting men I've sent against you now are of my own nation (*fei wo guoren* 非我國人). To the northeast of the walls are Dingling [Gaoche] and Hu [Xiongnu]; to the south of the walls are Di and Qiang." The defenders could kill them if they wanted, he continued, for that would rid him of discontent and rebellion back home.⁵⁴

Whatever the auxiliary troops felt in turn, the initial advance of this huge army went well. Virtually unopposed, Emperor Taiwu led his army south to Mount Zou (east of today's Jining, Shandong), where, almost 700 years before, the Qin First Emperor, shortly after his unification of all the Chinese lands, had ascended the mountain and installed a commemorative stele. Emperor Taiwu now climbed the mountain himself, where he had his men push over his rival's monument. More courteously, representatives were sent to make sacrifice to Confucius in the sage's old hometown, just fifteen or so miles away.⁵⁵

From Mount Zou they continued south, arriving in mid-January of 451 at Pengcheng (today's Xuzhou, in Jiangsu Province). Though undefeated on the field of battle—as they would be throughout the entire campaign—the million-man army was unable to take this strongly fortified city. In an

⁵² *SoS* 76.1974; *ZZTJ* 125.3949.

⁵³ *WS* 4B.104; He Ziquan, "Fubing zhiqian de Beichao bingzhi," in *idem*, *Du shi ji* (Shanghai, 1982), 334.

⁵⁴ *SoS* 74.1912; *ZZTJ* 126.3963–3964. For an overview of the central army itself, see Zhang Jinlong, *Wei Jin Nanbeichao jinwei wuguan*, Volume 2, Chapter 16.

⁵⁵ *SoS* 95.2350; *WS* 4B.104.

exchange with Pengcheng's commander shouted over the city walls, an envoy of the invading emperor summed up the situation: "Defense of this city is what your side is well versed in; open-field battle is what we excel at."⁵⁶

Unable to take the town, the Northern Wei proceeded south across the Huai river. In mid-February of 451, they finally reached the north bank of the Yangzi, just across the river from Jiankang. Despite the precarious nature of the dynasties that based themselves there, this city was at that time probably the greatest center of culture and commerce in the world.⁵⁷ Emperor Taiwu's tent sat on top of a hill overlooking his army, whose encampments stretched for miles.⁵⁸ On the south side, martial law had been declared.⁵⁹ Three days later—by the Chinese calendar, New Year's Day—the Wei emperor held a great feast for his officers, with bestowals according to rank and peerage for more than 200 men, and a declaration of the end of hostilities. And on the day after that, he led the army back north. The river had not been crossed, the invasion not carried to completion. But the regions through which the Wei armies had marched were devastated, and as they withdrew, tens of thousands of households of captives were gathered up to take back to the Sanggan valley.⁶⁰ Though it had survived, the Song regime was much weakened.

The question is: why did Emperor Taiwu not push further south? First of all, the Yangzi was a huge moat, and Jiankang naval capabilities were much more highly developed than those of the Tuoba.⁶¹ Another issue was logistics. On the road north, the "men and horses were hungry," and increasingly driven to attacks on grain stores in the cities they passed. And while many of these walled towns had been abandoned, others—like Pengcheng and Xuyi—were still held by defenders. The Wei armies could turn from triumphal procession to trapped prey, with attacks by southern troops precipitating mutiny among Wei's auxiliary units. And finally, these men of Inner Asian origin were not accustomed to the southern climate, or its native germs, and disease had begun to spread through the ranks; we are told, probably with exaggeration, that

⁵⁶ WS 53.1169; trans. by Albert Dien in his "The disputation at Pengcheng: Accounts from the *Wei shu* and the *Song shu*," in *Early medieval China: A sourcebook*, ed. Wendy Swartz et al. (New York, 2014), p. 44. See also the parallel passage in SsS 59.1601. For an overview of the campaign, see Dien's "Disputation at Pengcheng," and also Graff, *Medieval Chinese warfare*, pp. 128–129.

⁵⁷ Shufen Liu, "Jiankang and the commercial empire of the Southern Dynasties: Change and continuity in medieval Chinese economic history," in *Culture and power in the reconstitution of the Chinese realm, 200–600*, ed. Scott Pearce, Audrey Spiro, and Patricia Ebrey (Cambridge, MA, 2001), pp. 35–52.

⁵⁸ WS 4B.104–5; ZZTJ 125.3960.

⁵⁹ SsS 5.99; described at length in Zhang, *Bei Wei zhengzhi shi*, 3.268–295.

⁶⁰ WS 4B.105, 95.2140, 105C.2406; SsS 95.2329; ZZTJ 126.3966.

⁶¹ See Graff, *Medieval Chinese warfare*, p. 129.

casualties amounted to more than half the army.⁶² For all these reasons, and perhaps more, this practical commander in chief led his troops back north, with tens of thousands of new subjects in thrall.

Perhaps this had been the point of the campaign from the beginning, together with a desire to intimidate Song and squelch its efforts to retake northern Henan. And there would be no further efforts by the southern court to recover those territories, as the Song emperor's murder by his own son in 453 embroiled the South in power struggles. Such convulsions were not, however, reserved for Jiankang. Emperor Taiwu had taken the throne in 424 with little turmoil. He did not leave it in that way. In 452 a power struggle between him and his heir led first to the death of the son, and then to the murder of the father by a eunuch, who seized power at court. This lasted for about eight months, until the palace guard executed the eunuch dictator and enthroned Emperor Taiwu's twelve-year-old grandson, Tuoba Jun, whose posthumous name would be Emperor Wencheng (r. 452–465).

JUSTIFYING THE REALM

Emperor Taiwu's grand southern campaign had not been a military success. Viewed on another level, however, it was a powerful symbol, grandly choreographed with all the pomp and circumstance of an imperial progress. Rulers base their power on symbol and ritual as much as on coercive force. Just as the early Tuoba lords used different groups of human beings for different tasks—to grow their food, manage their accounts, fight their wars—so they used different symbols to try to persuade those populations to accept their rule and to do their bidding. The Tuoba arrived on the stage of East Asia unburdened by a great deal of tradition, and so with relative freedom to manipulate it. At the same time, however, the glue that had bound Emperor Daowu's imagined community together was not especially strong, and efforts to shape tradition can fail.

Key among the symbols of the Inner Asian and Chinese (and many other) traditions is Heaven: Tängri or the Chinese Tian. We first encountered this high sky god among the Tuoba in 258, with the grand ceremony in which the interloper Liwei claimed power in the old land of the Xiongnu. More than a century later, Emperor Daowu repeatedly used these rituals in his restoration of the Tuoba state and radical reorganization of its peoples and armies. There was, however, an interesting uncertainty in his employment of them, an eclectic use of different traditions in a manner frequently seen among the Tuoba. He had first sacrificed to Tängri at his enthronement with the Helan

⁶² *Sa* 74.1912–1913, 95.2352–2353; *ZZTJ* 126.3963–3966.

up at Niuchuan, presumably in a manner familiar to nomads. Use of an Inner Asian style became more explicit in the fourth month of 398, with sacrifice to Tängri at a western altar. At the end of that same year, in a just-finished throne hall in the new capital city, he took the title *huangdi*—that is, emperor—bestowed a great pardon, and changed his reign name to Tianxing 天興 (Heaven Prevails), which could, if one wished, be read as “Tängri Prevails.”⁶³ In the next month, the first month of 399 (and then of 400), no doubt following the advice of Chinese secretaries, he gave sacrifice to the Chinese Shangdi—Tian—in traditional Chinese manner, at a shrine to the south of the capital. In 405, however, we see him once again sacrificing to Tängri in the west. This would become the rule: in particular he made frequent sacrifices to Tängri in the western suburb, as prelude to military campaigns. Later, only under his descendant Emperor Xiaowen (r. 471–499), however, was the rule decisively reversed in favor of the Chinese model.

Shamanesses played a role in emperors’ sacrifices to Tängri, ascending the altar while beating drums.⁶⁴ But it was the emperor himself who played the central role; he was the regime’s high priest. Under Northern Wei we see no shamanic rival to the throne such as Chinggis’s Kököchü, much less prophets coming forth to maintain the covenant by reproaching the king. While traces of shamanic practice survived to the end of Wei, with occasional efforts to suppress them, it was increasingly peripheralized.⁶⁵ In Emperor Taiwu’s mind, at least, the threat came from Buddhism.

In northern China, the earliest centers of Buddhist activity had been in the far east and the far west; the spread of the new religion in the Pingcheng region thus accelerated in the late 430s, with conquest of Yan and Northern Liang, and transportation to the Wei capital of the faithful, including large numbers of monks and nuns.⁶⁶ Already dismayed by the sudden spread of this potentially rival source of authority, Emperor Taiwu took action in 446 when, during suppression of the Gai Wu rebellion, weapons were found in

⁶³ WS 2.20, 32, 34, 42, 108A.2734–2736; ZZTJ 110.3483. On this ambiguity, see the reference in Zhang, *Bei Wei zhengzhi shi*, 3.9, n. 3. This tension between Chinese and Inner Asian forms of the ritual, up into the time of the emperor Xiaowen, is the key theme of Kang Le’s study *Cong xijiao dao nanjiao: Guojia jidian yu Bei Wei zhengzhi* (Taipei, 1995). For a broader discussion of Wei ritual, see Shuguo Chen, Keith N. Knapp, trans., “State religious ceremonies,” in *Early Chinese religion*, Part Two: *The Period of Division* (220–589 AD), Volume 1, ed. John Lagerwey and Lü Pengzhi (Leiden, 2010), pp. 53–142; Chen Shuguo, *Zhongguo lizhi shi: Wei Jin Nanbeichao juan* (Changsha, 1995); and Kaneko Shuichi, *Chūgoku kodai kōtei kisai no kenkyū* (Tokyo, 2006), esp. pp. 267–308.

⁶⁴ See the description of Emperor Daowu’s 405 ceremony in WS 108A.2736. *Songsbu* says the emperor also received advice from a “holy shaman,” a *shenwu*: *SaS* 95.2322.

⁶⁵ WS 4B.97, 7A.155.

⁶⁶ WS 114.3032–3033; Hurvitz, *Treatise on Buddhism and Taoism*, pp. 61–64; Tang Yongtong, *Han Wei liang Jin Nanbeichao Fojiao shi* (Beijing, 2011), p. 272; Liu, *Zhongguo de Fojiao yu shehui*, pp. 30–32.

a monastery in Chang'an. Convinced the monks had been aiding the enemy, he had them all killed and the Buddhist images destroyed.⁶⁷ These commands were then extended to the empire as a whole, though with mixed results, as such an effort faced the resistance of many powerful converts at the capital.⁶⁸

Rejecting Buddhism, Emperor Taiwu sought other ways to explain and justify the realm, to supplement the Tängri sacrifices. In 443 there appeared in Pingcheng a representative of the Wuluohou, a Mongolic group from the Khingan region once occupied by the Tuoba. Hearing from the visitor of the presence there of an ancient Tuoba "shrine," he now sent an envoy north to the cave to sacrifice to Heaven, Earth and the imperial forebears and make an inscription on the cave wall honoring the ancestors.⁶⁹ Rediscovered in 1980, this Gaxian cave clearly had been inhabited by primitive populations around the beginning of the Common Era.⁷⁰ And the inscription by Taiwu's representative adds to our knowledge of the mid-fifth century, among other things revealing that the Wei *huangdi* continued explicitly to refer to their ancestors by the Inner Asian monarchical title *qaghan* (Ch. *keban*) and its feminine form, *qatun* (Ch. *kedun*). We must, however, be cautious in assuming that this particular cavern was necessarily the site actually inhabited by the dynasty's genetic forebears: the emperor clearly did not know where his ancestors had lived; and the Wuluohou may have had mixed motives for making this report to the Tuoba lord. Still, his desire to rediscover his original home is interesting, as is his wish to publicize the discovery in both Pingcheng and the northlands.

A more systematic state cult was found by Emperor Taiwu in the Chinese Daoist religion. In 424 Cui Hao introduced the emperor to Kou Qianzhi, a Daoist prophet charged by the gods to go to Pingcheng and aid the emperor. Rituals were established together with a network of shrines, and in 440 the emperor adopted a title suggested by Kou—Perfect Ruler of Great Peace (*Taiping zhen jun*)—which he also made his new reign name (440–451).⁷¹ But despite his effort to foster a unifying faith for his recently created empire, there seems to have been little popular interest in Kou's sect. Over time, in fact, the emperor himself seems to have lost interest. When Kou died in 448, no successor was named as leader of the Daoist church. The reign name was changed in 451, a few months after the emperor's return from the South.

⁶⁷ WS 114.3033–3035; Hurvitz, *Treatise on Buddhism and Taoism*, pp. 64–68.

⁶⁸ The converts included the heir apparent: WS 114.3034–3035. ⁶⁹ WS 4B.95, 108A.2738.

⁷⁰ Mi Wenping, "Xianbei shishi de faxian yu chubu yanjiu," *Wenwu* 1981.2, pp. 1–7.

⁷¹ WS 114.3049–3054; ZZTJ 119.3761–3762, 123.3885; Richard B. Mather, "K'ou Ch'ien-chih and the Taoist theocracy at the Northern Wei court, 425–451," in *Facets of Taoism: Essays in Chinese religion*, ed. Holmes Welch and Anna Seidel (New Haven, 1979), pp. 103–122.

With Cui Hao we see development at Pingcheng of another source of authority, another way to justify (and manipulate) rulership. This was the power of the Book, seen in different forms in different societies: in this case, of course, the Chinese classics. Cui Hao's father, Cui Hong, was one of the educated gentlemen of eminent lineage who were literally hunted down in the past by Emperor Daowu to serve the Wei.⁷² With the passing of years, such men were increasingly honored and relied upon in the court, providing the emperors a counterweight to Tuoba generals and princes. Cui Hao rose to be an influential adviser to Emperor Taiwu, putting forth to the emperor an ideal vision of state and society extracted from the classics, the same Chinese texts that the sons of princes and ministers were now expected to study at the imperial university.⁷³ In 450, however, the emperor turned on Cui Hao, executing him, his family, and the members of several other closely related prestigious Chinese families. This may have been in part because of corruption and cronyism: Cui was increasingly filling the bureaucracy with kith and kin, forming a powerful faction in the government. And over time Cui had grown increasingly smug and arrogant toward his lord. But the stated reason for the execution given in *Weishu* probably was the proximate cause: that in compiling a history of the dynasty Cui Hao had revealed "unseemly affairs of state" (*guo e*).⁷⁴ Though we do not know what these unseemly affairs were, text—Chinese text—could clearly contain threat as well as benefit for the royal house.

THE GROWTH OF ABSOLUTISM

Despite Cui Hao's execution, the classics remained the basis of the curriculum of the Tuoba princes. The authority of these texts would continue to grow, reaching its zenith under Emperor Xiaowen (r. 471–499). More immediately, under Emperor Taiwu's grandson and successor, Emperor Wencheng, the proscription of Buddhism abruptly ended. The royal house now began to use Buddhism to its own ends, beginning by building the great Yungang cave temples, just west of Pingcheng, where the Tuoba lords were presented as Buddhas, huge statues standing above all other beings in the world.⁷⁵

Transitional in nature, the reigns of Emperor Wencheng and his son, Emperor Xianwen (r. 465–471), show signs of the beginning of major change

⁷² WS 24.620–623.

⁷³ For an edict mandating their attendance, see WS 4B.97. The university had been first established during Emperor Daowu's reign: WS 2.35.

⁷⁴ WS 35.815, 825–826, 48.1069–1070; ZZTJ 125.3941–3944. See discussion of the reasons for the execution in Zhang, *Bei Wei zhengzhi shi*, 4.299–367.

⁷⁵ WS 5.112, 114.3035–3037; Hurvitz, *Treatise on Buddhism and Taoism*, pp. 69–72.

in the regime. The pace of military activity was greatly reduced, confined largely to quelling occasional rebellions and to border wars with Jiankang to the south and the Avars in the north. The one exception during this period—and for the rest of the Wei—came from 466 to 469 with seizure of the lands between the Yellow River and the Huai (modern Shandong and northern Anhui) in a prolonged struggle initiated by defections sparked by a southern succession crisis.⁷⁶

The campaigns of the 460s were not, however, led by an emperor, as they now spent less time in the field. Distance began to grow between them and their armies. Early on in this process, Emperor Wencheng is quoted at one point as muttering to the *guoren* in his ever-present guard, “You all hold your bows and your swords, on the right and left attending Us—you just establish some ‘merit’ and you all become dukes and princes.”⁷⁷ At the same time, the emperors now spent more time—often reluctantly—in a palace city that had grown far beyond being simply the abode of the monarch. It had become an entity in and of itself, a dense network of individuals and etiquettes and levers of power over both the army and a burgeoning apparatus of government. These tendencies can be seen already in the ability of a eunuch to kill Emperor Taiwu and take power for the better part of a year back in 452.

After Emperor Taiwu, it was often not the emperor who pulled the levers of power. In fact, more and more it was palace women.⁷⁸ This began in earnest during Emperor Wencheng’s reign, 452–465. Deprived of contact with her son in life, his mother had been put to death at the time of his enthronement. He filled the emotional gap by elevating his wet nurse, Madame Chang, to the status of empress dowager, an act unprecedented in Chinese history.⁷⁹ Madame Chang then used the Tuoba’s “ancient practice” for her own purposes, ordering the death of the emperor’s favorite, who had birthed the presumptive heir, then replacing her as empress with a daughter of the Feng, the former rulers of Northern Yan, whom the wet nurse knew as a fellow transportee from Manchuria. With the death of the emperor in 465, the throne was inhabited by the heir, Madame Feng’s eleven-year-old stepson Tuoba Hong (whose posthumous name would be Emperor Xianwen, r. 466–471), though power was actually held by Yi Hun, a high-ranking former confidant of the deceased father. After several months, however, the dictator was eliminated by Madame Feng acting in concert with several of the boy emperor’s kinsmen.⁸⁰ For a year as empress dowager, Madame Feng

⁷⁶ ZYTJ 131.4123, 132.4147; Holmgren, “The making of an elite,” pp. 46–58. ⁷⁷ WS 48.1076.

⁷⁸ Song Qirui, *Bei Wei nüzhun lun* (Beijing, 2006); Holmgren, “Women and political power,” pp. 33–74; *idem*, “The harem in Northern Wei politics: 398–498,” *JESHO* 26.1 (1983), pp. 71–96.

⁷⁹ Pearce, “Nurses and nurslings,” pp. 296–305; Song Qirui, *Bei Wei nüzhun lun*, Chapter 2.

⁸⁰ ZYTJ 130.4074, 131.4104.

(often referred to by her posthumous title, Dowager Empress Wenming) served as regent to her stepson, keeping peace at the fractious court by carefully co-operating with the princes and ministers.⁸¹ But with the birth in October 467 of the thirteen-year-old emperor's first son, she chose to withdraw to the rear apartments of the palace, taking the future heir with her. The birth mother died two years later; the histories do not mention the cause.⁸² Madame Feng used this time to build ties throughout the court and government, as well as with the child under her care.

For four years Emperor Xianwen now ruled as well as reigned. In 471, however, presumably under pressure from his uncles and Madame Feng, the seventeen-year-old passed the throne on to his heir and withdrew (perhaps escaped) from the court to a lodge in the imperial deer park north of the city.⁸³ As Retired Emperor (*taishang huangdi*) he continued to play an active role in the regime, leading a campaign against the Avars and regularly hearing reports on affairs of state. At the same time, however, tension grew between him and Madame Feng, which reached breaking point in 476 when Emperor Xianwen had his stepmother's lover executed.⁸⁴ She responded by poisoning him.

Madame Feng was now the leading figure at court, confidently wielding power that derived from three sources: her designated position as matriarch of the imperial house; the network of informal allies she had developed at court, including kinsmen promoted to high posts; and, probably most important, the emotional control she wielded over her step-grandson Tuoba Hong, posthumously Emperor Xiaowen (r. 471–499) whom she had raised from birth and played a key role in educating.⁸⁵ At least part of the young emperor's obedience to Madame Feng rested on acceptance of the fundamental Chinese moral concept of *xiao* (filial piety), obedience and respect to the parent, mother as well as father, and here extended to foster mother as well. The boys of the imperial family had for generations now been raised with the Chinese classics; Emperor Xiaowen was a bookish young man, who apparently took the teachings of the classics—including *xiao*—especially to heart.⁸⁶ Though he and he alone sat on the throne, in fact he acted as junior partner in a diarchy, regularly

⁸¹ For her biography, see A. G. Wenley, *The Grand Empress Dowager Wen Ming and the Northern Wei necropolis at Fang Shan* (Washington, DC, 1947).

⁸² BS 13.498; WS 13.331.

⁸³ WS 6.131–132, 19B.461, 41.921; ZZTJ 133.4164–4166. See the overview of this in Zhang Jinlong, *Bei Wei zhengzhi shi*, 5, 11–13; Andrew Eisenberg, *Kingship in early medieval China* (Leiden, 2008), pp. 72–76.

⁸⁴ BS 13.495; WS 13.328; ZZTJ 134.4187.

⁸⁵ BS 13.496; WS 13.329, 7B.186. Also see Holmgren, "The harem in Northern Wei politics," p. 88.

⁸⁶ WS 7B.187; ZZTJ 140.4389.

deferring to Madame Feng on matters of state.⁸⁷ The pair were referred to as the “two sages” (*er sheng*), and at Yungang are said to be depicted as two Buddhas sitting one beside the other.⁸⁸

The famous reforms of the Xiaowen reign came in two major clusters: the first, generally of a practical sort, in the mid-480s, while the court still lay under “two sages”; those of the second, coming after Madame Feng’s death in 490, were of a more visionary bent.

In taking the Central Plain, Northern Wei had inherited two of the scourges of Later Han: corruption and manorialism. For the first several decades of Tuoba rule—in the midst of the military expansion, when the treasury was regularly filled by booty—taxation of farm output was rudimentary and inefficient, conducted through local “big men” less concerned with the state’s needs than with protecting their own safety and interests from within the little family strongholds that dotted the Central Plain.⁸⁹ When booty dried up with the slackening of conquest, piecemeal efforts to improve agricultural production and tax it more efficiently began.⁹⁰ These efforts intensified under the two sages, with the establishment in 485 of a series of interlocking systems: the equal fields (*juntian*), according to which all land was owned by the state, and at least supposedly then equally distributed to taxpaying farmers; a new form of rural administration, the “three-elders” (*sanzhang*) system; and in 484 a salary system for officials, to more fully ally them to the state and dissuade them from corruption.⁹¹ As is true of any human institution, these were never perfectly implemented. They would, however, play a critical role in the history of medieval China, providing a stable fiscal basis for empire into the early Tang (for more detail, see Chapter 14, which deals with the economic history of the north).

⁸⁷ *BS* 13.496; *WS* 13.329. Her power was never, however, total: Eisenberg, *Kingship in early medieval China*, pp. 70–71, 84; Zhang Jinlong, “Fengshi gaigeshuo shangque,” in his *Bei Wei zhengzhi yu zhidu lungao* (Lanzhou, 2003), pp. 28–51.

⁸⁸ *WS* 78.1737, 1738. See Yin Xian, “Yungang shiku suo fanying de yixie Bei Wei zhengzhi shehui qingzhuang,” in *Yungang bai nian lunwen xuanji*, ed. Yungang shiku wenwu yanjiusuo (Beijing, 2005), pp. 416–418 (originally in Yin Xian, ed., *Beichao shi yanjiu: Zhongguo Wei Jin Nanbeichao shi guoji xueshu yantaohui lunwenji* (Beijing, 2005)); see also the very interesting article by Guan Furong examining the use of Buddhism by Madame Feng at Yungang, “Fo mu ta dong yu Feng taihou,” in 2005 *nian Yungang guoji xueshu yantaohui lunwenji*, *Yanjiu juan*, ed. Yungang shiku wenwu yanjiusuo (Beijing, 2006), pp. 733–736 (rpt. in Guan Furong, *Beichao sanlun* (Taiyuan, 2007), pp. 352–359).

⁸⁹ See discussion in Mark Edward Lewis, *China between empires: The Northern and Southern Dynasties* (Cambridge, MA, 2009), pp. 131–133. For a detailed discussion of the fortified villages and the security they provided their inhabitants, see Jin Fagen, *Yongjia luanbou beifang de haozu* (Taipei, 1964); and Ku Saek-hŭi, *Liang Han Wei Jin Nanbeichao de wubi* (Beijing, 2004).

⁹⁰ *WS* 4B.108–9; 7A.137, 138.

⁹¹ *WS* 7A.153–154, 156, 7B.161; *ZZTJ* 136.4261–4263, 4268–4269, 4271–4272. Much work has been done on these important topics, including that by Hori, *Kindensei no kenkyū*.

Things changed with the death of Madame Feng in 490. Despite objections by his officials, the twenty-three-year-old emperor mourned his foster mother for the full period (more than two years) stipulated by the ritual texts.⁹² When finished, in 493, he began a process of radical reorganization. Key to this was the physical relocation of a capital that he saw as peripheral and remote.

As discussed above, there were very real reasons to leave Pingcheng. Its resources were limited; modern climatologists suggest that from 479 it was growing colder.⁹³ As one Confucian moralist said, while even the slaves of the rich wore silks in Pingcheng, the farmers down in the Sanggan valley were hungry and half-naked.⁹⁴ Already in the late 460s, it had been mandated that the three highest tax categories in the newly taken Shandong territories would deliver grain to the capital. In 482, 50,000 men were called up to improve the road that led from the plains below up to Pingcheng.⁹⁵ It would, of course, never be as efficient for transportation of foodstuffs as a water-based system such as came into being to supply Luoyang under the Sui dynasty. Compounding the difficulties, in 487 the capital region was again beset by famine. An edict was issued permitting subjects to depart for richer lands. We are told, perhaps with exaggeration, that 50 or 60 percent of the population now fled south.⁹⁶

The physical limits of Pingcheng dovetailed, however, with Emperor Xiaowen's deep commitment to "China," in terms of both geography and textual tradition. Like many in this age he wished to "resurrect" the antiquity described in the Chinese classics to create a perfect world, which would definitionally be in the "central states." It must be noted, however, that for him that perfect world in the central states would be centered around and ruled by him and his heirs. Much of what attracted him to the Chinese tradition was the absolute power he at least imagined it offered the ruler.⁹⁷ This quest for absolutism did not, of course, begin with him—his ancestor Emperor Daowu had broken up the traditional ties of the Helan and many other Inner Asian groups to reassemble them as a unified army under his control. But Emperor Xiaowen took this much further a century later, laying claim to the Chinese classics and using them to try to end the privileged status of the *guoren* and set himself apart from and above the generals and noblemen of the land of Dai.

⁹² *BS* 13.497; *WS* 13.330; *ZZTJ* 137.4296–4302, 4323.

⁹³ *NQS* 57.990; and Shengi Hsu, "From Pingcheng to Luoyang: Substantiation of the climatic cause for capital relocation of the Beiwei dynasty," *PNS* 14.8 (2004), pp. 725–729.

⁹⁴ *WS* 60.1332–1333. ⁹⁵ *WS* 110.2852, 7A.151. ⁹⁶ *WS* 110.2856.

⁹⁷ See close study of similar later efforts to use Chinese tradition to build state power in Scott Pearce, "Form and matter: Archaizing reform in sixth-century China," in *Culture and power in the reconstitution of the Chinese realm, 200–600*, ed. Scott Pearce, Audrey Spiro, and Patricia Ebrey (Cambridge, MA, 2001), pp. 149–178.

In terms of geography, his choice was the ancient city of Luoyang, which, though now in ruins, had been a capital of Han and before that the ancient Zhou dynasty, and was believed by many to lie near the very center of the world.⁹⁸ Knowing there would be opposition to the move, he resorted to dissemblance. At Pingcheng the gathered army was told they were repeating Emperor Taiwu's great march on Jiankang of forty years before. At Luoyang they stopped, and here a pre-scripted debate was staged before the troops, with chosen commanders insisting it was folly to continue south. Feigning disappointment, the emperor now said, "If the imperial carriage is not to continue south, then we should move the capital to this place."⁹⁹ And here the troops would remain, though living quarters had not yet been constructed for them. A flurry of building followed, and over the next year or two the troops' families as well as the bureaucracy and the imperial harem were brought down.¹⁰⁰ Left behind were key conservative figures at the Pingcheng court. At the same time, the army was rebuilt with a call-up in 495 of 150,000 new guardsmen "from throughout the empire," which it has been assumed meant mostly Chinese. A dramatic shift from cavalry to infantry now appeared in the Wei's fighting force.¹⁰¹

With departure from Dai came measures to divorce the court from Dai's military culture. Emperor Xiaowen had already begun this process more than a decade before, when as a fourteen-year-old he had decided he would never go hunting again.¹⁰² In 494, "barbarian garb" was prohibited, and in the next year "northern speech" was barred at court, at least for those under the age of thirty.¹⁰³ The traditional Dai's key ritual underwent equally wrenching change. Envoys from Jiankang described the emperor as still conducting the sacrifice to Tängri at Pingcheng in the fourth month of 492, circling the altar on horseback in military dress. Just two years later, in Luoyang, the Inner Asian ceremony had been abolished, replaced by the classic Chinese ceremony at an altar south of the new capital.¹⁰⁴

The nature of the imperial lineage itself also changed. It had heretofore been an ever-expanding kinship group, made up of all men descended from the third-century Liwei. Important military and political leaders came from among these distant kinsmen of the royal family; but so did rebels, and men

⁹⁸ WS 31.736; Jenner, *Memories of Loyang*, 45.

⁹⁹ WS 53.1183–1184; ZZTJ 138.4330–4341; Pearce, "Form and matter," 164.

¹⁰⁰ ZZTJ 140.4389–4390.

¹⁰¹ WS 7B.178; He, "Fubing zhigian de Beichao bingzhi," pp. 322–327. ¹⁰² WS 7B.187.

¹⁰³ For clothing: WS 7B.176; ZZTJ 139.4370; Dien, *Six Dynasties civilization*, pp. 317–319. For language: WS 7B.177, 21A.536.

¹⁰⁴ NQS 57.985, 991; WS 108A.2751; WS 7B.174; ZZTJ 137.4320; Kang Le, *Cong xijiao dao nanjiao*, pp. 167–169.

of the sort about whom the emperor's grandfather Emperor Wencheng had complained that just by holding bows and swords at court they gained the titles of dukes and princes, with the power and privilege that these entailed.¹⁰⁵ In 492 Emperor Xiaowen redefined the imperial house as containing only those descended directly from the founder, Emperor Daowu, reducing distant relatives as well as those of other surname groups who held those noble titles. This was yet another source of deep resentment among the old guard.¹⁰⁶

Emperor Xiaowen went on to construct, by fiat, a new elite, centered on himself and the now more narrowly defined royal line. An edict issued in 495 assigned certain lineages—Chinese as well as non-Chinese—privileged access to high office on the basis of previous service to the throne. This explicitly included Chinese in the new mixed elite, and reorganized non-Chinese lineages on the basis of the Chinese grades of mourning. At the same time, it guaranteed continued access to high office to some (and only some) Xianbei lines, at a time when Chinese more and more dominated the bureaucracy.¹⁰⁷ These lines were encouraged to intermarry. In 496 the process was completed by replacing the original names of non-Chinese kinship groups with single-syllable Chinese names. This began with the imperial line of the Tuoba (“Tabgač”), which was renamed Yuan, “Primary” (interestingly the dynastic name later used by the Mongols).¹⁰⁸

Many of those brought south into this new world were unhappy, living in difficult conditions of unaccustomed heat and disease. Those left in the North were unhappy as well. In 494 the emperor was forced to go to Pingcheng and then tour the Six Garrisons to attempt to persuade the *guoren* of the rightness of his plan. They remained unconvinced, perceiving loss of privilege and abandonment in what was now a frontier military reservation.¹⁰⁹

Emperor Xiaowen's own son and heir, Yuan Xun, was one of the unhappy and unconvinced. The relationship was already a troubled one: in 493, when the ten-year-old was named heir, the great innovator reluctantly fell back on “ancient practice” to put the boy's mother to death. The bookish emperor was troubled by the boy's dislike for the classics, while the son hated the southern heat of Luoyang and, when away from his father, wore the banned apparel of the northern cavalryman. In 496, after attempting to flee north to Pingcheng,

¹⁰⁵ See discussion of the growth of such problems earlier under the Murong: Barfield, *Perilous frontier*, pp. 112–113. Needless to say, not all of Emperor Wencheng's guards were of the imperial line.

¹⁰⁶ WS 7B.169; Luo, “Bei Wei zhiqin kao,” p. 104. For dissatisfaction with the change, see BS 15.555; WS 14.360.

¹⁰⁷ WS 113.3014–3015; ZZTJ 140.4393–4394; Albert E. Dien, “Elite lineages and the T'o-pa accommodation: A study of the edict of 495,” *JESHO* 19.1 (1976), p. 84.

¹⁰⁸ WS 7B.179; ZZTJ 140.4393.

¹⁰⁹ ZZTJ 139.4351–4352, 4357; BS 15.554–555; WS 14.359–360; BS 19.697; WS 21A.546.

he was deposed as heir and later forced to commit suicide.¹¹⁰ Shortly after the heir's attempted flight, key noblemen in the North led an insurrection. This was quickly suppressed, and the ringleaders were put to death.¹¹¹ But resentment continued to simmer.

THE DYNASTY'S FALL

Emperor Xiaowen's experiments were bold efforts to redraw the main lines of his regime's sociopolitical map, replacing ethnic divides with distinctions based on class, class as defined by the state; or, to put it another way, to dismantle the system of one monarch governing two societies with two different systems of leadership and control. With the benefit of hindsight, we know that within a generation this would lead to disaster for the dynasty. Divorcing his court from the Dai military, he had divorced it from the regime's real power base. The modern scholar Kang Le sums this up well in the title of his doctoral thesis: "An Empire for a City."¹¹²

Seeking to rule all the lands of the Han empire, the emperor now spent most of his time away from the new capital leading a series of campaigns into the borderlands south of Luoyang. These brought no notable success, but it is worth noting that he was the last of the Wei emperors to personally lead troops into the field. Dying in 499, he was succeeded by his new heir, Yuan Ke (posthumously Emperor Xuanwu, r. 499–515). Power struggles raged throughout the reign, between uncles on both sides of the emperor's family tree. Finally emerging was Gao Zhao, of Korean extraction, the brother of the emperor's mother who had earlier been murdered by a rival in the harem.¹¹³ Seeking to cement power, Gao arranged for a niece to marry the young emperor. But his ambitions were thwarted by her inability to bear a son. Instead the heir came from a Chinese woman of the Hu family.

When Emperor Xuanwu died of natural causes in 515, Gao Zhao was away from the court on a campaign against the South. Madame Hu now allied with the commander of the imperial guard and a powerful eunuch, Liu Teng, to enthrone the five-year-old heir, her son Yuan Xu (posthumously Emperor Xiaoming, r. 515–528).¹¹⁴ She was the first mother of a Northern Wei emperor to survive into her son's reign; the "ancient practice" had finally

¹¹⁰ BS 19.713–714; WS 22.587–589; ZZTJ 140.4400. ¹¹¹ ZZTJ 140.4402–4403.

¹¹² Kang Le, "An empire for a city: Cultural reforms of the Hsiao-wen emperor (A.D. 471–499)" (PhD dissertation, Yale University, 1983); this earlier English-language work overlaps much of the content of his *Cong xijiao dao nanjiao*.

¹¹³ BS 80.2684–2686; WS 83B.1829–1831. ¹¹⁴ ZZTJ 148.4611–4613.

been abandoned.¹¹⁵ Gao Zhao was now put to death, while Madame Hu took power as empress dowager and regent for her son (she is often referred to by her posthumous name Empress Dowager Ling). She went even beyond Madame Feng in her assertion of independent authority: digging justification out of the classics, she presented herself as the dynasty's high priest and issued edicts (*zhao*) in her own name rather than that of her son.¹¹⁶

Her Luoyang had its delights. Of a family of faithful Buddhists, Madame Hu was a lavish patron; among her many contributions was the pagoda of the Yongning Temple, construction of which began in 516. Standing hundreds of feet high, it was said that the tower could be seen some thirty miles away.¹¹⁷ Taking the boy emperor up to the top with her, they "gazed down upon the national capital [as if] in their own courtyard,"¹¹⁸ which in a sense it was: since it overlooked the palace, commoners were forbidden to ascend it. And when the Buddha's Birthday was celebrated each spring, the emperor scattered flowers before the images of the Buddha as they were brought forth in a great carnival-like parade:

There were forests of banners and a fog of incense, and the Buddhist music of India shook heaven and earth. All kinds of entertainers and trick riders performed shoulder to shoulder. Virtuous hosts of famous monks came, carrying their staves; there were crowds of the Buddhist faithful, holding flowers; horsemen and carriages were packed beside each other in an endless mass.¹¹⁹

For the newly created super-elite, this was a glorious age. In the Six Garrisons, however, resentment grew as increasingly more of the descendants of the *guoren* felt ignored and abandoned. Or even worse, they felt actively exploited: the eunuch Liu Teng, for instance, is said to have used his power and connections to engage in extortionate trade there, "skinning the northern garrisons."¹²⁰ Furthermore, their ranks had grown tainted by a new source of

¹¹⁵ BS 13.503; WS 13.337; Jennifer Holmgren, "Empress Dowager Ling of the Northern Wei and the T'o-pa sinicization question," *PFEH* 18 (1978), p. 161.

¹¹⁶ BS 13.503; WS 13.337–338.

¹¹⁷ *Luoyang qielan ji jiaozhu*, by Yang Xuanzhi, commentary by Fan Xiangyong (Shanghai, 1978), 1.1; Jenner, *Memories of Loyang*, p. 148; Yi-t'ung Wang, trans., *A record of Buddhist monasteries in Lo-yang* (Princeton, 1984), p. 16; Dien, *Six Dynasties civilization*, pp. 72–73; Fu Xinian, "The Three Kingdoms, Western and Eastern Jin, and Northern and Southern Dynasties," in *Chinese architecture*, ed. Nancy S. Steinhardt (New Haven, 2002), p. 83.

¹¹⁸ *Luoyang qielan ji jiaozhu*, 1.5; Wang, *A record of Buddhist monasteries*, p. 20; see also Jenner, *Memories of Loyang*, p. 151.

¹¹⁹ *Luoyang qielan ji jiaozhu*, 3.132–33; Jenner, *Memories of Loyang*, p. 208; see also Wang, *Record of Buddhist monasteries*, pp. 126–127. See the detailed discussion of these events in Po Yee Wong, "Acculturation as seen through the Buddha's birthday parade in Northern Wei Luoyang" (PhD diss., University of the West, 2012).

¹²⁰ WS 94.2028; Jenner, *Memories of Loyang*, p. 69. For a memorial describing the general state of corruption in the garrisons: WS 41.926–927.

recruitment borrowed from Jiankang: use of convicts in penal military service.¹²¹ Resentment also grew among the transplanted military men of Luoyang. In 519, enraged at the suggestion of a Chinese official that they be categorically excluded from the bureaucracy's "pure" ranks, they rioted, killing the man's father and brother. Fearing further rioting, the court did nothing more than arrest a few ringleaders, while offering the guardsmen new advantages in competition for office.¹²²

More troubling, if less noticed, was a gradual decay among such men of the old Tuoba martial culture. One who did notice, an imperial prince, voiced concern about the weakening of the central armies that protected Luoyang.¹²³ Such concerns were also voiced by a young man from the Huaishuo garrison (near today's Guyang, Inner Mongolia) who was on an official errand in the capital when the 519 riot broke out. This was Gao Huan, who would be instrumental in bringing an end to the Northern Wei, and then become the power behind the throne of one its two successors, Eastern Wei (534–550). In Luoyang he saw not only the riot but also the staggering wealth of the Wei princes, and their competitive efforts to display it.¹²⁴ Upon returning north, Gao began spending in a different way, to build up a personal following in the garrisons. With Luoyang in such a state, he said, "How will one be able to hang on to wealth?"¹²⁵

In 520 Yuan Cha, a member of the royal house and Madame Hu's brother-in-law, seized power.¹²⁶ He did this having become the supreme commander of the imperial guard, while building ties with Liu Teng and most of the imperial princes. Though he had Madame Hu's lover, an uncle of the emperor, put to death, the empress dowager was simply placed under house arrest. Though unsettled by these events, most at least of those at court were able to hang on to their wealth.

In just four years, however, the situation would get much worse. Despite links he had with the northern garrisons, Yuan Cha—like Madame Hu before him—made little effort to deal with their growing problems. In 523, drought caused a massive die-off of livestock among the Avars, who now raided into Wei territory. In the process they seized 100,000 head of stock while also evading an army of 150,000 sent against them.¹²⁷ Echoing the comments made by Gao Huan four years before, another imperial prince noted that having seen the poor showing of the imperial army, the men of the border region came to look down upon the weakness of the Luoyang regime that

¹²¹ Pearce, "The land of Tai," pp. 482–486. ¹²² WS 64.1432, 9.228–229, 66.1479.

¹²³ WS 19B.475. This was part of a longer list of perceived problems within the realm.

¹²⁴ See the examples given in Jenner, *Memories of Loyang*, pp. 68–69. ¹²⁵ BQS 1.2.

¹²⁶ ZZTJ 149.4656–4658. ¹²⁷ ZZTJ 149.4672–4675.

based its power on the “central states.”¹²⁸ Despite his stated wish to unify the subject populations, Emperor Xiaowen had never released the *guoren* from their special duties to the state. Belated calls to do so now were too late.¹²⁹ This would be the beginning of the end for Wei, as the afflictions of drought and raids from the steppe led to widespread mutiny and rebellion up in the Six Garrisons, and, more fundamentally, a mass migration of the garrisons’ populations into the Chinese interior. It was these men who created Northern Wei’s successor regimes, the histories of which are given in the following chapters in this volume.

In the midst of these convulsions, Yuan Cha’s support at court vanished and in 525 he was stripped of rank and ordered to commit suicide.¹³⁰ Madame Hu now returned to court. But the power of the court itself was slipping away. Almost day by day, territory was lost to the rebels, while the imperial armies lost men to desertion or as casualties of war. Even when a few thousand here and there could be raised in special recruitment drives, with promises of fine rewards, there were few, if any, effective commanders for the new units.¹³¹ Those who were effective were mistrusted by rivals at court, and their efforts undercut.¹³² Not surprisingly, the consequence was a largely unbroken string of defeats for Luoyang’s armies.¹³³

By 528 the eighteen-year-old Emperor Xiaoming had come to deeply resent his mother, her lovers, and her thwarting of his plans to lead troops himself against the rebels.¹³⁴ Open struggle now broke out and Madame Hu had her son poisoned.¹³⁵ This ushered into the court a new, outside power, the self-proclaimed loyalist Erzhu Rong.

As the lands north of the Yellow River became battlegrounds or wastelands, the Erzhu—direct vassals of the throne from the time of Emperor Daowu—had held out in their autonomous domain in northern Shanxi, just south across the mountains from the Sanggan. Many fleeing rebellion in the garrisons sought refuge there (including Gao Huan). Drawing upon these experienced fighting men, Erzhu Rong had by 528 expanded his power over most of Shanxi, with his base at the critical military center of Taiyuan.¹³⁶

A bizarre chain of events followed Emperor Xiaoming’s death, as his mother first attempted to enthrone an infant granddaughter, whom she then replaced

¹²⁸ BS 16.617; WS 18.430. ¹²⁹ WS 9.237; BQS 23.330; ZZTJ 150.4679.

¹³⁰ ZZTJ 150.4695–4696.

¹³¹ WS 9.242, 114.3048; Hurvitz, *Treatise on Buddhism and Taoism*, p. 103; WS 72.1619; ZZTJ 151.4271; He, “Fubing zhiqian de Beichao bingzhi,” pp. 351–352.

¹³² BS 16.618–621; WS 18.431–434; ZZTJ 151.4713, 4716.

¹³³ Zhang, *Bei Wei zhengzhi shi*, 9.331–332. ¹³⁴ WS 9.243, 246; ZZTJ 151.4712, 4721, 4723.

¹³⁵ BS 13.505; WS 13.339–340; Holmgren, “Empress Dowager Ling,” pp. 168–169.

¹³⁶ WS 74.1643–1657.

with a two-year-old great-grandson of Emperor Xiaowen. Voicing outrage, Erzhu now led his troops south to “save the court.” After enthroning another Yuan on the north bank of the Yellow River, he led his troops across to camp at Heyin (“South of the River”). Those who had not fled opened the gates of Luoyang. Two days later, horsemen were sent into the city to bring Madame Hu up to Heyin. There she pleaded her case to Erzhu Rong, who, unconvinced, drowned her and her two-year-old claimant in the river. Erzhu went on to assemble Luoyang’s officers and officials at Heyin on the pretext of including them in a sacrifice to Tāngri. Instead, he berated them for their greed and corruption, and for allowing the murder of Emperor Xiaoming; he then set his horsemen on them. “The House of Yuan has fallen,” the attackers cried, “The House of Erzhu rises.” Thousands died, in their fine robes, their hands held together in supplication.¹³⁷ Gao Huan had been correct.

Here we close our narrative of the history of the Northern Wei dynasty. Erzhu in the end curbed his ambition, choosing to be the power behind the throne. Two years later he was killed by his Yuan puppet, who was then killed by Erzhu clansmen in turn. In the end the Erzhu were all swept away, and the emerging warlords, Gao Huan in the east and Yuwen Tai in the west, each enthroned rival Yuan heirs. These puppet regimes—Eastern Wei and Western Wei—would survive into the 550s. But though drawing on lingering loyalties, these were other men’s states, whose centers of power lay neither in Pingcheng nor in Luoyang; superfluous ornamentation, the Yuan puppets would eventually be discarded. Though surviving a bit longer as symbols, the substance of Emperor Daowu’s Tuoba dynasty, reinvented by Emperor Xiaowen as the House of Yuan, was no more.

THE SHADOW OF THE TABGAČ

Emperor Daowu had, with stick and carrot, broken up various groups, each with their own parochial loyalties, to build a united and effective nation, loyal to his dynasty, whose armies fulfilled his ambitions. Specialized and privileged, this group stood apart from the larger population. Emperor Xiaowen sought to raise himself above this group and its demands, to unify conqueror and conquered under his rule. This project was never fully realized: the *guoren* who remained in the North never actually merged into the larger population, though it is not clear that things would have gone better if they had. At any rate, though abandoned by the court, Emperor Daowu’s creation up in the land of Dai did not simply disappear. Evolving in

¹³⁷ WS 74.1647–1648; BS 48.1753–1754; ZZTJ 152.4742–4743. Jenner, *Memories of Loyang*, p. 90 and n. 35, gives a range of numbers between 1,300 and 3,000 as reported in different sources.

its own way, quite differently from those who removed themselves to Luoyang, it survived.

In his book *In the shadow of the Han*, Charles Holcombe speaks of how “Han imperial tradition was sustained throughout the period of division.”¹³⁸ I would suggest that in addition the Tabgač and their traditions came to cast their own shadow over the political and cultural history of East Asia for centuries after the drowning of Madame Hu in the Yellow River. The Wei army survived in substantive form, the founders of the successor regimes, Gao Huan and Yuwen Tai, having come directly from its officer corps. They brought with them forms of military recruitment, discipline, and organization that, though undergoing change and adaptation, would survive into the Tang (618–907). And other Wei institutions—notably the equal fields—continued to play a significant role into the eighth century. But of equal importance, what persisted over these centuries was a shared martial culture dedicated to the horse and the hunt, and to career aspirations based on the possibility of promotion to high rank through military service.¹³⁹ Much changed in the process: Tang and Northern Wei were certainly not one and the same. But their linkage is confirmed in the perceptions of outsiders, the Türks, who in their eighth-century Orkhon inscriptions refer to their rivals, the Tang dynasty of the Li family, as “the Tabgač.”¹⁴⁰

¹³⁸ Charles Holcombe, *In the shadow of the Han: Literati thought and society at the beginning of the Southern Dynasties* (Honolulu, 1994), p. 135.

¹³⁹ An early but still interesting study of the source of Tang institutions in Wei is Chen Yinke, *Sui Tang zhidu yuanyuan liulungao* (Shijiazhuang, 2002). See also Yihong Pan, *Son of Heaven and Heavenly Qaghan: Sui–Tang China and its neighbors* (Bellingham, WA, 1997), pp. 32–38.

¹⁴⁰ Jonathan Skaff, *Sui–Tang China and its Turko-Mongol neighbors: Culture, power and connections, 580–800* (Oxford, 2012), pp. 124–125, 240–242.

CHAPTER 9

EASTERN WEI–NORTHERN QI

Albert E. Dien

INTRODUCTION

The Eastern Wei–Northern Qi was the dominant state in its time, rich in resources, its capital larger than any of its rivals, its cities the centers of thriving commercial activity, and its powerful army composed largely of veteran Xianbei tribesmen who had united the North and who still posed a serious threat to its neighbors.¹ Its conquest by the Northern Zhou armies in 577 has attracted much scholarly attention in an attempt to explain the reasons for its sudden collapse. Such studies have provided detailed analyses of the political and social elements that made up the state, and the internal tensions and conflicts that help explain its ignominious fall. The story of the Northern Qi state makes it one of the more interesting of the Six Dynasties period.

GEOGRAPHY

The area occupied by the state of Northern Qi falls naturally into two parts, the plains to the east and the mountainous section on the west. Passage through the rough highlands terrain is facilitated by a number of rivers that carved out valleys broad enough for the movement of armies. One of much significance is the Fen river, which runs in a southwesterly direction until it joins the Yellow River, effectively dividing the mountainous region into two. Near the head of the Fen river valley was Jinyang, the second capital of the Northern Qi, strategically important because it served to block incursions from the north but also those from the west up the Fen river valley into the heart of the Northern Qi. In the end, when an adequate military defense could not be fielded, the Northern Qi succumbed to a conquering army following that route.

¹ Lü Chunsheng, *Bei Qi zhengzhisbi yanjiu: Bei Qi shuailiang yuanyin zhi kaocha* (Taipei, 1987), pp. 101–104.

The North China Plain made up much of the eastern portion of the Northern Qi state. The line of demarcation between it and the Wutaishan and Taihang mountains that form its western boundary, and the Hengshan and other mountains forming its northern boundary, is sharp, the mountains rising dramatically from the flat and level plain. In the mountainous western half of the state, the clustered settlements and walled cities were limited to the valleys but on the flat plain they were widely distributed. Much of the state's estimated population of over 20 million would have been concentrated in that eastern half. The history of this period involves the interplay between the two areas, the mountains and the lowlands; the mountainous area, though it had fewer resources, for the most part was able to impose its control over the more exposed lowlands. Some scholars emphasize that the bifurcation of political control, deriving from the topography, created a basic instability that led to the fall of the state.

The Yellow River, as it emerges from the loess lands at the Tongguan Pass and turns eastward, forms a corridor between the southern edge of the Taihang on one side and the Mang mountains on the other. The height of the latter is quite modest, not rising much beyond 2,000 feet above sea level. The ancient capital of Luoyang was located where the valley opens up into the North Central Plain; the valley is narrow enough to make the passage of an army risky, providing Luoyang some protection from any threat that came from the west.

The North Central Plain merges south into the Huai river basin and beyond to the Yangzi river, without any observable natural features to interrupt the flatness of the terrain. The basin, much better watered than the Central Plain, has numerous tributaries and lakes, making it very fertile. The Huai river often served as a boundary between the Northern Qi and its southern neighbors, primarily the Liang in this period, but the actual boundary line constantly shifted between the two as political fortunes favored one side or the other.

There are no natural formations providing protection to the north, the direction from which the Xianbei had originally come. That area was occupied by the Ruanruan, also perhaps to be known as the Avars, a confederation of the nomads who controlled the steppes from the fourth to the sixth centuries.²

² Ruanruan is a transcription of an unknown native name, which appears in the Chinese sources also as Rouran and Ruru. On their history, see Denis Sinor, ed., *The Cambridge history of early Inner Asia* (Cambridge, 1990), pp. 291–297. For a discussion whether the Runruan are to be identified with the Avars who appeared in Eastern Europe in the sixth century, see Carter Findley, *The Turks in world history* (Oxford, 2005), p. 35; and Mihály Dobrovits, “‘They called themselves Avar’: Considering the pseudo-Avar question in the work of Theophylaktos,” in *Ērān ud Anērān: Studies presented to Boris I. Maršak on the occasion of his 70th birthday* (Venice, 2006), pp. 175–184. Here I tentatively use the name Avars.

A line of defense along the northern frontier was especially important because of the location of Pingcheng (modern Datong), the capital of the Northern Wei in its early years (398–494). At first it seemed that the locations of these outposts were not set, but later there developed what came to be known as the Six Garrisons (Liuzhen), which were Woye, Huaishuo, Wuchuan, Fuming, Rouxuan and Huaihuang (see Map 0.2). These and other garrisons were strategically located to control important north–south routes and lines of approach to Pingcheng. The garrisons were staffed by elite Xianbei officers and mainly Xianbei troops; their importance was fully recognized and morale was high in the early years of the Northern Wei dynasty. Even the offspring of important Han lineages sought assignments there as a route for advancement. Surrendered nomads of various tribes who were settled along the frontier also contributed to the forces that manned these garrisons. Over time, and especially when the capital was moved to Luoyang in 494, the line of garrisons became less critical and the status of the men serving there suffered in comparison to those enjoying the advantages of residence in the new capital. The situation was exacerbated by the practice of sending convicts to serve in the garrisons, the freezing of the status of soldiers into “garrison households” who were not allowed any social mobility, and a growing neglect of the welfare of those manning the defenses.³

FINAL YEARS OF THE NORTHERN WEI DYNASTY

The start of the fall of the Northern Wei can be dated to the rebellion of the Xiongnu Poliuhan Baling,⁴ at Woye, north of the Yellow River Ordos loop, in 524, which attracted the support of both Chinese and non-Chinese. Poliuhan’s forces then moved eastward to besiege Wuchuan and Huaishuo, and his victories over government forces encouraged other uprisings along the frontier area. Only then, when the situation had become so grave, did the emperor decide to issue a proclamation that, except for criminals, the male members of the military households who served for life in the army were to be classified as *min*—that is, free people—and the garrisons where the households were located were to be reclassified administratively as prefectures, thus allowing

³ Wang Yichen, *Dong Wei Bei Qi di tongzhi jituan* (Taipei, 2006), pp. 10–21. See also Lü, *Bei Qi zhengzhi shi*, 33, for a summary of the various explanations offered to explain the garrison rebellion, on which there is an extensive literature. See, for example, Étienne Balazs, Appendix IV, *Le Traité économique du “Sonei-chou”* (Leiden, 1953), pp. 241–262; and Chen Xuelin, “Bei Wei liuzhen zhi panbian ji qi yingxiang,” *Chongji xuebao* 2.1 (1962), pp. 26–50.

⁴ Poliuhan Baling’s Xiongnu ancestors had been active on the Chinese frontier since the third century. On Baling, see Peter Boodberg, “Marginalia to the histories of the Northern Dynasties,” *HJAS* 3 (1938), p. 245; and ZZTJ 149.4674–4675.

these heretofore professional soldiers to merge with the general population, and allow them to serve the customary short terms when called up. But the emperor's reforms came too late since by then all the border garrisons were up in arms.

At this point the Erzhu, soon to become major players in these events, made their appearance by quashing an attempted rebellion at Xiurong, thus seeming to assist the government. The Erzhu were a group known as the Qihu or Jiehu who had been awarded territory in 398 for their assistance in subduing earlier rebels in the Xiurong region.⁵ They had maintained close military and marriage connections with the Xianbei leadership, and were delegated to defend this important strategic area for the new state.⁶ Seeing that these uprisings boded ill for the future of the Wei, their leader Erzhu Rong began to assemble an independent following loyal to himself; among those who responded were such men as Hou Jing, Sima Ziru, Jia Xianzhi, Duan Rong, and Dou Tai, all of whom became important in the following years.⁷

By 525 the Northern Wei was under heavy pressure on all sides. There was considerable unrest and open rebellion in the west and in the territory bordering the Liang in the south, and of course the threat posed by Poliuhun Baling in the north. Poliuhun Baling, apparently still the most powerful leader of the forces aligned against the Northern Wei, seems to have overextended himself in making a sweeping flank attack south but then falling before a joint attack of the Northern Wei forces, led by Yuan Shen, and the Avars, who were persuaded to aid the imperial army. Poliuhun's following of a purported 200,000 men surrendered en bloc. However, what should have resolved a serious threat to the state led instead to a worsening of the conflict. Yuan Shen and others requested that commanderies and districts be established in the frontier region to settle this large number of former garrison soldiers, and that aid be given to them to win back their loyalty. On the contrary, the decision was made to resettle them in the heartland, as it were, in the three prefectures of Ji, Ding, and Ying. This resolution enabled these resettled warriors to be drawn into the continuing unrest and uprisings that led to the final end of the dynasty.

⁵ WS 74.1643. The Qihu or Jiehu appear to have been of Central Asian origin and came into China as a part of the Xiongnu confederation; Edwin G. Pulleyblank, "Ji Hu: Indigenous inhabitants of Shaanbei and Western Shanxi," in *Opuscula Altaica: Essays presented in honor of Henry Schwartz*, ed. E. H. Kaplan and D. W. Whisenand (Bellingham, WA, 1994), p. 512.

⁶ Li Wencai and Wang Tinglin, "Erzhushi xingshuai de zhengzhi yu wenhua kaocha," *Nanjing Xiaozhuang xueyuan xuebao* 2007.4 (China academic journals, online resource), 25–34.

⁷ Wang Yichen, *Dong Wei*, pp. 31–34.

The vacuum left by the collapse of the Poliuhuan uprising was filled by a number of other contenders in the struggle for power. To the north was Du Luozhou, who had taken Poliuhuan Boling's place and was pushing south. Xianyu Xiuli at Dingzhou, perhaps the most serious threat up to this point, was killed and replaced by Ge Rong, who, moving quickly to establish his credentials, declared himself to be the emperor of a Qi dynasty and marched on Yinzhou. The Northern Wei army sent to relieve the siege arrived a month after the city had fallen, and was attacked by 100,000 of Ge Rong's army with great loss of life. The increasingly dysfunctional Wei court's slow response to meet crises is clearly evident here.⁸ Early in 528, Ge Rong, apparently under pressure from Du's advance southward, managed to kill Du and to combine Du's forces with his own. But despite Ge's expanding power there was an issue of shifting loyalties, and Ge had difficulty in retaining his subordinates. Men like Duan Rong, Wei Jing, and Cai Jun, who had been with Du Luozhou and had gone over to Ge Rong, became unhappy with him and fled to Erzhu Rong. Among this group was Gao Huan, who was to emerge as the dominating figure in all of these events.

Gao Huan's grandfather had been transported to the Huaishuo Garrison near Baotou in Inner Mongolia, where Gao grew up. There is some question whether the family roots were Chinese, for the claim was made later that they were related to an eminent Gao family of Bohai, but other evidence indicates that Gao Huan's offspring considered themselves to be Xianbei. It may be that Gao Huan was representative of that hybrid society that had evolved on the frontier where ethnic identities were not self-evident.⁹ Having the occasion to observe how ineffectual the Northern Wei state had become, he concluded that it had no future, and he invested what resources he had, much from the dowry of his wife, née Lou, to gather about him followers who would be loyal to him, a typical beginning of a gang leader in periods of disorder and warfare. He fell in first with Du Luozhou and then Ge Rong,

⁸ For an analysis of Ge Rong's group, see Wang Yichen, *Dong Wei*, pp. 22–30.

⁹ There has been much discussion concerning the ethnic identity of Gao Huan. In Wan Shengnan, ed., *Chen Yinke: Wei Jin Nanbeichaosbi jiangyan lu* (Hefei, 1987), pp. 292–300, Chen Yinke made the important point that culture rather than ethnicity is paramount, and that although Gao's ancestry was Han, he was completely assimilated to Xianbei culture. However, after reviewing the various theories, Lü Chunsheng, pp. 14–25, concluded that he was a Xianbei. Yet his cognomen, He-liu-hun, may be a transcription of the Turco-Mongolian term **arjun*, “half-breed.” See Peter Boodberg, “The language of the T'o-Pa Wei,” *HJAS* 1 (1936), p. 177. If so, this would indicate that his mother was a Xianbei and his father a Han. Jennifer Holmgren, “Family, marriage and political power in sixth century China: A study of the Kao family of Northern Ch'i, c. 520–550,” *JAH* 16.1 (1982), pp. 1–50, examines not only Gao Huan but also the families of those related to him. Yan Hai, “Gao Huan zuyuan tanwei,” *Bowuguan yanjiu* 2006.1, pp. 23–27, argues that Gao's ancestry was actually Korean, possibly adding another dimension to what Holmgren describes as the mestizo culture emerging in the northern border regions.

and finally made the trek to the Erzhu stronghold at Xiurong, in the Fen river valley.¹⁰

During this time Erzhu Rong had maintained the fiction of being a loyal regional administrator of the Northern Wei, with the appropriate titles, in command of the whole Fen river valley. When he was refused entry into a city there by its governor, Erzhu Rong simply took the place by force and installed his own governor; the Wei court had no recourse but to accept his action, an indication of a crumbling structure. Gao Huan, having gained the ear of Erzhu Rong, joined with others who urged that Erzhu Rong move to occupy the capital “to clear out the rascals.”¹¹ Erzhu Rong suggested to the dowager empress, Madame Hu, in Luoyang that he mobilize his troops to partake in a multi-front attack on Ge Rong, whose advance parties by now had pressed south to the bank of the Yellow River. The dowager feared what Erzhu Rong’s plan would lead to and turned him down. She was correct to suspect that Erzhu Rong had ambitions beyond bringing order to the realm.¹²

Erzhu Rong subsequently marched on the capital in the third month of 528, put to death the dowager empress and her party, massacred thousands of court officials at Henei, and installed a new puppet emperor, Yuan Ziyou (r. 528–530, posthumously Emperor Xiaozhuang); these actions are discussed in more detail in the previous chapter on the Northern Wei. Erzhu Rong returned to his redoubt in the Fen river valley, confident that the court and emperor were under his control.¹³ During this time Ge Rong was steadily expanding his control to the south and had set up a siege of Xiangzhou, or Ye. In the ninth month, Erzhu Rong turned his attention to his rival in the eastern plains. He proceeded to mobilize his forces, sent out troops to seal the passes into his territory, and led a relatively small army to win an important battle against the overly confident Ge Rong, who was then captured and killed. Ge Rong’s army of purportedly several hundred thousand, too large to be absorbed into the Erzhu forces, was allowed to disperse, in effect becoming available for the next warlord.¹⁴

For the next few years occasional insurrections were quelled, and there was an unsuccessful attempt by the Liang state in the South to seat another Yuan prince in Luoyang. Thus, Erzhu Rong maintained control of the court through agents and his daughter’s marriage to the emperor, while he himself remained at Jinyang. This arrangement collapsed with his assassination in 530 during

¹⁰ *BQS* 1.1–3; Chen Haibo, “Lun Bei Wei monian Erzhu Rong junshi jituanzhong de liuzhen haoqiang qishuai,” paper delivered at the meeting of the Wei Jin Nanbeichao shi xuehui, Taiyuan, 2011, pp. 381–391.

¹¹ *BQS* 1.3. ¹² *WS* 74.1645–1646. ¹³ *WS* 74.1649.

¹⁴ *WS* 74.1649–1650; Wang Yichen, *Dong Wei*, 36.

a visit to Luoyang by the emperor, whom he had himself installed.¹⁵ The remaining Erzhu forces immediately took revenge on the emperor and a series of Yuan princes followed in the space of a year or so, culminating in 532 with Yuan Xiu (posthumously Xiaowudi).¹⁶ The country was then divided among the various Erzhu heirs. Erzhu Zhao became the ostensible leader at Jinyang, Erzhu Shilong at Luoyang; Erzhu Zhongyuan ruled in the Southeast, and Erzhu Tianguang in the West at Chang'an.

During these perilous years, Gao Huan's position and influence had steadily improved. He had performed well in various campaigns and, becoming a close adviser to Erzhu Rong, he had been made governor of Jinzhou, downriver from Jinyang, the most important garrison guarding the Fen river route. During the tumultuous events at Luoyang, he had remained at his post, using a number of excuses for failing to lead his troops to assist. Later, when Erzhu Zhao was faced with an attack on Jinyang from the northern steppes, Gao Huan did move, though slowly, to provide crucial assistance in defeating the invader, thus earning Erzhu Zhao's gratitude. This enabled him to gain permission to enlist the former followers of Ge Rong who had remained a discontented, badly treated host. Gao Huan's reputation as an evenhanded though demanding leader attracted many of these Xianbei veterans to join him. He then pleaded with Erzhu Zhao that the resources of the Jinyang area were inadequate to support such a large force, and he requested permission to move out of the mountains onto the plains. Erzhu Zhao agreed, though with some misgivings.

Gao Huan now found himself free from the control of the Erzhu and at the head of an army in an area seething with discontent. Gao Qian, a loyalist of the murdered emperor Yuan Ziyou, had rebelled against the Erzhu and gained control of Jizhou. He offered to support Gao Huan against the Erzhu, significant because it indicated that Gao could attract the support of the prominent local Han leaders. As Gao made his way south toward Xindu, the site of Jizhou, other local notables, such as the Lis at a mountain redoubt near Yinzhou, flocked to him. At this point Gao Huan openly declared his opposition to Erzhu rule. His speech to the troops demanding strict discipline in return for his leadership calls to mind that of Henry V on St. Crispin's Day at Agincourt.¹⁷

The Erzhu family immediately reacted to this new threat to their authority, and armies totaling 100,000 men converged on Gao Huan at Xindu. Gao Huan used fake messages to sow distrust among the Erzhu family and some led

¹⁵ WS 10.265 and 267; 74.1654–1655. Lü, p. 36, makes the point that the murder of Erzhu Rong was the turning point for the rise of Gao Huan.

¹⁶ WS 11.281. ¹⁷ BQS 1.6–7; Wang Yichen, *Dong Wei*, pp. 47–55.

their forces away. On November 9, 531, Gao Huan, despite being outnumbered, defeated Erzhu Zhao at Guang'a, Yinzhou. He then moved on to besiege Ye, which fell on February 8, 532. The Erzhu leaders mended their differences and again mounted a joint attack on Gao Huan. On May 18, 532, a fierce battle took place south of Ye; again, Gao Huan emerged the victor, and the Erzhu leaders scattered. In a sense, Gao Huan had replaced Ge Rong but was having greater success in moving south. Each side had its emperor, and claimed on the surface to be defending the royal house when of course they were really competing for supremacy. As a result of this battle, any support for the Erzhu faded; most of their soldiers were either killed or became fugitives. A few managed to reach their home bases, but theirs was a lost cause. Hou Jing, who had been an Erzhu general, surrendered, and was appointed the governor of Jizhou; in this way and others, Gao Huan was establishing his base.¹⁸ However, portending later difficulties, the Erzhu garrison troops at Chang'an fell to the leadership of Yuwen Tai, one of their generals.

The question now facing Gao Huan was who should be the emperor of the Northern Wei. There were two Northern Wei emperors, Yuan Gong (posthumously Emperor Jiemin), selected from among the many Yuan princes by the Erzhu, and the other, Yuan Lang, installed by Gao Huan himself, but he was not happy with either, so he located a third, Yuan Xiu (posthumously Emperor Xiaowu), and had him brought to Luoyang. The initiation ceremony took place outside Luoyang and was a Xianbei observance. The new emperor sat on a black felt rug being lifted by seven men, one of whom was Gao Huan. Facing west, the emperor made obeisance to Heaven,¹⁹ and was then installed in a Luoyang palace with the usual Chinese rituals. The final phase in Gao Huan's assumption of complete control was to root out Erzhu Zhao. This was accomplished by a surprise attack led by Dou Tai early in the lunar year of 533, and Gao Huan's authority in the field was now unquestioned.²⁰ Following Erzhu Rong's example, Gao established himself at Jinyang, which continued to be the second, or alternative, capital of the state.²¹

¹⁸ *BQS* 1.7–8.

¹⁹ *BS* 5.170; *ZZTJ* 155.4824 says the obeisance was made to the Hyades Cluster of stars. On the ceremony, which was also reported observed under the Mongols, see Boodberg, "Marginalia to the histories of the Northern Dynasties," *HJAS* 4 (1939), pp. 273–277.

²⁰ *ZZTJ* 156.4829.

²¹ Cui Yanhua, "Ye–Jinyang liangdu tizhi yu Dong Wei Bei Qi zhengzhi," *Shehui kexue zhenxian* 2010.7 (China academic journals, online resource), makes the point that these two were of equal status and each had a full complement of official posts. Of course, the civil administration was concentrated in Ye and military concerns were primarily dealt with at Jinyang. Cui cites Mao Hanguang, *Zhongguo zhonggu zhengzhi shilun* (Taipei, 1990), p. 92, that the time spent in Jinyang by the emperors between 534 and 577 was twice that spent in Ye. The ambiance of Jinyang being more similar to the nomadic and frontier experience may have been an important factor in the preponderance of time spent there. On this and

The termination of Erzhu control over the state would seem to have reinforced the sense on the part of the emperor and his immediate advisers that Gao Huan's sway was likewise a temporary phase. It must have seemed intolerable to the emperor to have to toady to someone, especially a rough warrior like Gao Huan. In small steps the imperial guard at Luoyang was increased. The relationship between Gao Huan and the emperor was not always one of master and puppet, for on the surface Gao Huan acted as the subject. The Gao brothers from Xindu, who had been so important in rallying support for Gao Huan at a critical time, might have been considered by Gao Huan a liability now. Historians have cited his hypocrisy in revealing to the emperor the extent to which Gao Qian was serving as an informant of the emperor's plans to undercut Gao Huan's power, resulting in the emperor having Gao Qian executed. His brothers, Gao Aocao and Gao Zhongmi, fled to Jinyang, thinking to place themselves under the protection of Gao Huan, and received that warrior's commiseration. At one stroke, Gao Huan had removed a possible rallying point of the influential Han gentry in the plains and had it blamed on the emperor.²²

While Gao Huan was militarily in control of the Northeast, he had little success in extending his power beyond the Hangu Pass, where Yuwen Tai was establishing his control of the Northwest. As the tension between Gao Huan and the emperor became increasingly tense, the agents whom Gao Huan had placed amid the courtiers in Luoyang were fleeing the capital, which allowed the emperor the opportunity to cultivate close relations with Yuwen Tai by awarding him prestigious titles. The emperor and his close adviser Husi Chun took another step by replacing some governors who were of Gao Huan's party with those loyal to the crown, despite Gao Huan's objections. Gao Huan was also insisting that the capital be moved to Ye, allowing him easier control of the court. Finally the conflict came to a head. The emperor mustered what troops he could but they proved no match. On August 20, Gao Huan crossed the Yellow River, the imperial defenses crumbled, and the emperor and a small group of followers fled to the west and the protection of Yuwen Tai. Another Yuan prince, Yuan Shanjian (524–551, r. 534–549, posthumously Emperor Xiaojing), only ten years old, was made emperor. The division of the realm into an eastern and western part was completed. The two dominions would remain apart for the next forty-three years.

other comments, see Zhang Wenjun and Jin Xiaopeng, "Bei Qi biedu Jinyangcheng chutan," *Shanxi shidaxue xuebao (shehui kexueban)* 37.4 (2010), pp. 80–83.

²² ZZTJ 156.4831–4833.

THE EASTERN WEI DYNASTY

Gao Huan now turned his attention to consolidating his hold on power. Those with whom he had to deal fell largely into four groups: (1) the veterans who had emerged from Huaishuo during the Six Garrison uprising and their followers who now formed the core of his military command; (2) those like the Gao brothers who made up the gentry in the Hebei plains and who had allied themselves with him at Xindu; (3) the capital crowd, as it were—those who served at the court and in the bureaucracy that administered the state—this consisted of a mixture of the Han and Xianbei lettered elites; and (4) Jie, Xiongnu, and other ethnicities who had served under Ge Rong and then the Erzhu, and among whom periodically there were outbreaks of resistance to central control.²³ There continued to be two administrative centers, the military at Jinyang and the civil at Luoyang. Gao Huan had long realized that Luoyang was too vulnerable and difficult to control from a distance, so he carried through his plan to move the capital to Ye. Early in 535, where possible, the buildings at Luoyang were dismantled and the population given thirty days' notice to move. The new city rose at Ye; a building program of new palaces soon followed. This time, oversight of the court was made certain by marrying one of his daughters to the emperor, and in 536, his eldest son, Gao Cheng, aged fifteen, moved to Ye to be personally involved in the administration.²⁴

It would appear that Gao Huan was not reconciled to the idea that he had lost the West to Yuwen Tai. In 536, in part in response to governors of prefectures who wanted to come over to the Eastern Wei, expeditions were sent to such places as Xiazhou, Liangzhou, and Lingzhou, along the far northern border, and their populations were transported back to Eastern Wei territory. These actions may have been more in the nature of feints or attempts to put the enemy in the west off-balance, because the major thrust was further south. In 537, Gao Huan marched 200,000 troops south out of the mountain fastness through the Hukou Pass and turned west to cross the Yellow River at the Pujin ford. Yuwen Tai, with an extremely small force, according to Northern Zhou sources, managed to win this very important victory at Shayuan that ensured the survival of his regime. Gao hurriedly withdrew his forces, and the Western Wei followed up this victory by occupying the now ruined city of Luoyang. There were also sympathetic outbreaks at Chenliu and other places, so the aftermath of the Shayuan battle was serious. Gao Huan's hold on power may well have been teetering, as the

²³ Wang Yichen, *Dong Wei*, pp. 134–137.

²⁴ *BQS* 2.16, 3.31.

cities south of Luoyang fell to Western Wei attacks or were surrendered by those going over to the Western Wei.²⁵

At the same time, however, there is evidence that the governance structure that Gao Huan was forming was holding fast. The governor of Jizhou, Gao Jishi (no doubt of the Bohai Gaos), who had at his command a personal force of 1,000 men and 800 cavalry, sent 300 of the cavalry to quell a rebellion of almost 10,000 so-called bandits at Puyang, at some distance from Jizhou, as well as another at Yangping. He claimed, when challenged, that he had done so purely out of loyalty to the regime and because he had the resources to do so. The anecdote also reveals the level of resources available to some of the governors who could act with such autonomy.²⁶

By the start of the next year, 538, the Eastern Wei began to recover. South Fenzhou, near where the Fen river ran into the Yellow River, came over to the Eastern Wei. Gao Huan put together an army that moved against the Western Wei threat around Luoyang, and an important battle ensued that initially went against the West, but by the end of the year, after Gao Huan returned to Jinyang, the Western Wei returned to Luoyang and the territory west of Xiangzhou and Guangzhou, south of Luoyang, remained under their control. The situation was to remain volatile for years to come.

The southern border that the Eastern Wei shared with the Liang state was also a fluid one. The area contested over the centuries was generally that between the Huai and the Yangzi rivers, but at this time the struggle was much further north of the Huai. While the Liang sent an army even as far north as the Kaifeng area, the Eastern Wei responded by taking Pengcheng and even some territory along the Huai river before withdrawing. The probing and testing lasted until the seventh month of 537 when an accord was reached and envoys were exchanged. In 542 Hou Jing was put in charge of the southern area bordering on Liang, with the authority to mount attacks as opportunities presented themselves, becoming in time a sort of Eastern Wei–Northern Qi legate in the South.²⁷

These years of conflict had played havoc with the economy: urbanites, farmers, and merchants were all distressed and starvation was widespread. To ameliorate the situation, Gao Huan ordered that granaries be established at the prefectures bordering on rivers and fords for ease of transportation, to supply the needs of the military and to prepare for famines. The sale of salt produced at areas near the sea offset the military costs. Excellent harvests also helped to strengthen the economy.²⁸

²⁵ *BQS* 2.20; *ZZTJ* 157.4883–4887. ²⁶ *BQS* 21.296. ²⁷ *BS* 5.190.

²⁸ *WS* 110.2863; *ZZTJ* 158.4909–4910.

Gao Huan continued to carry the struggle to his western adversary. In 542 he again led a large army down the Fen river valley, but the fortress at Yubi, under the command of Wang Sizheng, blocked his route. An attempt to bribe Wang by offering him the governorship of Bing prefecture failed, as did a siege of nine days, and Gao Huan then withdrew.²⁹ A counterattack by the Western Wei took the form of a thrust through Luoyang in support of a turncoat governor at North Yuzhou who offered to surrender it to the Western Wei. Gao Huan arrived with 100,000 men and managed to cross the Yellow River despite the attempt to burn the bridge by floating burning boats downstream. A serious battle ensued which the Western Wei lost, though Gao Huan himself narrowly escaped capture. The Western Wei fell back behind the pass but fortified Hengnong as a foothold to facilitate any future invasions.³⁰

One of the problems that Gao Huan faced as his hegemony became more stable was that those who had been comrades in arms now arrogated powers and expected to enrich themselves at the state's expense. Four of his coterie—Sun Teng, Sima Ziru, Gao Yue, and Gao Longzhi—held offices at the court in Ye and were responsible for the administration. The situation was exacerbated by the presence of Gao Huan's son Gao Cheng, who felt he was not treated with proper respect by these Four Dignitaries (*si gui*), as they were called. To remedy the situation and reduce their influence, Gao Huan shifted the power to make key decisions to his son, and either dismissed from office or executed a number of the more egregious miscreants, including Sima Ziru.

Gao Huan covered himself by making it known that even though it was his old comrades being punished for crimes of graft and misconduct, he personally was unable to intervene. Indeed, he publicly thanked Cui Xian, who had lodged some of the complaints, for standing up to those powerful figures and for his role in instituting the reform. Sun Teng and Gao Longzhi, nevertheless, were commissioned to tour the country to locate non-registered households, and over 600,000 were identified and forced to return to their original locations. Thus, one step at a time, Gao Huan was asserting his sole control while also strengthening the economy and administration of the state.³¹ To forestall any joint action by the Avars and the Western Wei against his state, he also took as a wife the daughter of the Avar leader. It is reported that she was a rather formidable woman who refused to speak Chinese, and Gao was forced to attend on her even while he was ill.³²

²⁹ ZZZJ 158.4912; ZS 18.295; Benjamin E. Wallacker, "Studies in medieval Chinese siegecraft: The siege of Yü-pi, A.D. 546," JAS 28.4 (1968), pp. 789–802, provides an excellent background and discussion of this conflict.

³⁰ ZZZJ 158.4914–4918; ZS 18.295.

³¹ Wang Yichen, *Dong Wei*, pp. 184–194; ZZZJ 158.4921–4924; WS 12.319. ³² BS 14.517–518.

Gao Huan was nothing if not persistent, and in the ninth month of 546 once more led his army to besiege Yubi. Despite herculean efforts that included changing the course of the Fen river, building a high mound to overlook the city's walls and digging numerous tunnels to undermine them, and offering significant rewards to anyone who would assassinate the commanding general, the siege was a failure, and after fifty-five days of effort and heavy losses, Gao withdrew.³³ While a heavy investment in military forces was retained on the western border, this was the last effort by the Eastern Wei/Northern Qi to invade its western neighbor.

Gao Huan died on February 8, 547. The succession of rule in later years would not prove to be easy, but in this case it seems to have gone well. Gao Cheng, Gao Huan's eldest of ten sons, now twenty-six, had been groomed since the age of fifteen for this role. His father advised him to rely for support on such men as Kudi Gan, an old Xianbei veteran; Hulü Jin, of the Chile ethnicity, also an old veteran, and Kezhuhan Daoyuan and Liu Fengsheng, who could be trusted, but he was also warned that Hou Jing, by then in charge of the southern area for fourteen years, was a potential threat and needed to be carefully watched. Indeed, Hou Jing was reported to have said that he did not dare cross Gao Huan, but that once the father died he could not serve "that Xianbei child," meaning Gao Cheng.³⁴

Hou Jing, holding the area south and southeast of Luoyang, immediately turned to the Western Wei and to the Liang to support his bid to break away from the Eastern Wei. After some consideration of the consequences of recognizing Hou Jing, and thus breaking the peace pact that had been established with the Eastern Wei, the southern court sent 30,000 men to establish a supply line to Hou Jing. The Western Wei was more cautious about allying itself with the wily Hou Jing and withheld any substantive support.³⁵ In the bitter hostilities that followed, the Eastern Wei was able to recover its lost territory and to push beyond the Huai river almost to the bank of the Yangzi. Hou Jing was forced to flee to the Liang with catastrophic consequences for that state.³⁶

On September 15, 549, Gao Cheng was conferring with close aides Chen Yuankang, Yang Yin, and Cui Jishu about official appointments when he was assassinated by the son of a Liang governor who had been taken prisoner during the hostilities. Gao Cheng had refused to have this man ransomed, but

³³ Wallacker, "Studies . . . Yü-pi," pp. 794–781. ³⁴ *BQS* 2.23–24.

³⁵ On the Eastern Wei victory at the siege of Yingquan which blunted Western Wei's move into Henan, see Wallacker, "Studies in medieval Chinese siegecraft: The siege of Ying-ch'uan, A.D. 548–549," *JAS* 31 (1971), pp. 612–622.

³⁶ *ZZTJ* 160.4948 ff.; for Hou Jing's rebellion, see Scott Pearce, "Who, and what, was Hou Jing?" *EMC* 6 (2000), pp. 49–73.

kept him on to work in the kitchen and to serve food. The second of Gao Huan's sons, Gao Yang, learning of this, immediately arrived and took control of the situation.³⁷ He surprised everyone with the calm and decisive way in which he took charge, so unlike his usual withdrawn and retiring manner that it led some to infer that perhaps he had had a hand in planning the assassination.³⁸ Keeping the death of Gao Cheng a secret, he left the capital in charge of trusted aides and hurried to Jinyang to report to the notables there what had happened. Close associates of his brother were removed. Men such as Cui Xian and Cui Jishu who had aroused the enmity of some veterans but enjoyed Gao Cheng's protection, were now accused of crimes, flogged, and sent to the frontiers.³⁹

THE NORTHERN QI DYNASTY

On February 19, 550, Gao Yang was formally appointed to succeed to his brother's titles as chancellor, commander of all the armies, and other titles, giving him complete control of the state. Arrangements to install the new dynasty were continued despite his mother, the soon-to-be Empress Dowager, née Lou, stating that he was no match for his father who had been content to be *shogun*; others pointed out that such an action would incite the Western Wei to take on the mantle of defending the legitimate dynasty.⁴⁰ Still, on June 9, Gao Yang was installed as the emperor of the Qi dynasty.⁴¹ One problem emerged: the new emperor's primary wife and the mother of his son, Gao Yin, was a Han, while his secondary wife, the sister of Duan Shao, a Xianbei, also had borne a son. Gao Longzhi and Gao Dezheng both feared how the Xianbei notables at Jinyang would react to the selection of the Han wife as queen, and made a statement often cited in the discussion of Han–Xianbei relations, in which they are reported to have said, "A Han wife cannot be the mother of the empire; rather one should select the [Xianbei] concubine." Gao Yang refused and on July 8, his Han wife, née Li, was named empress and their son became the crown prince.⁴²

A number of initiatives were undertaken. The reform of the legal code was to be discussed. Elite military units were organized by selecting exceptional

³⁷ *BQS* 3.37–38; *BQS* 4.44; *ZZTJ* 162.5026 says the group was planning the abdication of the Wei emperor and the establishment of a Gao family dynasty.

³⁸ See Xie Weijie, "Gao Huan 'gongchen jituan' de xingcheng yu Dong Wei de zhengzhi chongtu," *Zhongguo wenhua yanjiusuo xuebao* 2002.11, p. 113, and the literature cited there. Wei Qihui, "Gao Cheng yuce shijian zaitan," *Qianyan* 2010.16, 133–135 (China academic journals, online resource), suggests a conspiracy involving Hou Jing, which would seem unlikely.

³⁹ *ZZTJ* 162.5027. ⁴⁰ *BQS* 30.408, 414, 33.445; *ZZTJ* 163.5042. ⁴¹ *BQS* 4.49.

⁴² *BQS* 9.125.

Xianbei warriors who were given the title of *baibao Xianbei*, which is explained as those Xianbei who could match 100 ordinary soldiers. Han soldiers likewise were selected and simply called *yongshi* or “braves.” The households of the state were divided into nine grades, the wealthier were to pay their taxes in coin while the others supplied corvée labor. A new calendar was ordered, compiled, and circulated, as befitted a new dynasty.⁴³ Measures were taken to enhance classical studies, such as moving fifty-two Han dynasty stone steles on which the classics were incised to an appropriate academy.⁴⁴ Gao Yang’s selection of officials for his administration was also admirable: these included such talented men as Yang Yin, Gao Dezheng, Gao Longzhi, and Du Bi. Through the agency of his officials, he also attempted to curb some of the excesses of the Xianbei elite, actions for which these responsible officials suffered once Gao Yang passed from the scene.⁴⁵

While the struggle in the South was winding down, interrupted now and then by a minor outbreak of conflict, the area of concern shifted to the North. The Avars, until then the dominant force on the steppes, came under attack from the Tujue (Türks) in 552, leading a number of Avars to surrender to the Northern Qi. The fugitives returned to the steppes the next year, this time being attacked by the Khitans who then mounted a serious incursion into Northern Qi territory in the Northeast. In the record of the campaign against them, Gao Yang is depicted in heroic terms as the leader of his men, bare-headed and devoid of armor, going day and night without rest or special provisions. This image starkly differs from the withdrawn, reticent person described before his accession to the throne.⁴⁶ The unsettled situation continued in the North, if not from raids by Avars, then by the Tujue, who were in the process of replacing them as the dominant power in the steppes.

At this point, the end of 554, the Northern Qi was in a good position. The Avars in the North had been beaten off and had begun to raid the Western Wei instead. There had not been any military action on the western border by either side. It was only to the south that the Northern Qi had expansionist designs.⁴⁷ The Northern Qi territory south of the Huai extended almost to the banks of the Yangzi, and the Liang was only just beginning to recover from the Hou Jing wars. But then the Western Wei invaded Liang and incorporated much of that state’s territory. Earlier in 554, the literatus Fan Xun had warned of such a development in one of his *xiucai* examinations, and he had urged

⁴³ ZZTJ 163.5051, 5059. ⁴⁴ BQS 4.53.

⁴⁵ Li Wencai, “Lun Bei Qi Wenxuandi Gao Yang zhi yongren,” *Xuchang xueyuan xuebao* 2008.1 (China academic journals, online resource).

⁴⁶ BQS 4.57.

⁴⁷ This point was made by He Tao, “Bei Qi Gao Yang tongzhi shiqi de junshi jinglue yanjiu,” *Sanxia daxue xuebao (renwen shehui kexueban)* 2008 (China academic journals, online resource).

a more proactive effort by the Northern Qi, but nothing had been done.⁴⁸ This was the beginning of the transfer of the initiative to the Western Wei, soon to be the Northern Zhou, and the gradual and final eclipse of the Northern Qi.

A year later, in 555, Northern Qi attempted to take advantage of the weakened Liang state by sending an envoy to that state's capital at Jiankang to suggest to Wang Sengbian, the Liang general who was trying to hold together what he could of the remnant of the Liang, that it could be to Liang's advantage if Xiao Yuanming, the nephew of the deceased Liang emperor Wudi, who had been in the North since his capture in 547, were to ascend to the Liang throne. A synchronized aggressive offensive convinced Wang Sengbian to accept the Northern Qi offer, and in the fifth month, Xiao Yuanming was received in Jiankang and enthroned as emperor of the Liang; the Liang had thus become in effect a Northern Qi feudatory.⁴⁹

This arrangement with Liang fell apart when the Liang general Chen Baxian killed Wang Sengbian and ousted Xiao Yuanming. A large army was sent to salvage Xiao Yuanming's reign but failed and the Northern Qi withdrew, taking Xiao Yuanming with them; he died shortly after. The retreat of the Northern Qi army was but a ruse, the idea apparently being that if their man was not on the Liang throne, they would take the whole state. On June 15, 556, the Northern Qi army began moving down the Yangzi, soon reaching Danyang, and closing in on Jiankang. Five days later they threw a bridge over the Qinhuai river, reached the outpost of Fangshan, and moved beyond it to the outskirts of the capital. At that point heavy rains mired the Northern Qi army, and the Liang army's capture of their supplies and a stiff resistance led to a disastrous defeat; the Northern Qi survivors sought to flee any way they could, and the attempt to strong-arm the Liang ended disastrously.⁵⁰

During this time it was Yang Yin who kept the state going. It was decreed that too many prefectures and commanderies had been established in order to satisfy the demands of eminent local families whose support the state had been courting. However, now there was a need to rationalize the system, so three prefectures and 153 commanderies were eliminated.⁵¹ The wall building in the North continued, and the final section, reaching to the sea, was completed; the wall then stretched some 3,000 *li*. Every ten *li* there was a guard post and prefectures and garrisons were placed at significant places, some twenty-five in all.⁵²

⁴⁸ *BQS* 45.609–610. ⁴⁹ *ZZTJ* 166.5126–5129.

⁵⁰ *ZZTJ* 166.5144–5146; *BQS* 4.61–62; *CS* 8.139–40. *BQS* 31.300 cites unhappiness in the army with those appointed to lead the attack, which must have played a role in the loss.

⁵¹ *BQS* 4.63. ⁵² *BQS* 4.61; *ZZTJ* 166.5156.

Unfortunately, Gao Yang's behavior became increasingly erratic. The historical records are replete with instances of his violent and deadly actions, often completely irrational. Once, while drunk, he had the courtiers all assembled and surrounded by soldiers, saying that when he raised his whip as a signal they were all to be killed. He kept them there for an entire day while he continued to drink, and then finally dismissed them. There are stories about his cruel execution of two of his brothers, and his slaughter of all the remaining members of the Yuan family, again with much brutality. Such activities must have had a deleterious effect on those serving the state. What made the situation increasingly perilous was a policy of gradually diminishing the authority of the military at Jinyang, and thus making it more subservient to that of Ye. Given the capriciousness that characterized the court, in time this would have serious consequences for the Northern Qi state.⁵³

In his last illness, said to be the result of excessive drinking, Gao Yang expressed his concern that his son and heir was too young, and he appointed Yang Yin, Yan Zixian, and Zheng Yi, all Han, and Gao Guiyan, a cousin of Gao Huan, to manage the succession and to take on the administration. He died on November 19, 559, aged thirty-one.⁵⁴ There was no mourning at his passing; rather there must have been a collective sigh of relief.

There was always a problem of imperial succession in the Northern Qi, perhaps due to a differing tradition on the steppes where fraternal succession was more readily accepted. We see it now when Gao Yang's son Gao Yin ascended the throne. Almost immediately two uncles, Gao Yan and Gao Zhan, Gao Huan's sixth and ninth sons, and their fellows in this camp, such as Duan Shao and Gao Guiyan, as well as Gao You and Gao Yan, two other sons of Gao Huan, all took on the command of the military at the capital and at Jinyang. To forestall any attempt to check their growing dominance at the court, Yang Yin and other high civil officials were seized and killed.⁵⁵

Six months later, Gao Yan felt confident enough to usurp the throne. On October 8, 560, Grand Dowager Lou announced that the fifteen-year-old Gao Yin was to step down and her son, Gao Yan (r. 560–561, posthumously Emperor Xiaozhao), was to be emperor. Not long after, Gao Yin was put to death.⁵⁶ According to the assessment of the traditional historians, Gao Yan as emperor was quite different from his elder brother Gao Yang. While the latter had come to pay little attention to the affairs of state, Gao Yan was the opposite, to a fault. He is described as extremely intelligent and, having from a young age been raised in the halls of government, he was well versed

⁵³ For a detailed examination of Gao Yang's mental illness, see Holmgren, "Seeds of madness: A portrait of Kao Yang, First Emperor of Northern Ch'i, 530–560 A.D.," *PFEH* 24 (1981), pp. 83–134.

⁵⁴ *BQS* 4.67. ⁵⁵ *BQS* 5.75. ⁵⁶ *BQS* 5.75–76.

in administrative matters. As emperor he immersed himself in the smallest details, even to the point of being criticized for not having a broader vision. He was said to accept criticism gladly, and his filiality toward his mother was widely admired.⁵⁷

During Gao Yang's reign, shortages had raised the price of grain, but reforms initiated under Gao Yin and continued by Gao Yan served to remedy the situation. New *tuntian* fields supplied the garrisons south of the Huai river, at the center on the Yellow River, and at the northern frontier, all of which reduced the cost of shipping the grain as well.⁵⁸

What seems to have been the start of a successful period of rule was cut short when Gao Yan fell from a horse and died from his injuries. Originally, his brother and fellow conspirator Gao Zhan had been named as heir, but then Gao Yan named his own son, Bainian, as heir, which displeased Gao Zhan. Aware of this, the emperor made some appointments to limit Gao Zhan's influence in the capital. Because his heir was so young and vulnerable, the emperor on his deathbed wrote to Zhan asking that he not kill the boy, so as not to repeat what had happened in the previous case.⁵⁹ When he died, Wang Songnian was sent to Ye to make known Gao Yan's last wishes. Zhan suspected this all was a charade, and was only convinced that his brother had died when the body was viewed in the coffin. He then hastened to Jinyang, changed the guard, and then, ignoring the ostensible heir, named himself emperor (r. 561–565, d. 568, posthumously Emperor Wucheng), and installed a new slate of officials from among his own adherents.⁶⁰ The young prince, Gao Bainian, was put to death in 564.⁶¹

At this point new figures appear at the court who were to have a profound impact on the fortune of the dynasty. One of these was He Shikai, who seems to have been of Sogdian origin. A man whose abilities with the lance and skill in playing the pipa, or lute, had earlier made him a favorite of Gao Zhan now led to his being given an important role at the new court. Needless to say, there were many who at first sought to have him dislodged, but He Shikai was more than a match for them all and thus rose to a dominant position.⁶²

On May 20, 562, the Dowager Empress Lou died.⁶³ She had been an indomitable figure who had played a major role in the fortunes of the state, both while her husband was alive and after. Free from her presence, the emperor shockingly paid no heed to the rites of mourning, but instead drank and enjoyed music. Even He Shikai urged that the music stop, and

⁵⁷ Teng Ssu-yü, *Family instructions for the Yen clan by Yen Chih-t'ui* (Leiden, 1968), pp. 70–71, gives a moving instance of Gao Yan's filial concern for his mother, the Dowager Empress Lou.

⁵⁸ *BQS* 22.319. ⁵⁹ *BQS* 6.85. ⁶⁰ *BQS* 7.89–90. ⁶¹ *BQS* 12.158.

⁶² He's biography is in *BQS* 50.686–689 and *BS* 92.3042–3047. ⁶³ *BQS* 9.123–124.

for his trouble was struck by the emperor—some evidence of the turbulence that was to come.

Under Gao Zhan's rule court intrigue and manipulation seem to have reached new levels. The sort of perverse accounts of behavior that had characterized the reign of Gao Yang reappear in the historical records. He is said to have raped Gao Yang's widow under threat of killing her son, and when the resulting child was killed at birth, he savagely beat her almost to death; on recovery she became a nun. Whether such stories are credible is difficult to say, but they certainly create an image of reckless behavior. He Shikai is blamed in those records for encouraging the irresponsible behavior of the emperor by persuading him to pay little attention to state affairs, and to give oversight of appointments to offices and ranks to Zhao Yanshen and of fiscal affairs to Yuan Wen Yao, while Tang Yong handled the military troops. The emperor would attend court only once every three or four days, write a few characters, say nothing, and leave.⁶⁴

By now there was a shift in the relationship between the two northern states. This is well illustrated by the comment in the historical records that up until about 560, it was the Northern Zhou which feared an attack by Qi, and each year they broke up the winter ice on the Yellow River that separated them. Since Gao Zhan had come to the throne, the imperial favorites were in charge of affairs, the court was increasingly in disorder, and now it was the Qi that broke up the ice. Hulü Guang, the son of the stalwart general Hulü Jin, was grieved by this and observed that his state, which had once had the ambition to swallow up its enemy, now was led by those who only amused themselves with music and women.⁶⁵ Indicative of this developing sense of vulnerability, in 563 Hulü Guang was sent with 20,000 cavalry to build a fortification at the pass in the mountains across the Yellow River from Luoyang, in order to block one possible route of access to Jinyang.⁶⁶

The two states competed to ally themselves with the Tujue in the North, and the Northern Zhou emperor was successful, sealing the compact by making a daughter of the Tujue khan his empress. The Northern Zhou then, in the ninth month of 563, together with the Tujue mounted a serious attack on the Northern Qi from the North and South. A heavy snowstorm slowed the advance of the attacking forces, giving time for the Northern Qi army to reach Jinyang, and to place 30,000 troops at Pingyang to guard against the attack from there. The Zhou and Tujue pressed on Jinyang in the North. The good order of the defending troops alarmed the Tujue, who had been assured by their Zhou allies that Qi was in a state of disorder, and so at the first clash they withdrew and refused to fight. As a result the Zhou army was

⁶⁴ *BS* 92.3044. ⁶⁵ *BS* 54.1968. ⁶⁶ *BQS* 17.223.

defeated and withdrew. Concurrently, the southern attack column, on reaching Pingyang and learning that the northern campaign had been a failure, also withdrew, pursued by Hulü Guang, who returned with many prisoners.⁶⁷ Despite this success in repelling the invasion, it may be indicative of the Northern Qi's attempt to establish better relations with the Northern Zhou that at this time they allowed the mother of the powerful Northern Zhou regent, Yuwen Hu, to join her son.⁶⁸ If that was the intention behind releasing the elderly woman, it failed.

The next round of hostilities opened in the eighth month of 564. This time the Tujue seemed more eager to engage in battle. They first raided the Youzhou area, modern Beijing, and then camped outside the border while they gathered more men to mount again a joint attack with the Northern Zhou. The Tujue again raided Youzhou while the Northern Zhou armies in the South divided, one column sent to attack Luoyang, another the pass at Zhiguan, which would allow access eventually to Jinyang from the south, and a third to besiege Xuanhu, in the area between the Yellow River and the Huai. The latter was successful, for Xuanhu surrendered in the twelfth month, but the army sent to Zhiguan, led by an overconfident general, was defeated by a surprise attack and that army surrendered. The battle at Luoyang was a fierce one, but the arrival of Qi forces from Jinyang, now that the Zhiguan route was open, decided the day and the Zhou army was forced to retreat. At that, the southern campaign was also abandoned.⁶⁹

Zu Ting, one of the most interesting people of the time, appears now. He was a very clever person, learned and with many gifts, but at the same time devious and apparently completely lacking any moral scruples. He had been repeatedly found guilty a number of times for pilfering, had been flogged and jailed, and reduced to commoner status, but each time managed to find favor and return. He became one of Gao Zhan's followers, sharing with He Shikai the confidence of the emperor. In the previous two reigns, emperors had not been able to hand on the throne to their designated heirs. At this point, Zu Ting came up with the idea that to guarantee the succession the emperor should abdicate in favor of his son and thus ensure the desired succession. He explained his idea to He Shikai and, in total self-interest, they laid forth the idea to Gao Zhan. The sighting of a meteor at this time, interpreted to mean a change of rulership, would have been seen to validate the scheme. Gao Zhan fell in with the idea, and on June 8, 565, his son Gao Wei (r. 565–577), then aged nine, ascended the throne while the father, still retaining power, became

⁶⁷ *ZZTJ* 169.5236.

⁶⁸ *ZZTJ* 169.5242. This is discussed in more detail in Chapter 10 on the Northern Zhou in this volume.

⁶⁹ *ZZTJ* 169.5243–5248.

the Retired Emperor.⁷⁰ The successful implementation of this maneuver of course also served to heighten Zu Ting's standing at the court for a time. But shortly afterwards he overextended himself, and was stripped of office and sent south to be imprisoned. While under confinement there the smoke from the twigs he burned in order to have light by which to read blinded him.

The death of the able veteran general Hulü Jin on August 2, 567, at the age of eighty (*sui*) may well have reduced the authority enjoyed by the veteran military notables centered at Jinyang.⁷¹ His son Hulü Guang received the title of Great General, but this would not stave off defeat in the approaching terminal struggle with the Northern Zhou.

Gao Zhan, the Retired Emperor, aged only thirty, died in 568.⁷² His death set in motion a fresh period of heightened intrigue and infighting at the court. He Shikai had been a close associate of the Retired Emperor and his wife, now designated Dowager Empress Hu. His influence and authority only increased under the reign of Gao Wei. Attempts by family members and their party to have He dismissed proved fruitless, and even resulted in the execution of one of the remonstrants. The youth of Gao Wei, the current emperor, may have exacerbated the expansion of the cohort of favorites and apparent knaves that burgeoned during the short years of his independent reign. One infamous example is that of Lu Lixuan, who had been sentenced to servitude after her husband was executed for rebellion. She had become the emperor's wet nurse, and through that relationship became a close confidant of her charge as well as that of the emperor's mother. In the sources she is depicted as being crafty and excellent at flattery, and thus gained a position of authority and wealth. Her son, Mu Tipo, became a close companion of the young emperor, and she adopted He Shikai and Gao Anahuai as her sons, forming a very close-knit coterie. She also managed to install her adopted daughter as the consort of the emperor. Zu Ting was brought back from exile, and, though now blind, fit in very well with that group.⁷³

When hostilities resumed with the Northern Zhou in 570, it was centered not at Luoyang, but in the Fen river valley which led to the heartland of the Northern Qi, and both sides began to seek a superior position there. Hulü Guang was appointed governor of Bingzhou—that is, at the pivotal Jinyang—and sporadic

⁷⁰ For a full discussion of this maneuver, see Andrew Eisenberg, *Kingship in early medieval China* (Leiden, 2008), pp. 106–114.

⁷¹ *BQS* 8.100, 17.222. ⁷² *BQS* 8.101.

⁷³ Holmgren, "Politics of the Inner Court under the Hou-chu (Last Lord) of the Northern Ch'i (ca. 565–73)," in *State and society in early medieval China*, ed. Albert E. Dien (Stanford, 1990), pp. 269–328. According to Gao Anahuai's biography, *BQS* 50.692, the end of his name was written with the character usually pronounced *bong*.

skirmishes began in early 571, with the Northern Qi pushing the Northern Zhou back for a time almost to the banks of the Yellow River.⁷⁴

At the same time, Gao Yan, the emperor's brother, was growing furious about the power and extravagance of He Shikai, Mu Tipo, and their cronies. Seeing his hostility, they arranged for him to have very limited access to his mother, the dowager empress; Gao Yan was able to see her only once every five days. Their plan was to relieve him of his office as Grand Guardian (*taibao*) because it gave him access to an armory. Faced with the prospect of losing all influence in the palace, Gao Yan moved to seize He and killed him. He led a force of 3,000 men to the palace gates to eliminate the remaining circle of those whom he considered to be polluting the court. Since he did not intend to seize power, this led to a standoff with his brother, the emperor. It was Hulü Guang who resolved the issue by advising the emperor to face the younger brother, while Hulü, taking Gao Yan by the hand to lead him to the emperor, pleaded that mercy be shown for the rash act of a young man. Many of Gao Yan's followers were executed, but, as Hulü Guang advised, those who were the offspring of the veteran generals at Jinyang were spared lest it turn them against the regime. Gao Yan was carefully watched and put under the protection of his mother, the Dowager Empress Hu, who even tasted his food to make certain he was not poisoned. Despite the urging of his counselors, the emperor would not go against his mother's wishes and overtly have him executed, but instead, using the pretext of a hunt, lured him out of the palace and had him killed. He was all of thirteen years old!⁷⁵ If all of this was not enough scandal, the emperor discovered that his mother was having affairs with Buddhist monks who visited her quarters dressed as nuns. She was then sequestered; when he ate with her, he did not dare to taste the food.⁷⁶

By 572 the effort by Zu Ting to gain more authority caused the disapproval of the military, represented by Hulü Guang, to reach a critical point. With the murder of He Shikai, Zu had become very powerful in both civil and military matters. It became obvious that Hulü had developed a deep animus, complaining that the veteran generals were passed over in decisions about military affairs, and that a "blind Han" would be the ruin of the state. He also expressed his displeasure when land at Jinyang was given to Mu Tipo, saying that withdrawing the land from pasturage for military horses would reduce the ability to defend against enemy attacks. The Northern Zhou also planted ditties to be circulated in the Northern Qi that cast suspicion on the loyalty of

⁷⁴ *BQS* 17.224. Hulü Guang led his army back almost to the capital in order to obtain the rewards for his men that had been withheld. The implicit threat of this action contributed to the decision later to have him eliminated.

⁷⁵ *BQS* 12.161–163. Teng, *Family instructions*, pp. 5–7. ⁷⁶ *BQS* 9.126–127.

Hulü. After some prodding, the emperor agreed that Hulü Guang had to be eliminated, and his murder, as well as that of his sons, was arranged. Needless to say, there was much happiness in Northern Zhou at the news that their most stalwart enemy leader had been executed, and later commentators said the death of Hulü Guang made the eventual defeat of the Northern Qi a certainty.⁷⁷

Gao Anahuai, Mu Tipo, and Han Changluan shared direction of the military forces and were termed the Three Notables (*san gui*). Han Changluan was especially belligerent, always fulminating that the “Han dogs” must all be killed. As might be expected, Zu Ting, rationalizing the administration and relying on the dowager empress for support, very soon came into conflict with the Three Notables. In the end, Zu Ting was ousted and appointed governor of a northeastern prefecture, and on July 13, 573, the triumvirate took over control of the government.

Earlier in the year, perhaps perceiving an increasingly dysfunctional Northern Qi regime, Chen to the south opened an attack and their forces advanced step by step. On September 13, Shouyang fell. The sources comment that when the news reached the capital, Mu Tipo and Han Changluan, ostensibly in charge of the state, were playing a game similar to backgammon. They did not leave off their game, merely saying that Shouyang had once been the territory of the southern states, and Chen had now merely recovered it. Relieved of any anxiety, the emperor became very happy and drank and danced. The obliviousness to the impending disaster, conveyed in the text, reminds one of Nero fiddling while Rome burned.

In warfare of the time, there was no battle line as such. Rather, walled cities, spread through an area, would be picked off one at a time, each one falling whether by siege or by early surrender. The attackers had only to worry about their lines of communication and to keep an eye out for reinforcements arriving to lift the siege.⁷⁸ By mid-October, the steady advance of the Chen forces caused increasing concern in the capital. Thus, when it became known that the emperor was leaving for Jinyang, as he did regularly, some of his highly placed court officials, all Han, petitioned for him not to leave at this juncture lest the populace panic. Han Changluan warned the emperor that this was a pretext by officials whose intent was to put the emperor in jeopardy and to undermine the state. The result was that on October 19, 573, the petitioners were called to the court and executed, and their families enslaved. Two days later, the emperor set out for Jinyang.⁷⁹

⁷⁷ ZZTJ 171.5307–5309.

⁷⁸ On the role of walled cities, see Herbert Franke, “Siege and defense of towns in medieval China,” in *Chinese ways in warfare*, ed. Frank A. Kierman Jr (Cambridge, MA, 1974), pp. 151–194.

⁷⁹ ZZTJ 171.5328; Albert E. Dien, “Yen Chih-t’ui (531–591+): A Buddho-Confucian,” in *Confucian personalities*, ed. Arthur F. Wright and Denis Twitchett (Stanford, 1962), pp. 60–62.

At this point the historical sources paint a dismal picture of the palace and of society in general, following the historical topos of bad last rulers. Gao Wei, the emperor, by then eighteen years of age, was said to stutter, to be extremely reticent, and to have paid little attention to the affairs of state. At the same time, he was extremely extravagant, so much so that the treasury was soon depleted. He was fond of music, and found pleasure in composing sad songs and playing on the pipa, having a group of Sogdian youths and eunuchs harmonizing with his music. Titles were handed out freely, and advancement in office came through bribes and purchase. There were no bounds for debauchery and avarice. There may have been some truth to these claims, for by the middle of 575 the Northern Zhou was encouraged by such reports to open a campaign against their eastern enemy.

The attack primarily aimed at Luoyang proved largely unsuccessful, but the Chen opened an offensive on Pengcheng, quite far north of the Huai river.⁸⁰ The modern scholar Su Xiaohua, in a convincing analysis, maintains that the success of the Chen campaign was indicative of the lower priority that the Northern Qi placed on its southern territories. The elite troops were retained in the north to guard against the Northern Zhou; the officers and governors assigned to the South were not the Xianbei veterans, who would be expected to offer better leadership. He also points to the numbers of envoys sent by the Northern Zhou to the Chen court at this time, and he surmises that the purpose was to encourage the Chen to attack what was perceived as a weak Northern Qi southern defense structure. Su Xiaohua concludes that the Northern Qi treating the South as a low priority was a serious error on their part and directly led to the fall of the state.⁸¹

The next and final Northern Zhou campaign against the Northern Qi began with an attack on Pingyang, the administrative center of Jinzhou, and the most critical in the defense of the Fen river valley. After fierce fighting, the city fell on December 3, 576. It may be a coincidence that the Northern Zhou chose as the time for its attack when the emperor Gao Wei was at Jinyang, for it meant that the command of the Northern Qi response was in relatively inexperienced hands. The Northern Zhou left a garrison in the city and fell back while the Northern Qi advanced and attempted to retake Pingyang. While the siege was still underway, the Northern Zhou army returned to do battle. Rather than adopting a defensive posture, Gao Wei led the army to meet the Northern Zhou forces in the open. Rattled by the give-and-take of the ensuing battle, the emperor took bad advice from Mu Tipo and deserted

⁸⁰ ZZTJ 172.5346–5347.

⁸¹ Su Xiaohua, "Dong Wei Bei Qi zhong bei qing nan de yuanyin ji qi yingxiang," *Yunnan minzu daxue xuebao* (zhaxue shubui kexueban) 2008.2 (China academic journals, online resource).

the field, whereupon his army gave way and suffered a telling defeat.⁸² Attempts to stop the Zhou advance were futile, and their army arrived at Jinyang by January 17, 577. Gao Wei left his cousin Gao Yanzong (son of Gao Cheng) in charge of the defense of Jinyang while he fled, thinking possibly to seek refuge among the Tujue, but eventually he returned to Ye. To provide some semblance of leadership, the next day Gao Yanzong declared himself emperor and distributed the treasures of the imperial residences to secure the loyalty of the forces left behind. The siege of Jinyang began on January 19 and at first the besieged were successful in withstanding the Zhou attack. Two days later, however, the enemy breached the city walls at dawn and the Qi forces, including Gao Yanzong, were all taken prisoner.⁸³

Gao Wei had reached Ye on January 20. Suggestions of how to resolve this crisis, including counterattacks at the passes leading to the Zhou homeland, were offered but the emperor could not make any decisions. For some reason it was thought that a change of rulership would have some significance, and Gao Wei's son, Gao Heng, aged seven, ascended the throne on February 4, 577.⁸⁴ On February 22 Ye fell to the enemy. Again, as the Zhou forces had neared the city, the now Retired Emperor and his son left the city. The plan was to muster troops in the South to make a last stand and, if that failed, to seek refuge in the state of Chen to the south. Betrayed by his confidant Gao Anahuai, the emperor and his family were captured on February 28, 577.⁸⁵ Taken as prisoners back to Chang'an, Gao Wei was given an honorary title of duke, but in 578, accused of plotting a rebellion, he and his whole extended family were executed.⁸⁶ All that then remained was clean-up operations as the last remnants of resistance were overcome.

CONCLUSIONS

The speed with which the Zhou army was able to overrun the Qi state is quite remarkable. It is true that at the time, with the loss of the South and the threats from the Tujue in the North, the Northern Qi was in an unfavorable situation.⁸⁷ But still it really speaks to the leadership's overall lack of organization and incapability of mustering what means were still available to resist the assault. However, it is also possible that the state had simply overextended its resources on the three fronts that it faced at the same time. Traditional histories always paint a dismal picture of any failed state; but here the stories of

⁸² *BQS* 50.691. ⁸³ *BQS* 11.150; *ZZTJ* 172.5364. ⁸⁴ *BQS* 8.110–111.

⁸⁵ Albert E. Dien, *Pei Chi'i Shu* 45: *Biography of Yen Chib-t'ui*. Würzburger Sino-Japonica 6 (Bern, 1976), p. 14.

⁸⁶ *BQS* 8.111. ⁸⁷ Lü, *Bei Qi zheng zhi*, pp. 135–137.

debauchery and negligence may to some degree be credible. The tension between the Xianbei and the Han is often cited as a factor that undermined the viability of the regime. After reviewing the textual material, the scholar Miao Yue concluded that during this period the Xianbei were dominant and held the greater majority of the highest posts, and efforts by Han officials like Yang Yin and Zu Ting to reduce the Xianbei role in the administration ended in failure; in his opinion, this led to the demise of the dynasty.⁸⁸ Another analysis concluded that the Northern Qi was basically an unstable structure from its beginnings, and the internal fissures between Ye and Jinyang and the factional struggle for power, which was often framed in terms of friction between the Han and the Xianbei, meant that sooner or later it would collapse.⁸⁹ No doubt such interethnic conflicts contributed to the tensions that were rife at the court during the tenure of this short dynasty, but the factors that led to its collapse may well be more systemic. Gao Huan was a powerful leader who commanded the respect and loyalty of veteran generals, enabling him to maintain his position without an overt demonstration of naked authority. His successors for the most part felt less secure, no doubt with good reason, and as the powerful and experienced military cadre died off, it was not replaced at Jinyang; rather the court made itself the sole authority in the state, militarily as well as administratively. While the absolute and what appears to have been erratic exercise of that power ensured compliance within the state, it worked to reduce its military effectiveness. If the historical records are to be believed, while the succeeding emperors were able to restrain any domestic challenge to their authority by draconian methods, they rarely possessed the ability to deploy the considerable resources of the Northern Qi state effectively under their personal leadership, especially when faced with enemies along all its borders closing in for the kill.

According to the historical records, the territory of the Northern Qi, consisting of fifty-five prefectures, 162 commanderies, 385 districts, 3,332,528 households, and a population of 20,006,886, were added to the Northern Zhou state.⁹⁰ Not long afterward, the city of Ye itself was razed.⁹¹

⁸⁸ Miao Yue, "Dong Wei Bei Qi zhengzhishang Hanren yu Xianbei zhi chongtu," in *idem*, *Dushi cunghao* (Beijing, 1963), pp. 92–93.

⁸⁹ Wang Yichen, *Dong Wei*, 406.

⁹⁰ ZS 6.101; see also the note in ZZTJ 173.5375. On the basis of WS figures, Liu Pengling, "Dong Wei hukou tongjibiao," *Yugong* 3.1 (1935), p. 38, arrived at a population of only 7,591,654, which indicates the uncertain quality of the information available.

⁹¹ Glen Dudbridge, "Yü-ch'ih Chiung at An-yang: An eighth-century cult and its myths," *AM*, 3rd series 3.1 (1990), pp. 28–29.

CHAPTER 11

THE SOUTHERN DYNASTIES

Andrew Chittick

When Liu Yu (r. 420–422, posthumously Song Emperor Wu) ascended the throne in the summer of 420, he had already been de facto ruler of the Jiankang regime for sixteen years. Some of his original close-knit base of supporters among the Northern Headquarters Troops (*beifu bing*) had died from combat or other causes over that span. However, Liu had greatly expanded his direct and indirect network of clients and supporters to include a wider range of fighting men and a broad cross-section of Jiankang society, including scions of its wealthiest and most influential families.¹ He had engaged in numerous aggressive military campaigns, notably against the Southern Yan regime (based in modern-day Shandong) in 409–410 and into the Guanzhong region in 417–418, and had recruited new emigrants from the north to settle in his domain and help secure his authority.² By 420 the reach of the Jiankang empire was as large as it would ever be, ranging from the banks of the Yellow River to what is now central Vietnam, and from the edges of the Tibetan massif to the sea. It was the largest and most populous state in eastern Asia at the time, and in the rest of Asia rivaled only by the Gupta empire in northern India and the Sassanian empire in Mesopotamia and Central Asia.³

Liu Yu's rise exemplifies several important features which were a hallmark of the Southern Dynasties, though they were generally exhibited by the

¹ Wang Yongping, *Dong Jin Nanchao jiazu wenhua shi luncong* (Yangzhou, 2010), pp. 257–317.

² Wang Zhongluo, *Wei Jin Nanbeichao shi* (Shanghai, 2003), pp. 320–326. Guanzhong, literally “Within the Pass,” is the area of modern Shaanxi and Gansu.

³ Census figures for the Northern and Southern period are notoriously flawed. In the Later Han census of 142 CE, the population of all the provinces, including and to the south of Xu, Yan, Yu, Jing, and Yi (the region later controlled in the early fifth century by the Song rulers), was about thirty-two million, more than 60 percent of the total in the empire, or half again as much as the northern provinces (*HHS*, treatises 19–23). The next somewhat reliable census, that of the Sui in 609 CE, counts only by household, but also indicates that the southern region held about 60 percent of the total (*SS, juan* 29–31). All accounts of the period from the late Han to the early fifth century indicate a tremendous population crisis in the North, and significant southward migration, so it is likely that the Song regime would have had at least as high a proportion, if not more.

northern regimes as well. First, the most powerful political actors were military men, or those who could most effectively gain their personal allegiance. The culture of the south is often described as “aristocratic,” but the émigré elite that had dominated politics in the Eastern Jin period was in political, military and eventually economic decline throughout the fifth and sixth centuries.⁴ Their support alone could not ensure the success of a palace coup, keep a child emperor on the throne for long, or otherwise control the imperial succession; only those with strong military backing could hope to seize and hold the throne.

As a result, the preponderance of power was vested in men who had relatively little engagement with literate Sinitic traditions. According to the *Songsbu* (*History of the Liu-Song Dynasty*), Liu Yu initially was largely illiterate; had rough and uncouth manners; had no interest or ability in court music, poetry, or calligraphy; and preferred hunting and dice games to any of the polite arts. He, his clansmen, and probably the majority of their allies spoke the vernacular Sinitic language called Chu, which at that time was widely spoken in what are now the provinces of southern Shandong, northern Anhui and Jiangsu, as well as in the community of migrants from that region who had settled south of the Yangzi, in modern southern Jiangsu.⁵ Chu vernacular was less respectable than the old Wu vernacular of the lower Yangzi region, which had a substantial literate and elite heritage dating from the late Han and Three Kingdoms Wu period. Both languages were less prestigious than the erudite vernacular of the Jiankang elite, derived from that of early fourth-century Luoyang.⁶ Subsequent southern emperors had more substantial grounding in literate traditions, but their primary military backers usually did not; relatively uneducated fighting men from the eastern Chu region

⁴ The literature on this question is vast; an excellent summary of the “aristocratic” argument, and the early development of a counterargument, is provided by Albert E. Dien, “Introduction,” in *State and society in early medieval China*, ed. *idem* (Stanford, 1990), pp. 1–29. Since then, arguments for a more fluid structure of power, in which those with heritable office-holding privileges were relatively marginalized, have been advanced by Scott Pearce, Audrey Spiro, and Patricia Ebrey, “Introduction,” in *Culture and power in the reconstruction of the Chinese realm, 200–600*, ed. Pearce, Spiro, and Ebrey (Cambridge, MA, 2001), pp. 1–34; Gan Huaizhen, *Huangquan, liyi yu jingdian quanshi: Zhongguo gudai zhengzhi shi yanjiu* (Taipei, 2003); Andrew Chittick, *Patronage and community in medieval China: The Xiangyang garrison, 400–600 CE* (Albany, 2009).

⁵ *SōS* 52.1506; also *SōS* 51.1462, on Liu Yu’s half-brother, who also spoke only Chu vernacular.

⁶ For a breakdown of language groups in this period, see W. South Coblin, “Migration history and dialect development in the lower Yangtze watershed,” *BSOAS* 65.3 (2002), pp. 529–531. The Chu vernacular would correspond to what Coblin terms the “eastern” or “Dongqi” dialect. In the *Shishuo xinyu*, 13.1, p. 595 (Richard B. Mather, trans., *Shih-shuo hsin-yü: A new account of tales of the world* (Minneapolis, 1976), p. 301), speaking Chu vernacular is associated with being a country bumpkin. On Wu versus Luoyang vernacular, see David R. Knechtges, “Sweet-peel orange or southern gold? Regional identity in Western Jin literature,” in *Studies in early medieval Chinese literature and cultural history: In honor of Richard B. Mather and Donald Holzman*, ed. Paul Kroll and David R. Knechtges (Provo, UT, 2003), pp. 27–79.

would continue to dominate the Southern Dynasties military until the middle of the sixth century.⁷ In this respect, the southern military are comparable to the *Sārbi (Xianbei) and other conquering tribes of the north, who began with little familiarity of Sinitic literary traditions, and only acquired it after generations in power.

Partially due to domination by relatively uneducated military men, the political system of the Southern Dynasties tended to be a highly personal one based on patron–client ties, rather than more abstract bureaucratic or cultural loyalties. Liu Yu's core supporters were his own agnatic kin group (male family members such as brothers, cousins, sons, and nephews), some affinal kin (related by marriage), and several allied kin groups whose key members were personally known to Liu Yu through years fighting together in the Northern Headquarters Troops.⁸ The factions that supported each successive emperor were based on similarly constructed groups of fighting men from one or more of the South's various garrisons, each one rapidly swollen into an ad hoc pyramid of personal ties between fighting clients, their commander patrons, and the higher-level patrons who competed directly for the throne. This reliance on personal networks meant that the regimes at Jiankang were unable to effectively draw on the empire's entire population of possible fighting men. Instead, coalitions tended to be drawn from limited regional bases, inevitably including men from the capital area in the lower Yangzi and Huai region, but only sporadically including very many from the central Yangzi, and very few from Sichuan or the far south prior to the mid-sixth century.⁹ Personal ties were also quite fungible, especially in succession disputes, when men had considerable opportunity to refocus their loyalty in a manner that aligned most closely with their own personal benefit. The result was a shifting, unstable system dominated by voluntary choices and considerable political and military opportunism.¹⁰

Exacerbating the volatility of this system was the relative weakness of the tradition of primogeniture. Emperors themselves were naturally interested in promoting the authority of their own offspring, and routinely designated their

⁷ Chen Yinke, "Chuzi jitian yu jiangzuo zhengquan de zhuan yi," in *Wei Jin Nanbeichao shi jiangyan lu*, ed. Wan Shengnan (Hefei, 1987), pp. 171–191.

⁸ David Graff, *Medieval Chinese warfare, 300–900* (London, 2002), pp. 84–87.

⁹ The household registration data during the southern dynasties represented only a small fraction of the available pool of conscriptees, and scholars such as Graff, *Medieval Chinese warfare*, pp. 126–127, have suggested that this explains southern military weakness. However, conscription was not limited by the registers, since the informal patronage system drew on many unregistered households, especially those who were "sheltered" by powerful local strongmen who joined military units and brought their clients with them. The patronage system *was* limited to those who had links via personal ties up through the pyramid, so it failed to pull in men and resources from more distant geographical regions.

¹⁰ Chittick, *Patronage and community*, pp. 7–11.

eldest sons as heirs, a practice supported and valorized by historians well schooled in Han dynastic traditions. In reality, however, a wide range of the emperor's male relatives were regarded as acceptable successors, including his other sons, brothers, and uncles, so virtually no imperial succession went unchallenged. This led to escalating paranoia among the victors, some of whom went so far as to attempt the pre-emptive execution of many clansmen in order to forestall possible challenges, and to turn instead to relying on powerful and hopefully loyal military clients from other households.¹¹

Compounding the problem of weak primogeniture was the precedent of succession by ritual abdication, firmly established by the Wei and Jin dynasties, which allowed non-relatives to succeed to the throne and found a new dynasty if they could make a persuasive case that the ruling dynasty had "lost the Mandate."¹² To achieve this feat, non-relations had to control the throne (often facilitated by having a minor child as emperor), dominate or outright eliminate other imperial relatives, and command sufficient military backing. An imperial household weakened by factional infighting and repeated purges was ripe for this sort of challenge. Contenders, potentially cast as "legitimate," could arise from both lateral succession within the imperial clan and ritual abdication to a powerful minister outside the clan. Remarkably then, almost any man could engineer a legitimate seizure of the throne, so long as he could marshal a strong network of fighting clients and sufficient inside support at court. Most often the succession did in fact fall to an imperial relative, but the process was far from orderly, and belies the notion of a systematic and well-regulated succession implied by the official validation of primogeniture and the idea of a "dynasty."

Despite the repeated chaos generated by succession crises, the Southern Dynasties were a time of tremendous economic development and cultural flourishing. Jiankang grew to become one of the great cities of the world populated by well over a million people, and its trade networks spread far up the Yangzi into the interior, throughout the Lingnan region (modern Guangdong, Guangxi, and northern Vietnam), and overseas to Japan, Korea, and South and Southeast Asia. Culturally, the Southern Dynasties nurtured some of the most foundational writings in poetry, historiography, and religious thought of the Chinese tradition. These topics are primarily reserved for other chapters; here we will focus on political and military developments.

¹¹ Andrew Eisenberg, *Kingship in early medieval China* (Leiden, 2008), pp. 50–58.

¹² Carl Leban, "Managing heaven's mandate: Coded communication in the accession of Ts'ao P'ei, A.D. 220," in *Ancient China: Studies in early civilization*, ed. David T. Roy and Tsuen-hsuin Tsien (Hong Kong, 1978), pp. 315–341; Howard L. Goodman, *Ts'ao P'ei transcendent: The political culture of dynasty-founding in China at the end of the Han* (Seattle, 1998); Andrew Chittick, "Dynastic legitimacy during the Eastern Chin: Hsi Tso-ch'ih and the problem of Huan Wen," *AM*, 3rd series 11.1 (1998), pp. 21–52.

THE FOUNDING YEARS, 420–453

After a decade and a half serving as a virtual shadow emperor at court, Liu Yu had developed a widespread alliance of personal followers and clients. This loyal group fanned out from his original base, in the Northern Headquarters Troops, to include other military men and numerous representatives of the well-educated émigré families who dominated political and social life in Jiankang. Though originally unlearned, Liu Yu must have been canny, charismatic, and a quick study; by 420 he had significantly improved his speaking and debating ability, expanded his literacy, and developed a supple, tolerant approach to the demands and pretensions of the Jiankang elite.¹³ He was greatly aided in this by several longtime associates from elite family backgrounds who were advantaged by better education and social connections, such as Wang Hong, Fu Liang, and Xie Hui. With his groundwork so carefully laid, Liu Yu's demotion and execution of the last of the Jin imperial line and his ascension to the throne in the years 419–420 went virtually unopposed.

Liu Yu died two short years later, during the summer of 422, at age fifty-nine. He was succeeded by the eldest of his seven sons, Liu Yifu (known posthumously as the "Little" or "Short-Term" Emperor (Shaodi)), then seventeen years of age, in what at first appeared to be an orderly, primogeniture-based transition. The apparent smoothness was belied, however, by the designation of a triumvirate of co-regents to aid the new emperor in government: Fu Liang, Xie Hui, and Xu Xianzhi. Since Liu Yifu was old enough to be considered an adult, the appointment of regents was formally unnecessary, and suggests that Liu Yu lacked confidence in the rulership abilities of his own offspring. More fundamentally, it foreshadowed the factional splintering of the far-flung personal network of clients and alliances that Liu Yu had built up over the preceding two decades.

The first year and a half of this emperor's reign were uneventful, but in the early spring of 424 the three regents punished and exiled Liu Yu's second son, Liu Yizhen. This move proved a harbinger for the much more drastic step of arresting, demoting, and exiling Liu Yifu himself in midsummer. Both were subsequently executed. These steps cleared the way for the regents to install as emperor Liu Yu's third son, Liu Yilong (r. 424–453, posthumously Emperor Wen), then eighteen years of age. The immediate motives behind the coup are obscure; the accusations leveled against Liu Yifu and Liu Yizhen in the official history, while not necessarily false, are relatively perfunctory and unconvincing. Furthermore, there is no evidence that Liu Yilong had shown himself to

¹³ Wang Yongping, *Dong Jin Nanchao jiazuo wenhua*, pp. 257–277.

be especially impressive, or supported by a powerful faction, or even personally involved in the coup. The regents appear to have acted in their own interests and, more generally, to have promoted the dominance of the educated capital elite over the young, uneducated scions of the upstart Liu clan, for whom they surely had little regard (however much they may have respected Liu Yu himself while he was alive).¹⁴

The regents presumably anticipated that the new emperor, Liu Yilong, would be a pliant tool for their plans, but in this they were quite mistaken. He worked to gain the allegiance of several of his father's most important old generals, notably Tan Daoji and Dao Yanzhi, and in the spring of 426 relied on their influence to order the execution of Xu Xianzhi and Fu Liang, the two regents still in the capital. Tan Daoji then took a naval force upriver to attack the third regent, Xie Hui, who controlled the Jing Province command; though Xie marshaled considerable resistance, he was captured and executed within two months. Tan and Dao were both of a lower-class military background with little formal education, and were much more closely tied to the rank-and-file military than to the Jiankang elite. Neither is on record as supporting the regents' initial coup. By backing Yilong in his counter coup, Tan and Dao effectively used the prestige of the Liu dynastic house to reassert the primacy of the military.

The resulting factional alignment, with newly empowered military leaders and men of the Liu clan firmly in charge, was one of the most stable and long-lasting of the Southern Dynasties. The emperor did not challenge this core group's inheritable titles and guaranteed income streams, which had been awarded for loyal military service to his father and himself in the founding generation. For example, Tan Daoji's two older brothers each had noble titles and rights to the tax income from a thousand or more households, and the titles and 3,000-household income stream that had been allotted to a cousin, Tan Pingzhi, in the founding generation was inherited by his heir. Tan Daoji himself served at the forefront of subsequent military campaigns and was ultimately made a duke, with the rights to the income from 5,000 households, the equal to that of an imperial prince.¹⁵

Another binding element in these factional relationships was marital ties. The Tan family was related by marriage to Liu Yu's half-brother, Liu Daolian. One more group noted for marital ties to the imperial household was the family of Liu Yu's stepmother, Xiao Wenshou (posthumously known as the Xiaoyi Empress). The empress was the mother of both Liu Daolian and

¹⁴ Wang Zhongluo, *Wei Jin Nanbeichao shi*, pp. 336–337.

¹⁵ For biographies of major Tan family members, see *JS* 85.2217; *SoS* 45.1372–1373; *SoS* 47.1416–1417; *SoS* 43.1341–1345; *NS* 15.444–449.

Liu Daogui, on whom Liu Yu relied a good deal in his early years. At least three of the Empress's patrilineal relatives—two brothers, Xiao Mozhi and Xiao Yuanzhi, and Xiao Chengzhi—were also part of the Northern Headquarters Troops group that put Liu Yu in power. Their offspring remained tightly allied with each other in service to the imperial clan. Xiao Yuanzhi's son Xiao Sihua rose to prominence under this emperor, who also made Xiao Chengzhi one of his subordinate generals; Chengzhi's son Xiao Daocheng, who would later found the Southern Qi dynasty, did the same for Mozhi's son. Their marital alliances with the imperial clan also continued into subsequent generations; Xiao Sihua's daughter married the emperor's eighteenth son, Liu Xiufan, and his granddaughter married one of the emperor's grandsons.¹⁶ An anecdote from two generations later emphasizes how conscious men of these descent lines were of their imperial connections, but also how fragile that status had become:

[Tan] Chao ... served the Western office in the provincial administration. When Xiao Huikai was Lieutenant Governor, Chao acted informally and unceremoniously. Huikai reckoned that his status was superior, and was a bit deprecating. Chao shifted and hissed defiantly, unwilling to yield, opened his eyes wide and said, "You and I are both just affinal relatives from the state's humble days; how can you think yourself a first-rank noble?" Huikai's grandfather's sister was Empress Xiao; Chao's grandfather's sister was the wife of the Changsha Prince [Liu Daolian].¹⁷

For the three decades of Liu Yilong's reign, this interlinked network of newly risen households, all rooted in an uneducated group of largely Chu-speaking military men from "the state's humble days," provided a stable foundation for the emperor. Consequently, Liu Yilong was able to complete the process of administrative and military reorganization begun by his father, setting a template which all of the subsequent southern regimes would follow.

One development was the practice of appointing imperial relatives—sons, brothers, and sometimes cousins—to be in charge of key provincial military commands. This contrasted with the Eastern Jin practice of giving provincial posts to the scions of other powerful families, and more resembled Western Jin practice.¹⁸ Rather than end power struggles, it tended to internalize them within the imperial clan in ways which resembled the destructive "Disturbances of Eight Princes" which had undermined the Western Jin imperial house in the early fourth century. Nonetheless, the precedent was

¹⁶ For biographies of major Xiao family members, see *SōS* 41.1280–1282; *SōS* 78.2011–2018; *NQS* 1.1–3; *NQS* 52.891; *NS* 11.318; *NS* 18.494–506; *NS* 72.1765–1766.

¹⁷ *NS* 72.1765; see also *NQS* 52.891.

¹⁸ Chen Changqi, *Liang Jin Nanchao zhengzhi shigao* (Kaifeng, 1992), pp. 61–98; Wang Qing, *Liang Han Wei Jin Nanchao zhou cishi zhidu yanjiu* (Hefei, 2006), pp. 191–197; Graff, *Medieval Chinese warfare*, pp. 87–88.

to some extent followed by all of the subsequent southern regimes. Interrelationships between members of the imperial clan, their cliques of supporters, and their particular geographical and institutional bases of power are therefore of critical importance in understanding the factional politics of the era.

A second development was to make civilian administration in the provinces more fully subordinate to the military command structure. Commandery governors and district magistrates (including “lodged” or immigrant jurisdictions that lacked actual territory) usually held concurrent positions as generals, and thus came under the military authority of the provincial inspector. Inspectors of the most important provinces usually had command over military affairs in several adjacent provinces as well, and were able to make personal recommendations to staff both the military and the civilian appointments within their entire area of command. As a result, the civilian administrations of the provinces and commanderies became subordinate to the key regional military commands. This policy had developed in the Eastern Jin and was strengthened under the Song.¹⁹

A third development was to restructure the geography of provincial administration. On the one hand, this meant consolidating the key garrisons in and around the capital area: Yang Province, based in the immediate suburbs of Jiankang; South Yan Province, based at Guangling (about forty miles downriver, north of the Yangzi); South Xu Province, based at Jingkou (also downriver but south of the Yangzi); and South Yu Province, based at Gushu (forty miles upriver). These four core provinces were protected from northern threats by the Huai river frontier garrisons at the provincial seats of North Xu, North Yu, and North Yan provinces, connected by canals to the Yangzi, allowing the navy to transfer men and material. Together these garrisons formed the primary defensive system of the lower Yangzi and Huai region, and served as the principal recruiting ground for talented military clients.

At the same time, the garrisons farther upriver were systematically broken up into smaller units to minimize the opportunity for successful rebellions. Opposition between Jing and Yang provinces (the middle and lower Yangzi respectively) had characterized most of the major conflicts of the Eastern Jin period. Under Liu Yu and Liu Yilong, the territory and resources of the once-sweeping Jing command (based at Jiangling, in the western part of modern Hubei) were systematically divided up among new regional garrisons: South Yong Province (at Xiangyang, on the middle Han river in northern Hubei), Xiang Province (at Changsha, in modern Hunan), Ying Province (Xiakou, at modern Wuhan), and Jiang Province (Xunyang, at modern Jiujiang in

¹⁹ Chittick, *Patronage and community*, pp. 23–29.

northern Jiangxi). These provinces served as counterweights to the Jing command, fragmenting the prospects for upriver rebellions and giving the Jiankang regime more opportunity to play one provincial inspector off against another.²⁰ Though this did not eliminate civil wars, it significantly increased the odds that the Jiankang regime would prevail over its rivals so long as there was no internal crisis.

Liu Yilong's relatively long, stable reign saw important cultural developments, especially in historical writing. The imperial court oversaw the drafting of official records covering the preceding 400 years of imperial history, including a new *Hou Hanshu* (*History of the Later Han*) by Fan Ye; extensive annotations by Pei Songzhi to the *Sanguozhi* (*Records of the Three Kingdoms*), originally by Chen Shou; and the collection of materials for the history of the Jin and the early Song period. The emperor Liu Yilong's cousin Liu Yiqing oversaw the collection of the *Shishuo xinyu* (*New Account of Tales of the World*), a book of character anecdotes about late Han, Three Kingdoms, and Jin-era figures that had enormous influence on subsequent historical and fictional narrative writing. Liu Yiqing and other princes of the imperial clan also actively sponsored poetry writing. Because the princes and their allies had been raised on vernacular speech and oral traditions as much as or more than on classical written ones, their patronage encouraged the development of new poetic forms based on popular songs and dances of the lower and middle Yangzi.²¹ These developments are discussed in greater detail in Chapter 28.

Under Liu Yilong the Jiankang regime remained largely free of internal wars, and fairly aggressive in external ones, which would have helped to satisfy the ambitions of the fighting men who dominated his faction. In 430–431 they launched a major campaign against the Tabgač Northern Wei regime to retake territory south of the Yellow River, which was ultimately unsuccessful. Between 433 and 442 they waged a series of major campaigns against Yang Nandang, King of Wudu, an independent tributary regime of the Di people in the hills beyond the upper Han river valley.²² And in 446–447 they launched a major assault on the Cham, in what is now central Vietnam, resulting in a substantial haul of precious metals and other valuables.²³ Liu Yilong's regime also engaged in fairly continuous campaigns against the people who lived in the foothill and mountainous regions encircling the middle Yangzi plain on the north and west. In the sources these are designated by the term “Man” (with various descriptors based on region), but they were a rather

²⁰ He Dezhang, *Zhongguo Wei Jin Nanbeichao zhengzhi shi* (Beijing, 1994), p. 141.

²¹ Su Jui-lung, “Patrons’ influence on Bao Zhao’s poetry,” in *Studies in early medieval Chinese literature and cultural history*, ed. Paul W. Kroll and David R. Knechtges (Provo, UT, 2003), pp. 303–330.

²² *SoS* 98.2406–2409. ²³ *SoS* 97.2377–2379.

heterogeneous mix of people from diverse cultural backgrounds, some of them longtime highland people, others fugitive lowlanders. These Man were engaged in shifting cultivation practices or small-scale farming in highland valleys, thereby escaping Jiankang's tax, corvée, and administrative systems. The primary purpose of campaigns was to acquire captives to be used as military slaves and bound retainers, and occasionally to seize control of their cultivated land and to secure routes of passage. In the north-central Yangzi region (mostly in the Dabie mountains and surrounding foothills), the campaigns reached a peak in the 440s, during which time a large number of Man captives (sources suggest over 100,000) are reported to have been sent to Jiankang to serve in the army.²⁴

These campaigns were followed in 450–451 by another major north–south war, one that extended into Guanzhong, the largest such effort since Liu Yu's early campaigns north of the Huai river more than thirty years before. This war began in the spring of 450 with a Tabgač attack and siege of the Song fort at Xuanhu (north of the upper Huai river), which was only broken after forty days. The southerners launched a major countercampaign on both an eastern and a western front in early autumn. The eastern campaign, led by Wang Xuanmo, stalled fairly soon, and was then subjected to a massive counterattack by Tabgač forces led by their emperor in person. By late winter, having left several cities under siege, the Tabgač armies reached the north bank of the Yangzi and began preparations to cross the river. Liu Yilong and his court elected to negotiate a settlement, which resulted in the withdrawal of the overextended Tabgač forces and the ceding of significant territories south of the Yellow River. The dramatic failure of this campaign shows that the armies protecting the capital, which had evolved out of the Northern Headquarters Troops, were much less effective than they had been a generation earlier. They had not fought a major war for twenty years, and their leading figures had been as much engaged in court politics as in military training. Their numbers had also recently been swollen by captives from the anti-Man campaigns, who were probably ineffective soldiers and of only mixed benefit as support personnel.

The armies of the western front proved to be in surprisingly better condition. They were mostly volunteer recruits rather than captives, drawn from Xiangyang polyglot immigrant and native communities. The natives would have spoken a central Yangzi vernacular, but the northern immigrants primarily brought with them the languages and customs of the Guanzhong region, which evidence suggests they had retained.²⁵ Continuously engaged in campaigns against the Man hill people for a decade, the ruling stratum of

²⁴ Graff, *Medieval Chinese warfare*, p. 83.

²⁵ Coblin, "Migration history," p. 531; Chittick, *Patronage and community*, pp. 64–71.

fighting men from this region were probably fewer in overall numbers but far more cohesive and battle-ready than their compatriots in the east. Led by Liu Yuanjing, who had grown up in Xiangyang in a large family group descended from northern immigrants, the western troops successfully fought their way north from Xiangyang to the Yellow River, then moved west to seize the passes leading into Guanzhong. Before they could capitalize on their progress, however, the court negotiated peace and ordered them to retreat. Many of them were soon reassigned to further anti-Man campaigns in the region of modern northern Anhui.²⁶

By this time the emperor was in his mid-forties, and the factional politics of the imperial clan had grown much more complex. He had initially relied on his four younger brothers and several cousins for provincial military postings but eventually brought in his two oldest brothers, Liu Yikang and Liu Yigong, to serve in central court positions. For much of the period from 436 to 442, the emperor was ill and left his brother Liu Yikang largely in control of court affairs; he was considered by some as a possible alternative heir to the throne, instead of the emperor's eldest teenage son Liu Shao. Liu Yikang engineered the demotion and execution of the venerable general Tan Daoji and his heirs in 436, perhaps as a way of smoothing his own hoped-for succession. After the emperor recovered, however, the rumors of a coup attempt led him to demote his brother; after further rounds of rumored coup efforts and lesser purges, he finally had the brother executed in 451.

By the 440s the emperor's own offspring began to come of age. He adopted the practice maintained throughout the Southern Dynasties of keeping his eldest son and heir safe at court, while appointing his other sons to major provincial commands around the age of nine or ten. So long as the imperial princes were no more than teenagers they were figureheads; real power resided in their personal military staffs, who accompanied them to their posts. For example, the third son, Liu Jun, was first appointed to the South Yu command at the age of ten, but after five years he was deemed ready for a more distant command and sent out to South Yong Province (at Xiangyang) in 445 to oversee the anti-Man campaigns. His personal military staff, nominally under his command, was dominated by well-seasoned generals such as Shen Qingzhi, Liu Yuanjing, and Zong Que, all of whom were in their thirties or forties and fully able to run operations. Typically these provincial fighting men had been recruited—by one of the emperor's brothers or other elder imperial clan members—from one of the provincial garrisons; Liu Yuanjing and Zong Que, for example, had been recruited from the central Yangzi region and first served as personal clients to the emperor's brother Liu Yigong, who by

²⁶ Chittick, *Patronage and community*, pp. 29–34.

this time was stationed at court as Defender in Chief (*taiwei*) of all military forces. Notably, none of these more recently recruited fighting men had yet received the same sort of generous and long-lasting benefits, such as noble titles or income-producing fiefs, as had the core group of Chu men who served under Liu Yu in the founding generation. Having personally served several different imperial princes, their loyalties were up for grabs if the princes ever came into a conflict with one another; some patrons were likely to be more successful or generous than others, and more than one option might plausibly be portrayed as “loyal.”

The tensions underlying this situation were played out in the first great succession struggle of the Southern Dynasties. In the spring of 453, the eldest son and designated heir Liu Shao, in league with a younger brother, staged a coup and had their father the emperor killed. According to the official history the two sons had engaged in indiscretions with “black magic” and with a female sorcerer, leading their father to consider demoting them while raising one of his other sons as heir apparent. Whatever the validity of this tale (we must always be suspicious of how the defeated are portrayed in imperial history), there can be little doubt that the brothers staged a rapid and quite desperate coup. They then sought to leverage Shao’s nominal possession of the throne into support from the court and the military garrisons surrounding the capital. Support appears to have been quite tepid, however, and the conspirators were immediately challenged by a powerful alliance of an uncle Liu Yixuan, the Inspector of Jing Province, and their younger brother Liu Jun. The latter, at twenty-three years old, was Inspector of Jiang Province and was overseeing anti-Man campaigns that had reunited the successful core of fighting men from the western front of the 450 campaign. Within two months, this battle-tested coalition struck downriver and quickly surrounded the capital, gained its surrender, and had the two conspirators and their supporters executed. Their uncle Liu Yigong, who had managed to avoid execution during this perilous time, threw the weight of his well-developed faction at court behind the counter coup; he had almost certainly been sympathetic to it from the start, since it included many powerful generals with whom he had long-standing ties. The resulting alliance led to Liu Jun’s elevation to the throne (r. 453–464, posthumously Emperor Xiaowu) in early summer of 453.

FACTIONAL STRIFE AND THE END OF THE SONG DYNASTY, 453–478

The half-century following the enthronement of Liu Jun was characterized by extreme factional strife, civil wars, and bloody purges of family members. The violence has been characterized as symptomatic of the Southern Dynasties as

a whole, and attributed to the personal failings, even psychoses, of particular rulers or of the entire Liu ruling clan.²⁷ However, this period of escalating factional violence had systemic roots in the often unstable system of military patron–client ties and the weakness of imperial succession traditions. Neither Liu Yu nor his sons had shown any particular excess of paranoia, purges, or violence compared with other rulers in other periods of Chinese history. Liu Yilong's thirty-year reign was comparatively free of internal strife; the only substantial example is his long struggle with his brother Liu Yikang and his supporters, who were accused of plotting a coup several times over the course of fifteen years before Yilong finally had his brother executed in 451. This suggests that Yilong was secure in his authority and relatively reluctant to execute members of his own family.

Liu Jun's reign, by comparison, was marked by a significant increase in factional strife within the imperial clan. One reason was simply the increase in the size of the ruling household, and thus the number of potential rivals. When his father, Liu Yilong, took the throne in 424 he had only four living brothers, three being minor children. By comparison, in 454 Liu Jun had thirteen brothers alive, seven of whom were at least fifteen years of age, any of whom might just as well have succeeded to the throne. Liu Jun had also seized the throne following the brutal assassination of his father by his elder brothers, an unsuccessful but nonetheless unnerving precedent for challenges from within the court. The coup that Liu Jun staged from the provinces established a further, successful precedent that any powerful provincial commander might have been tempted to emulate. Thus, Liu Jun took and held the throne under much more challenging and insecure circumstances than had his father.

He immediately faced a very serious threat to his rule, as the pact between his two uncles, Liu Yigong and Liu Yixuan, broke down within a few months. This new fracture led Liu Yixuan, still based in Jing Province, to organize a rebellion against the court-based alliance of the emperor and Yigong. Liu Yixuan's forces moved rapidly downriver in the spring of 454 and reached the outskirts of the capital. They anticipated that some of the western generals in the emperor's faction would change sides due to regional or old personal loyalties, but they did not, presumably because they felt well-treated by Liu Jun and did not see the need to make a risky further switch in patrons.²⁸ Instead, the mutinous group suffered a rapid defeat, followed by the eventual capture and execution of Liu Yixuan and all the leading members of his faction by the end of the summer. One of the emperor's brothers, Liu Hun (Liu

²⁷ Li Zefen, *Liang Jin Nanbeichao lishi lunwen ji* (Taipei, 1987), pp. 469–474; Hans Bielenstein, "The Six Dynasties, Volume 1," *BMFEA* 68 (1996), pp. 158–159, 163.

²⁸ Chittick, *Patronage and community*, pp. 34–35.

Yilong's tenth son), also staged a minor rebellion at this time in the critical Xiangyang garrison and "enthroned" himself as "King of Chu." This episode was much more readily put down.

The events of 453–454 made the emperor more wary than his father had been of appointing close male relatives to provincial garrisons. He continued to rely on the eldest of his younger brothers as advisers and provincial commanders, but also more heavily on men from powerful families whose claims to authority and wealth derived from military service. Appointees included both Chu men who had been long-standing supporters of the imperial clan, and the central Yangzi men who had been critical in his recent coup. He began by rewarding his loyal backers richly: Liu Yuanjing and Shen Qingzhi, for example, received marquisesates worth the income from 3,000 households apiece, awards they could never have anticipated receiving during their "normal" decades of service to the imperial household. Liu Yuanjing was kept at court to defend the capital, while Shen Qingzhi, an illiterate man from an obscure lower-class Wu family, continued to be given important frontier military positions throughout this reign. Another example is Zhu Xiuzhi, an old client of Dao Yanzhi's from the founding era who had served the emperor at Xiangyang in the 440s, then gained merit fighting Liu Yixuan's rebellion from the rear. As a result, he was made a marquis and appointed Liu Yixuan's replacement as the commander of the Jing provincial garrison, the first time someone from outside the imperial household had held so powerful a position in over thirty years. Because these provincial command positions were the primary avenue for the recruitment of armed followers, the emperor was in effect diluting the opportunity for members of the imperial clan to build up their military power, and instead giving greater opportunity to other potentially rival men and their families.

The emperor Liu Jun's willingness to rely on his brothers dissipated further following the natural death in 458 of Liu Hong, Liu Yilong's seventh son, with whom the emperor had been particularly close, and also the rebellion of Liu Dan, the sixth son, in midsummer of the following year. Liu Dan was accused of plotting a rebellion at Guangling, one of the three critical garrisons ringing the capital. Rather than accept a summons to court, Dan marshaled his men and prepared to defend the city against his elder brother's punitive campaign. The emperor had all of Liu Dan's sons and other intimates at court executed, and appointed Shen Qingzhi to lead forces to besiege the city. The effort dragged on for over two months and ended in an especially brutal fashion, with several thousand of the adult males in the city massacred.²⁹ The original motivations behind this rebellion are hard to pin down, but almost a moot point; the climate of insecurity amongst imperial household

²⁹ *S*ōS 79.2027–2037.

members meant that even small breakdowns in trust rapidly spiraled into violent standoffs that could only be resolved by the death of one side of the dispute. It was a grim harbinger for the fate of the House of Liu.

In the short run, the brutal action against Guangling may have had the salutary effect of cowing other rebellious garrisons. The attempted insubordination of yet another brother, Liu Xiumao, at Xiangyang in 461, for example, was largely settled by a rival local garrison faction, which was probably concerned about demonstrating loyalty to avoid the fate of Guangling.³⁰ Yet both rebellions exemplified a more troubling development: garrison troops everywhere in the empire were increasingly emboldened to manipulate young imperial princes (Liu Xiumao was only sixteen) as figureheads for their own agendas, no doubt hoping that strife in the imperial household might provide opportunity to emulate the tremendous good fortune of men such as Liu Yuanjing and Shen Qingzhi. This, combined with the heightened power of leading military families, made the provincial garrisons a potential tinderbox that only awaited the spark of the next imperial succession crisis.

It was not long in coming. Liu Jun died, aged thirty-five, in midsummer of 464, leaving the throne to his eldest son Liu Ziyi, aged sixteen (known as the "Prior Deposed Emperor," Qianfeidi). Though legally an adult, he was nonetheless saddled with three regents: his great-uncle Liu Yigong (now fifty-two) and two generals, Liu Yuanjing and Yan Shibo, both longtime associates of the uncle. This may again have been a case where the father did not have confidence in his offspring, as in 422, but it is equally likely to have been part of a plot by Liu Yigong to eventually take the throne himself.³¹ Liu Ziyi and his backers certainly suspected as much, and in the autumn of the following year, used their own military clients to strike and kill all three regents, and their sons and supporters. This initiated a chain reaction of purges and coups over the next several months: first against two of the emperor's young brothers; then against his uncle Liu Chang, Liu Yilong's ninth son, who tried to stage a coup and wound up fleeing to the North; and finally in a successful coup by another of the uncles, Liu Yu, Liu Yilong's eleventh son, aged twenty-seven, whose backers managed to kill Liu Ziyi, the emperor, in midwinter of 465–466. Because Liu Yu wound up successfully defending his place on the throne (he is posthumously known as Emperor Ming), the official histories portray the murdered emperor as depraved, sadistic, and deserving of assassination, but we are unlikely to ever know the real truth of the matter.

Liu Yu's action was a straightforward palace coup, an assassination of the emperor and his close followers, with no significant military backing from any

³⁰ Chittick, *Patronage and community*, p. 48.

³¹ *SoS* 77.1990.

of the provincial garrisons outside the immediate vicinity of the capital, and it left him in a much more precarious position than that of Liu Jun in 453. The new emperor also had a weaker claim to the throne, because he was not the oldest surviving son of Liu Yilong (that was his elder brother, Liu Yilong's eighth son Liu Hui; the ninth son Liu Chang was also alive in the north). In any case his nephews, the fifteen surviving sons of his predecessor Liu Jun, had an equal or better claim to inherit the throne. They were all too young to assert this claim for themselves (the eldest was only ten), but four of them were already scattered across the empire as the heads of provincial garrisons, each one run by ambitious military men who were quite ready to assert an imperial claim in the name of their young patron. As a result, Liu Yu's coup set off a very broad-based civil war, known as the "War of Uncles and Nephews," which lasted much of 466 and greatly weakened both the military establishment and the imperial house.

Within a few weeks the nominal head of the "nephews" alliance, Liu Jun's eldest surviving son Liu Zixun, was formally enthroned as a rival emperor at Xunyang, the seat of Jiang Province, a very strategic location astride the lower middle Yangzi. In practice, Liu Zixun was a figurehead for ambitious military staff beneath him, led by Deng Wan. The forces allied under this banner included the military staffs of his younger brothers and virtually every other major provincial garrison in the empire, even those in the upriver Yangzi watershed (stretching west all the way to Sichuan), southern Jiangsu and Zhejiang, Lingnan (modern Guangdong and farther south), and much of the Huai river plain. This alliance appeared to have superior strategic position and far greater numbers than the Jiankang forces, but they were hampered by a lack of strong leadership and mistrust among their top ranks. At Jiankang, Liu Yu's immediate allies on the "uncles" side were a much more cohesive group, beginning with his four younger brothers, Liu Xiuren, Xiushi, Xiufan, and Xiuruo, who ranged in age from eighteen to twenty-three and were all stationed in or near the core capital district. They quickly sent troops against the smaller cluster of oppositional garrisons southeast of the capital (in modern south Jiangsu and Zhejiang) in early spring. Then they pivoted to address the main opposition forces heading down the Yangzi. These had halted halfway between Xunyang and Jiankang to build fortifications, though the military situation clearly demanded a swift strike against the capital; the hesitation suggests the weakness of their command structure. The imperial forces, under the aegis of the younger brother Liu Xiuren and operationally led by the general Shen Youzhi, took advantage of the breathing space to regroup and counterattack. This led to a prolonged stalemate along the river which lasted throughout the summer. The fragmented leadership of the opposition could not hold up under the strain of this delay; after a skillful operation from Shen

Youzhi's forces to penetrate behind enemy lines, the upriver rebellion rapidly unraveled in early autumn, leading to widespread executions and defections to the North.³² Meanwhile, forces under Xiao Daocheng, the victor in the southeastern campaign, moved against the opposition in the Huai valley, eventually killing them or driving them into the arms of the neighboring Northern Wei state.

The aftermath of the civil war was disastrous for both the military and the imperial house. The military suffered the execution of many experienced and ambitious leaders and a substantial loss of manpower. The Northern Wei regime took advantage of this weakness and turmoil and moved their armies south over the next two years, seizing all of the territory north of the Huai river, a region containing more than 10 percent of the Jiankang empire's officially registered population.³³ As for the imperial house, the emperor Liu Yu ordered the execution (or suicide) of not only the four imperial princes who had been figureheads in the war, but all of the other sons of his predecessor, Liu Jun, the youngest not more than four years old. His extermination of Liu Jun's entire bloodline was the first instance of wholesale "pre-emptive execution" of family members in the Southern Dynasties, but it would not be the last. In 469 the emperor's elder brother Liu Hui was accused of plotting rebellion, demoted to commoner, and eventually executed. And in 471, the emperor, in declining health and increasingly paranoid about guaranteeing the succession of his own sons against possible claims from their uncles, executed three of his remaining younger brothers, though they had been his most important allies in winning the civil war.

Had Liu Yu lived long enough to guide his sons into adulthood, his bloody strategy for ensuring their succession might have worked. But when he died the next year, aged thirty-five, his eldest son and heir, Liu Yu, was only nine years old. This offered a prime opportunity for a leading military man to set himself up to claim the Mandate and engineer a ritual abdication. The most likely candidates were those who had emerged triumphant from the 466 civil war, Shen Youzhi and Xiao Daocheng, both of whom were appointed regents for the new child emperor (known posthumously as the "Latter Deposed Emperor," Houfeidi). The threat to the imperial house was clear, and several of its few remaining adult members each in turn rebelled from their provincial garrisons: first Liu Xiufan, the last surviving son of Liu Yilong, in summer of

³² The primary account of the civil war is contained within the biography of Deng Wan, in *SōS* 84.2129–2147.

³³ In the Song census of 464, of the empire's total registered households (about 900,000), the five provinces of Xu, Yan, Yu, Qing, and Ji held about 15 percent; see *SōS* 35–38. Most, but not all, of this territory was lost in 466–468. Because the census registers greatly undercounted the actual population, these figures can be taken as only a very rough estimate of the proportion lost.

474 at Xunyang; then Liu Jingsu, the eldest son of Liu Hong, two years later at Jingkou. Both men were readily defeated due to inadequate support from other garrisons and not enough leverage inside the court; substantial purges of their relatives and backers followed.

With essentially all of the adult members of the ruling house eliminated, it was only a matter of time before the Liu clan was swept away entirely to make way for a new dynastic house. Xiao Daocheng, with deep roots in the military system and a strong position at court, began the actual process of usurpation in dramatic fashion in late summer of 477, by having the fourteen-year-old emperor murdered on trumped-up charges, followed by the installation of a younger half-brother (posthumously known as Emperor Shun, the “Yielding Emperor”). This provoked the armed opposition of Shen Youzhi, then in control of Jing Province, accompanied by scattered rebellions in other garrisons. Shen’s forces got bogged down in a two-month siege of Xiakou, at the juncture of the Han river with the Yangzi, which led to failure, withdrawal, rapid disintegration of the rebellion, and the execution of its leading figures. This was the last effort by any major military player to challenge Xiao Daocheng’s rise; subsequently, all of the remaining powerful interests stayed nominally allied with Xiao to see what they could gain from his enthronement. The well-worn procedure of succession by ritual abdication took a little over a year and ended with the emperor’s demotion from the throne and Xiao Daocheng’s elevation as the founder of the Qi dynasty (r. 479–482, posthumously Emperor Gao of Qi). It also involved the execution of virtually all of the remaining members of the Liu royal house, mostly cousins and nephews of the prior emperors, as well as the deposed emperor himself, aged ten.

CIVILIAN REALIGNMENT AND RENEWED FACTIONALISM UNDER THE QI DYNASTY, 478–501

The founding of the Qi dynasty was in many ways not a watershed in the Jiankang regime. The imperial institutions remained largely the same, and the Xiao dynastic house would have as much difficulty overcoming the inherent stresses of the imperial mantle as had its predecessors. The Xiao were ideologically and socially quite similar to the imperial Liu clan. Descended from Chu immigrants, they had served in the Northern Headquarters Troops during Liu Yu’s founding years and had maintained their wealth, privileges, tradition of military service, and marital ties to the Liu imperial household for two generations afterwards. Like the Liu imperial princes, Xiao Daocheng had received a basic education in classical texts, such as the *Rituals*,

the *Zuo Commentary*, and the *Classic of Filial Piety*, as well as basic poetry skills; however, his roots were firmly set in military and administrative concerns.³⁴

The most salutary effect of Xiao Daocheng's enthronement was the replacing of the increasingly dysfunctional Liu imperial household with a more cohesive and strongly led new imperial clan. He had grown up with the murderous policies of the late Song emperors and is recorded as having been quite conscious of the problems of internecine warfare. In response to Liu Yu's^a purge of his brothers in 471, he is supposed to have said, "All the court officials are blind to the situation. The sovereign himself is executing all his younger brothers, making the heir apparent vulnerable and weak. How can one rely on other clans to make a plan for [your own to survive for] many generations?"³⁵ As emperor, he moved to address the problem by reaffirming the early Song precedent of using his own kin to staff provincial military commands, reversing the trend of the late Song emperors to rely more on lower-class military men. At the same time, he sought to restrict his relatives from building up significant private armies of their own by using supervisory officials, humbly entitled "document clerks" (*dianqian*). In the early Song period these had been lowly staff positions, but now they increasingly became the emperor's personal agents, placed on princely military staffs in order to supervise and restrain their activities and report them to the emperor.³⁶ This obviously could lead to tension; after being restrained by his document clerk, one young Qi prince complained to his mother, "I want to take five steps and am not permitted; how is this different from prison!"³⁷

With regard to ensuring a smooth primogeniture-based succession, Xiao Daocheng benefited tremendously from taking the throne so late in life. His eldest son Xiao Ze was already forty years old at the time, had substantial leadership experience, and had built up a personal network of military and civilian clients in the decades prior to his father's enthronement. As a result, when Xiao Daocheng died only three years later, in the summer of 482, there was no succession crisis; Xiao Ze (r. 482–493, posthumously Qi Emperor Wu) ascended the throne without serious incident, the only really smooth transfer of power in all the Southern Dynasties. He largely carried forward his father's administrative reforms, including the completion of a substantial "residence determination" (*tudian*), in the area between the Yangzi and Huai rivers, which sought to regularize the registration and taxation of immigrant groups—the first large-scale success in this regard since the founding years of the Song dynasty under Liu Yu.

³⁴ *NQS* 1.1–24; Wang Yongping, *Dong Jin Nanchao jiazu wenhua*, pp. 395–399.

³⁵ *NQS* 1.6–7.

³⁶ Wang Qing, *Nanchao zhou cishi zhidu yanjiu*, pp. 197–201.

³⁷ *NS* 44.1115.

As emperor, Xiao Ze's most important initiative was to orient the imperial clan more toward courtly pursuits than military ones. He ensured that imperial clan members intermarried with members of the Jiankang elite, rather than with representatives of the lower-class provincial military. His three eldest sons—Xiao Changmao, Xiao Ziliang, and Xiao Ziqing—all developed significant literary salons and patronized men of learning and poetic talent, not just those from elite Jiankang families, but also occasional talented up-and-comers from more humble backgrounds who successfully gained princely notice. This patronage made the Yongming era (483–493) the high point for scholarly and literary arts, with poets such as Xie Tiao, Wang Rong, and Shen Yue all reaching the peak of their output and their poetic innovations. It was also a period of substantial religious creativity as imperial patrons indulged their eclectic interests in a diverse range of both Daoist and Buddhist traditions.

In foreign relations, Xiao Ze facilitated his demilitarizing efforts by agreeing to a truce with the Northern Wei regime, which lasted throughout the Yongming era. For many, the end of major military campaigns must have been a welcome respite from the incessant civil wars of the late Song period. For military men, however, it meant a sharp reduction in their opportunities for career advancement. Because the leading princes were not very aggressive about developing military client networks, ambitious military men were compelled to seek out the patronage of more peripheral imperial clan members. For example, Xiao Daocheng's fourth son, Xiao Huang, was fond of military affairs and popular with his father; he once found his document clerk too restrictive and had him killed, which led to a flogging at his father's command. Later, after his father died, Xiao Huang was caught hoarding both weapons and armed men near the capital; though urged to forgive the transgression, Xiao Ze elected to demote his brother as the law required.³⁸ Xiao Ze's fourth son, Xiao Zixiang, was similar to his uncle Huang in that he was disdainful of literary pursuits and instead developed a considerable following of military men. He too fell afoul of the emperor due to his impulsive execution of a local official who tried to restrain him, and was purged and ultimately executed in 490.³⁹ Other military clients flocked to Xiao Luan, Xiao Daocheng's nephew, who had been raised along with his cousins and served in several important provincial military posts as well as at court.

While military men had been marginalized, they had not been defanged. In the spring of 493 the emperor's eldest son and heir Changmao died, followed by the emperor himself who died in the autumn. In the interim, Changmao's eldest son Xiao Zhao (posthumously the

³⁸ *NQS* 35.623–624.

³⁹ *NQS* 40.704–707.

Prince of Yulin), then twenty-one, was designated heir. By passing over his own much more experienced sons, Xiao Ze perhaps sought to reinforce the principle of primogeniture over that of fraternal succession. Despite a weak attempt at a palace coup in the name of Xiao Ziliang, the succession once again initially appeared viable. However, over the next year Xiao Luan's faction gained the adherence of the majority of the regime's military forces, led by provincial generals, such as Wang Jingze and Chen Xianda. These were men who had been frustrated under Xiao Ze's civilian-oriented policies and were ambitious to raise their power, status, and wealth through imperial clan machinations. In late 494, in a move akin to Xiao Daocheng's staging of his own succession, Xiao Luan deposed and executed his grand-nephew and placed a younger brother, Xiao Zhaowen (posthumously the Prince of Hailing), on the throne. Xiao Luan had prepared his allies well. When he followed the coup two months later by deposing that youth as well and succeeding to the throne (r. 494–498, posthumously Qi Emperor Ming), there was neither civil war nor even much armed opposition. Though Luan's claim to succession was exceedingly weak and open to challenges from many directions, especially from Xiao Ze's numerous adult sons, no major opponent arose. Far more important than any formal legitimacy was the fact that none of these potential rivals had built up a personally loyal military client base that could challenge Xiao Luan's. Over the next several years, he worked to secure his claim and that of his own sons by systematically executing every conceivable rival among the members of the imperial clan, including all the remaining sons of Xiao Daocheng, all sixteen remaining sons of Xiao Ze, and all the younger brothers of Xiao Zhaoye and Xiao Zhaowen, the preceding two emperors whom he had displaced. This was "pre-emptive execution" in its most relentless and pitiless form.

In retrospect, Xiao Luan's coup and subsequent purges signaled the end of the Qi dynasty, but it did not necessarily appear that way at the time. Most of Jiankang's literary and official class signed on to work for the new regime within a year or two. The celebrated poet Xie Tiao, for example, had been on close terms with several of the executed Qi imperial princes, yet nevertheless not only accepted an intimate position under the new emperor, but married the daughter of one of his most important supporters, the illiterate general Wang Jingze. Xiao Luan's military faction, rooted in the traditional Chu men of the lower Yangzi and Huai region, also appears to have been quite robust. Springing to the defense of the empire effectively in the spring of 495, they forced the retreat of Northern Wei forces, who sought to take advantage of the new and potentially vulnerable regime by leading an attack across the Huai river, with a parallel force pushing into the upper Han river valley. The initial

success of Xiao Luan's regime helped to reassert the precedent of military rule that had fairly well served the empire under the early Song emperors. Many at Jiankang appear to have acknowledged this, if begrudgingly.

Two years later, in the autumn of 497, the Northern Wei emperor Yuan Hong (posthumously Emperor Xiaowen), launched a far more ambitious invasion, this time largely focused on the upper Han river valley, only a few hundred miles from his newly established capital at Luoyang. The emperor personally led an army recorded as having one million men: northern forces swept through the Nanyang region north of the Han river, besieging and securing its garrisons and driving the southern forces back to Xiangyang, on the south bank of the river, by the spring of 498. A countercampaign under one of Xiao Luan's top military allies, Cui Huijing, was a dismal failure. A parallel defense of the Huai garrisons against a smaller northern thrust also saw significant setbacks. Further southern losses were forestalled only due to the illness and eventual death of the Northern Wei emperor in the spring of 499.

Military failures, coupled with the repeated purges of potential rivals, contributed to the increasing breakdown of Xiao Luan's military clique. The first major sign of trouble was an abortive coup attempt in summer of 498 by Wang Jingze, who had been a staunch supporter of the imperial house since Xiao Daocheng's time. The death of Xiao Luan that autumn naturally hastened the collapse of his faction. Few of his allies had trusted patron–client ties with his sixteen-year-old heir Xiao Baojuan (posthumously “Marquis of Eastern Chaos,” Donghun Hou). The situation rapidly devolved into a struggle among Xiao Luan's former military clients to control the throne in order to inherit the Mandate. Coup attempts came almost continuously: first in the summer of 499 by Xiao Luan's nephew and close confidant Xiao Yaoguang; then in the winter of 499–500 by Chen Xianda, who was defeated by forces under Cui Huijing posing as the “protector” of the young Baojuan (as Xiao Daocheng had done with the late Song emperors). By the following summer, Cui himself was cast as the “rebel” in a further round of armed factional conflict. The capital region came to resemble a sort of slow-motion multisided civil war because of the leadership vacuum in the gravely weakened imperial clan, and also the inability of any military man to muster a decisive base of support.

The chaotic deadlock was finally broken by a co-ordinated military campaign based in the central Yangzi and led by several distant relatives of the imperial house. In Xiangyang, Xiao Yan and his younger brothers commanded troops well seasoned by the recent battles with the North, while at Jiangling, their cousin Xiao Yingzhou led a group surrounding the nominal leadership of Xiao Baorong, Baojuan's thirteen-year-old younger brother. Their joint campaign developed remarkably slowly. After declaring

opposition during the winter of 500–501, in the spring they elevated Baorong as a rival emperor (known as Emperor He of Qi); however, their progress downriver was stalled all summer by a siege of Xiakou. This situation threatened a replay of other stalled downriver campaigns, such as the “nephews” rebellion in 466 or Shen Youzhi’s in 478. That the Jiankang regime proved unable to rally a significant counterattack and instead merely awaited the outcome of upriver struggles signifies their leaderless and demoralized condition. The western rebellion emerged victorious, and in the fall the insurgents proceeded downriver and entered the capital. They encountered little opposition as they deposed and executed Xiao Baojuan in favor of his brother Baorong, who had remained behind at Jiangling. Xiao Yan, who had led the downriver campaign and whose troops had done the bulk of the fighting, quickly maneuvered to eliminate or co-opt his Jiangling partners. He then arranged for Baorong’s ritual abdication (and subsequent execution) and took the throne himself in the spring of 502 CE (r. 502–549, posthumously Emperor Wu), declaring the new dynasty of Liang.

THE REIGN OF LIANG EMPEROR WU, 502–549

Xiao Yan would turn out to be the longest-reigning of the southern monarchs, and his era is generally regarded as the pinnacle of the Southern Dynasties. The fundamental problems of the patron–client system and imperial succession were not resolved during his reign, but they were effectively put on hold by his skillful leadership and unusually long lifespan. The reigns of each individual Jiankang emperor were in many ways quite robust, able to defeat internal rivals, and not especially susceptible to coups. The critical problem was succession and the consolidation of control in the first place, and here Xiao Yan, like prior dynastic founders, benefited from having several younger brothers who were mature enough (all in their thirties) to provide substantial military and administrative backing and expertise. Had Yan died within the first decade of his enthronement with just minor-age sons (his eldest was born only in 501), a fierce succession crisis might have arisen amongst his brothers and his top generals. But he had the extreme good fortune to outlive them all.

Xiao Yan strengthened his hand by being a skillful manager of the balance of power between court and military. As a former member of Xiao Ziliang’s literary clique, he was well educated and enjoyed good personal ties with the Jiankang elite; after securing military control over the capital, he readily gained their support, and handsomely rewarded the most influential with inheritable fiefs and prominent court positions. Xiao Yan was also attentive in rewarding his military backers, though considerably less generous than earlier

precedents; only a few of his military supporters, notably Cao Jingzong, received a marquissate with an income drawn from a thousand households or more. Most settled for lesser titles with the equivalent of only a few hundred household incomes. Xiao Yan also showed little inclination to intermarry his relatives with men from these households; instead, he continued the Qi-era practice of marrying them into the Jiankang elite.

Xiao Yan was, however, attentive to his military backers in other ways. He partook in their military games and sports, and flattered them with poetry and portraiture, while suffering the occasional derision of the capital elite for tolerating drunken disorderly behavior.⁴⁰ Most importantly, and unlike the early Qi regime, he employed them in military campaigns. In response to probing attacks from the Northern Wei regime in 503–504, he launched a major northern campaign in the years 506–509, drawing on both his original core of generals from the central Yangzi and some fresh blood from the lower Yangzi and Huai regions. The campaign gave outlet to the ambitions of Xiao Yan's generals and, though failing to provide significant territorial gains, it did help to weld a group of quite heterogeneous origins into a more unified force. Xiao Yan continued to pursue occasional military engagements over the first two decades of his rule, working to further reinforce the Huai frontier in 514–515, and launching a second series of northern campaigns in 524–527, which ended in yet another exhausted stalemate. Soon afterwards the northern regime broke into two rival regimes, each dominated by a power behind a nominal Tabgač ruler on the throne. Numerous exiles from the ruling Yuan clan fled south to the Liang regime during this time, and Xiao Yan repeatedly sought to take advantage of the situation over the next several years by sending one or the other back, as pretenders to the throne, with support from his own armed forces. These attempts were all unsuccessful; in fact, both of the northern regimes were militarily quite vigorous, so the split did not offer the Jiankang regime much opportunity to press its advantage. Perhaps it did provide a reprieve from attack, however, as the two northern rivals focused on fighting each other. In 537 Xiao Yan finally signed a truce with the Eastern Wei regime that would last more than a decade.

During more than four decades of Xiao Yan's reign, the lack of substantive external or internal challenges created an authoritative, confident political atmosphere, allowing for the full flourishing of a lively social and cultural life at the capital and in major provincial centers.⁴¹ Xiao Yan and his associates

⁴⁰ Chittick, *Patronage and community*, pp. 89–94.

⁴¹ Liu Shufen, *Liuchao de chengshi yu shehui* (Taipei, 1992) and *idem*, "Jiankang and the commercial empire of the Southern Dynasties: Change and continuity in medieval Chinese economic history," in *Culture and power in the reconstitution of the Chinese realm*, 200–600, ed. Scott Pearce, Audrey Spiro, and Patricia Ebrey

took the opportunity to enact numerous bureaucratic reforms. They immediately undertook a new residence determination of the households in South Yan Province—a militarily strategic area just east of the capital—exempted from Xiao Ze's prior efforts in the previous generation, and promulgated a new legal code in 503 CE. Over the longer term the regime reconfigured provincial administration, systematically subdividing jurisdictions to create new ones; by the end of Xiao Yan's reign there were over four times as many. This effort was reminiscent of the approach the early Song rulers had used to break up the districts in the central Yangzi, but on a much larger scale, and required a substantial expansion of imperial administration. The most important reform was the revamping of the old Nine Ranks system, using a new model with eighteen grades that opened up assignments and promotions to merit judged by examinations and performance rather than just heritable privilege.⁴² In this way Xiao Yan sought to make the civilian bureaucracy, which had long been top-heavy with so-called "pure-stream" sinecures for sons of the Jiankang elite, into a more responsive governing instrument. The reforms placed many more men into the bureaucracy, and some from previously unheard-of provincial families rose to positions of considerable power and influence, releasing fresh energy in the capital.

Xiao Yan's efforts to make Jiankang a center of authority nonetheless rested more on cultural and ritual reforms than on institutional ones. Like his predecessors, he promoted the traditional Ru/Confucian classics, but by greater and more consistent efforts. In 505 he issued a proclamation re-establishing an imperial academy modeled on Han empire schools, with a separate section for each of the five classics, individually headed by an erudite with several hundred disciples. Eventually these scholars were sent out to establish schools in provincial areas, as well as to staff many of the newly created positions in both central and provincial administration. Xiao Yan avidly promoted other types of scholarship as well, including abstruse studies (or Dark Learning) (*xuanxue*) and pure conversation (for which see Chapter 23, "*Qingtan* and *Xuanxue*"), historiography, and technical works on medicine and military affairs. He sponsored the Shangqing Daoist school of Tao Hongjing, though he prohibited all other schools of Daoism in 504 and reinforced an extensive prohibition in 517.⁴³ Xiao Yan is the author of record (though often

(Cambridge, MA, 2001), pp. 35–52; Xiaofei Tian, *Beacon fire and shooting star: The literary culture of the Liang* (502–557) (Cambridge, MA, 2007); Qian Ruping, *Xiao Yan yanjiu* (Beijing, 2011).

⁴² Zhang Xuhua, "Xiao Liang guanpin guanban zhidu kaolue," in *idem*, *Jiupin zhongzheng zhi lilun gao* (Zhengzhou, 2004), pp. 234–246. Reprinted from *Zhongguo shi yanjiu* 1995.2.

⁴³ Michel Strickmann, "A Taoist confirmation of Liang Wu Ti's suppression of Taoism," *JAOS* 98.4 (1978), pp. 467–475.

in fact merely the sponsor) for much traditional scholarship, including over 200 fascicles on the Han classics and commentaries, and many works of poetry.

Xiao Yan followed the precedent of Xiao Ze, Emperor Wu of the Qi, by encouraging his young sons in cultural pursuits over military careers. Several of them established lively coteries that carried on the flourishing poetic and literary experimentation begun in the previous generation. The coterie of the eldest, Xiao Tong (heir apparent until his untimely death in 530), assembled a widely celebrated anthology of great works of literature, the *Wenxuan* (*Selections of Refined Literature*). The third son, Xiao Gang, who succeeded Tong as heir apparent after 530, already had an active group of literary clients before he moved into the Eastern Palace, the heir's residence; they wrote palace-style poetry and also worked on a massive compilation of Buddhist scholarly materials, in both endeavors with regular if sometimes competitive exchanges with the followers of the seventh son, Xiao Yi.⁴⁴

By the second decade of his reign Xiao Yan increasingly turned to the patronage and promotion of Buddhism, seeking to adapt Buddhist ritual and integrate it with traditional Han imperial ritual derived from Confucian classical texts. Such efforts had a long, erratic pedigree in the Southern Dynasties. Nonetheless, no prior monarch had made such a thoroughgoing and systematic effort to adapt Buddhism to imperial purposes, thereby stamping the official seal on a particular religious tradition to the exclusion of others. In 519 Xiao Yan went through the process of being ordained as a bodhisattva, which gave him significant ritual authority over both the sangha (the order of monks) and the lively, devout community of lay Buddhist worshippers among the urban population of Jiankang and its far-reaching, dependent mercantile world. Over subsequent decades he and his sons, several of whom shared his Buddhist interests, hired a small army of monks and scholars to tackle the complex scholastic problems of harmonizing the rituals and ideologies of classical and Han imperial traditions with the extensive and equally contentious world of Buddhist principles. They approached this project from the widely held perspective that Buddhism and the Confucian classical tradition were complementary, not contradictory; Buddhism was assigned the more fundamental "inner" role, while Confucian ethics were considered to serve a more "outer," applied function.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ Tian, *Beacon fire*, pp. 111–161, where she argues that the rivalry between the supposed "schools" of the different princely coteries is greatly exaggerated by traditional scholars.

⁴⁵ For example, as exemplified in the writings of Yan Zhitui; *Yanshi jiaxun buizhu*, by Yan Zhitui, ed. Zhou Fagao, Zhongyang yanjiuyuan Lishi yuyan yanjiusuo zhuankan no. 41, Volume 2 (Taipei, 1960), Chapter 16, 83a–91b; see also the translation by Ssu-yü Teng, *Family instructions for the Yen clan* (Leiden, 1968), pp. 137–152.

These ritual and scholastic efforts had numerous important political objectives. One was to make a more universal claim to rulership than Han tradition alone could offer. Xiao Yan modeled his Buddhist universalism on that of the Emperor Aśoka (304–232 BCE), the *cakravartin* or universal ruler of early Buddhism in India. He engaged in a variety of very public ceremonies in which the entire population of Jiankang was invited to participate regardless of rank. These occasions opened up traditionally court-centered ritual practices to a wider audience, encouraging the populace to develop a more personal connection with their sovereign. The ceremonies included charitable acts such as the feeding of all participants, and participatory spectacles such as chanting, veneration of relics, and even self-immolation. The more personal and populist style of rulership was intended to supplement, and to some extent undercut, the power of traditional bureaucratic officials. At the same time, Xiao Yan also sought to lay claim to greater authority over the Buddhist sangha and their privileged monopoly on Buddhist ritual and teaching. Some Buddhist scholastics opposed these developments, but most were either intimidated by imperial authority, or attracted by the fabulous largesse of imperial patronage and the concomitant expansion in the number of monastic establishments.⁴⁶

The wholesale adoption of Buddhist ritual and style of political authority went along with a vigorous expansion of diplomatic ties and commercial trade, extending the reach of Jiankang's international influence. Like his predecessors, Xiao Yan received seaborne emissaries from great distances, including regular visits from Japan, Koguryō and Paekche (on the Korean peninsula), Linyi (in modern central Vietnam) and Funan (in modern Cambodia), as well as less frequent visits from other states in Southeast Asia and India. Xiao Yan also received an increasing number of emissaries from inland states, including those in the southwestern mountain regions and the Tibetan plateau, northern steppe peoples such as the Ruanruan (Avars), and even Silk Road kingdoms such as Kucha and Khotan. Emissaries and merchants from these interior regions likely would have traveled back and forth via the basin of the upper Han river and the Yangzi to avoid transiting the often contentious border with the northern regimes. Jiankang thereby served as a major hub for a far-reaching and predominantly Buddhist world of political, intellectual and commercial exchange that stretched from India and Southeast Asia to Japan, and across the Asian interior.⁴⁷ With the fall of Luoyang and the splintering of the Northern Wei regime, and the concurrent decline of the Guptas in

⁴⁶ Andreas Janousch, "The emperor as bodhisattva: The bodhisattva ordination and ritual assemblies of Emperor Wu of the Liang dynasty," in *State and court ritual in China*, ed. Joseph P. McDermott (Cambridge, 1999), pp. 112–149; Jinhua Chen, "Pañcavāṛṣika assemblies in Liang Wudi's Buddhist palace chapel," *HJAS* 66.1 (2006), pp. 43–103.

⁴⁷ Xinru Liu, *Ancient India and ancient China: Trade and religious exchanges, AD 1–600* (Delhi, 1988).

northern India, Jiankang was undoubtedly the largest and most prosperous city within this sphere, as well as the capital of its most extensive empire.

The age of Liang Emperor Wu was retrospectively seen as an idyllic period. In his masterwork “Rhapsody Lamenting the South” (*Ai Jiangnan fu*), the southern-born poet Yu Xin (513–581) celebrated the diverse, cosmopolitan prosperity of the era:

In those days
 Life was happy for court and people
 Bells and drums amid lakes and towers
 Caps and carriages in every quarter . . .
 Stretching from the Restraining Dike to the banks of the Yangzi
 From the eastern portal, where stones were whipped to make a bridge
 To the southern extremity, where bronze was cast into pillars
 Of tangerines, myriads planted in gardens
 From bamboo, the income of a thousand households
 The West sent floating jade; the South gave sinking feathers
 Songs of Wu, chants of Yue, tunes of Jing, dances of Chu
 Spring warmth for plants and trees, wind and rain for fish and dragons.⁴⁸

In hindsight, however, as Yu Xin also lamented, the political confidence of the reign of Xiao Yan, Emperor Wu of the Liang, masked several critical weaknesses. Most important was the lack of military preparedness. The regime had neither seriously challenged, nor been challenged by, a substantial foreign regime since the collapse of the Northern Wei in the 530s, nor had it experienced much internal discord. Peace and prosperity, by the 540s, meant that the military had not fought a large-scale campaign for an entire generation, leaving the regime only weakly protected. Furthermore, because the personal ties between leading commanders and their imperial patrons had not been tested in battle or any comparable crisis, the command structure was especially fluid and lacking in personal trust.

A second critical weakness was the perennially unresolved issue of imperial succession. By 548 the crown prince, Xiao Gang, was in his late forties and had been sequestered at the capital for almost two decades without strong military backing. Precedent suggests that he would have faced significant challenges from his male relatives, and there were many of them; because Xiao Yan had lived so long, the crown prince had dozens of adult-aged brothers, cousins, and nephews, all of them with significant provincial leadership experience and extensive client networks. The fight to succeed Xiao Yan and control the empire was likely to be a complex and severe struggle, even had there been

⁴⁸ Adapted from William Graham Jr, “*The Lament for the South*”: *Yu Hsin's “Ai Chiang-nan fu”* (Cambridge, 1980), p. 63; see notes there for interpretation of specific literary allusions.

a calm and orderly formal succession.⁴⁹ And, as it turned out, the formal succession was far from orderly.

COLLAPSE, RECONSOLIDATION, AND CONQUEST, 548–589

The final four decades of the Southern Dynasties were a very complex period, which saw greater fragmentation of the South than at any time since the collapse of the Western Jin empire two centuries prior. It is helpful to divide this period into three distinct phases. First was the “chaos of Hou Jing,” a brutal civil war and succession crisis which began in 548 and led to the destruction of much of Jiankang and its ruling elite, the enervation of the Liang ruling house, and the functional independence of all of the provincial garrisons; those in Huainan (that is, the area south of the Huai river) and much of the middle and upper Yangzi were taken over by the two northern regimes. The second phase, beginning around 555, saw the reconsolidation of Jiankang as a center of power under Chen Baxian and his heirs, who systematically conquered and eliminated each provincial rival and reasserted a weaker and more circumscribed, but still quite significant, central authority as the Chen dynasty. The third and final phase arrived with the ominous development in 577 of a unified northern regime bent on conquering the South, and the weakened Jiankang regime’s inability to marshal an adequate military response, leading to its conquest in 589.

Phase 1: The Hou Jing Crisis and Its Aftermath, 548–554

Hou Jing was a northern general who rose to power under the aegis of Gao Huan, the authority behind the Eastern Wei puppet emperor.⁵⁰ At Gao Huan’s death in 547, Hou Jing was in control of a vast swath of territory between the Yellow and Huai rivers, adjacent to the frontier with the Liang. Due to his insecure relationship with Gao Huan’s heir, he offered to place his territory under the Liang, and was accepted by Xiao Yan, now eighty-five years old. After being attacked and defeated by Eastern Wei forces, Hou Jing fled across the Huai with a small number of followers and encamped at Shouchun, one of the most important Liang frontier garrisons. He soon gained more followers and also a key ally at court, Xiao Zhengde, a young nephew of Xiao Yan’s who had ambitions to usurp the throne from his uncle. In the early winter of 548 Xiao Zhengde helped Hou Jing and his forces cross the Yangzi and launch an attack on the capital, forcing their way into the suburbs. They

⁴⁹ NS 52.1296 notes the substantial rivalry between the imperial princes in Xiao Yan’s later years.

⁵⁰ Scott Pearce, “Who, and what, was Hou Jing?” *EMC* 6 (2000), pp. 49–73.

proceeded to besiege the well-fortified inner precincts, a process which would take five arduous and brutal months.

Hou Jing was able to gain a surprising amount of support, not only from the lower classes of the urban populace, but from some scions of wealthy and powerful capital families, who must have seen in him a potentially valuable ally in what everyone knew would be a bitter struggle to succeed the enfeebled Xiao Yan. The ambitions of men at the capital were only equaled by the ambitions of the princes in the provinces, all of whom sent contingents of fighting men toward Jiankang to help lift the siege, although none wished to weaken their own fighting strength by taking casualties. No prince took charge in person, nor did any rise up as the clear “leader,” and their sub-commanders had as much loyalty to their own interests as to those of their patrons. As a result, the relief contingents were quite incapable of uniting to mount a serious assault on Hou Jing, and they spent their time maneuvering for advantage from their encampments outside the city. The inner precincts finally fell to Hou Jing in late spring of 549, leaving Xiao Yan and the crown prince Xiao Gang in Hou Jing’s power. Xiao Yan died two months later, perhaps as a direct result of Hou Jing’s actions, and Xiao Gang was placed on the captive throne as a puppet (r. 549–552, posthumously Emperor Jianwen).

The resulting situation was unprecedented in the Southern Dynasties. The succession to Xiao Yan was always likely to be contentious, but the particular circumstances of the Hou Jing debacle made it considerably worse. As a usurper, Hou Jing was a formidable opponent yet an implausible ruler; few expected his renegade regime to survive once the provincial forces had gathered around a standard-bearer. The imperial princes thus saw their primary rivals as being one another, not Hou Jing, and they proceeded to engage in the most bitter and multisided civil war the Southern Dynasties had yet witnessed. This left Hou Jing largely unchallenged and in control of Jiankang for the better part of three years. During that time, he ransacked the city to raise funds to pay his supporters, took Xiao Gang’s daughter as his wife, married his top generals to women of the imperial elite, and to take the throne he eventually engineered Gang’s abdication (and execution).

Meanwhile, the civil war devolved into numerous battles, with recruiting efforts undertaken in every corner of the empire, thereby deeply engaging troops from a much wider geographic range of the South than ever before. The most pivotal conflicts were over the control of the central Yangzi river, the backbone of commercial trade and military transport. In Jiang Province (northern Jiangxi), Xiao Yan’s sixth son Xiao Lun came under attack from Hou Jing’s forces, who campaigned upriver in 550–551. Lun was eventually defeated and fled north. Farther upriver, Xiao Yan’s seventh son, Xiao Yi, fought off challenges from his nephews (the sons of his deceased elder brother

Xiao Tong), who controlled the garrisons to the north and south, ending in a stalemate with Xiao Cha, based at Xiangyang. In the summer of 551 Xiao Yi's forces turned the tide of Hou Jing's upriver campaign and began to push back downriver toward Jiankang. Xiao Yi's top commander, Wang Sengbian, joined up with another major army led by Chen Baxian, which had come north via Jiangxi from another series of civil wars in Lingnan. By late spring 552 the two were storming the capital, leading to Hou Jing's flight and eventual assassination.

The demise of Hou Jing opened the way for Xiao Yi to claim the throne for himself by the end of the year. Officially considered the legitimate heir to Xiao Gang, Xiao Yi (r. 552–554, posthumously Liang Emperor Yuan) was in fact far from securing widespread support at the time. He still had to fight off a challenge from his younger brother Xiao Ji, based upriver in Sichuan, who also claimed to be the legitimate Liang emperor, as well as from an independent commander, Wang Lin, who had taken control of central Hunan; these two campaigns took most of the year 553. Given the precarious military situation and the ruined state of Jiankang, Xiao Yi and his entourage decided to keep their capital at Jiangling, which had been their base for most of the preceding several decades.⁵¹

The imperial princes' battles with one another were damaging enough, but several of them had employed a more ominous tactic: seeking backing from one of the two northern regimes. The weakened Xiao Lun claimed backing from Northern Qi (the former Eastern Wei regime), while Xiao Cha, based at Xiangyang, was supported by the power behind the Western Wei regime, Yuwen Tai. Xiao Yi also ceded to Yuwen Tai considerable territory in what is now southern Henan and northern Hubei, as well as allowing the northerner's conquest of Sichuan to go unchallenged. These decisions appear to the modern eye as disloyal (or lacking "patriotism") toward their own state. However, the primary precedent was for loyalty to be given to individual power holders and perhaps their offspring, not to the abstract idea of a "state." The princes would have understood themselves to be fighting one another essentially to the death, since succession battles ordinarily led to the execution of the losers, or at best their flight to a neighboring regime. Moreover, Xiao Yi and the other imperial princes had been raised in an era of grandiose political rhetoric about the power and prestige of the Jiankang regime, and had little substantive military training to check their confidence or help them to appreciate the potential threat of the northern regimes.

In this regard Xiao Yi's leadership turned out to be deeply and fatally flawed. In winter of 554, after two combative and precarious years as claimant

⁵¹ Wang Zhongluo, *Wei Jin Nanbeichao shi*, pp. 395–398.

to the throne, Xiao Yi and his court were attacked directly by Yuwen Tai's forces. The city of Jiangling fell quickly, Xiao Yi was executed, and the remains of his entourage were enslaved and taken back to Chang'an potentially to serve out the rest of their years in captivity. Yuwen Tai set up Xiao Cha as a puppet ruler (posthumously Emperor Xuan of the "Later" or "Western" Liang dynasty), though Cha's nominal authority extended for less than a hundred miles from Jiangling. Xiao Yi's former military henchmen in Jiankang struggled to establish a rival Liang heir from several lesser members of the imperial clan, including one of Xiao Yan's nephews, Xiao Yuanming, who was backed by the Northern Qi regime, and Xiao Yi's ninth son Xiao Fangzhi (posthumously Emperor Jing). It had taken only six short and bloody years for every single member of the Liang imperial house to be killed, forced to flee, or turned into the puppet of a more powerful military ruler.

Phase 2: Reconsolidation under the Chen Clan, 555–575

In 555 Chen Baxian clarified the fluid and confusing situation at Jiankang. He staged a brutal coup against Wang Sengbian, followed by a hard-fought campaign against Wang's closest supporters. This put an end to the charade of Liang puppet rulers of a severely reduced state on the lower Yangzi, and clearly established Chen himself as the heir presumptive to the Jiankang throne, to which he formally ascended two years later (r. 557–559, posthumously Emperor Wu of the Chen dynasty). Chen Baxian had recruited the majority of his fighting men while in Lingnan and southern Jiangxi, regions largely untapped by prior imperial contestants; many of his initial clients were from southern Man, Xi, or Yue groups and probably speakers of non-Sinitic vernaculars.⁵² Chen Baxian nonetheless sought to re-create the imperial center at Jiankang in ways that were ritually and administratively similar to his Liang predecessors, including the support of Buddhism.⁵³ However, the writ of his regime barely stretched a hundred miles from the half-ruined capital, a far cry from the vast and confident reach of the Liang dynasty at its peak. The critical territory between the Huai and Yangzi rivers, which protected the northern frontier, had been occupied by the Northern Qi regime, while the upper Yangzi basin and all of the middle Yangzi north of the river were firmly in the grip of the Northern Zhou (the successor to the Western Wei) or their Liang puppet state. The territory south of the Yangzi (in modern Hunan,

⁵² Chen Yinke, "Liang-Chen shiqi shizu de moluo yu nanfang Manzu de xingqi," in *Wei Jin Nanbeichao shi jiangyan lu*, ed. Wang Shengnan (Hefei, 1987), pp. 203–214.

⁵³ For example, he twice held "unlimited grand assemblies" (CS 2.34, 38; NS 9.272, 274) and twice visited temples to give himself over and be ransomed back (CS 2.37–38; NS 9.273–274), both following Xiao Yan's precedents.

eastern Hubei, central and southern Jiangxi, most of Zhejiang, Fujian, Guangdong, Guangxi, and northern Vietnam) was under the sway of local warlords, none of whom offered more than nominal allegiance to Chen's regime; all would eventually require active military campaigns to bring their regions back under Jiankang's command.

Chen Baxian died less than two years after taking the throne, leaving all these objectives unfinished. His only son was held captive by the Northern Zhou, so the widow and other court figures selected his nephew Chen Qian, aged thirty-seven, to succeed him. Qian (r. 559–566, posthumously Emperor Wen) had commanded troops under his uncle and acquitted himself well; the succession, though not based on primogeniture, was as smooth as any in the Southern Dynasties. Over the next six years the new emperor sent his generals on a series of military campaigns to bring all the territory of the empire back under Jiankang's control. His first success was against Wang Lin, the popular former Liang commander based in Xiang and Ying provinces (modern Hunan and eastern Hubei), who maintained his own rival Liang emperor and was allied with the Northern Qi. Chen Baxian had attacked Wang Lin unsuccessfully in 558; now Wang Lin took the initiative by attacking downriver in winter 559 only to be rapidly defeated and forced to flee to Northern Qi, leaving Ying Province (the Han–Yangzi river junction) in the Chen regime's hands. This opened a direct land route by which Chen Baxian's only son, the "legitimate" heir who was released by the Northern Zhou, could return to Chen territory. One of Chen Qian's associates met him upriver and made sure that he drowned en route, ensuring no rival for Chen Qian's reign. With this "threat" eliminated, the upriver campaign recommenced in the fall of 560 with an extended and ultimately successful campaign to retake Xiang Province. Attention then turned to the regions of central and southern Jiangxi, secured by 563, and southern Zhejiang and Fujian, seized by 565. With Lingnan ruled by a former close associate of Chen Baxian's, Ouyang Wei, who displayed no signs of rebellion, the southern expanse of the empire appeared to be back in Jiankang's control. This was no small achievement.

Chen Qian died the next year, leaving his twelve-year-old son Chen Bozong (r. 566–568, posthumously Feidi, the "Deposed Emperor") to succeed him, but with a group of five senior officials as regents. One of the five was Chen Qian's younger brother Chen Xu, then thirty-six, who had returned from captivity in Northern Zhou in 562, directed several military campaigns, and secured key allies among top generals such as Wu Mingche. After his brother's death, he rapidly moved to monopolize authority and eliminate his rivals, which led to yet another rebellion in Xiang Province, requiring a campaign to

retake the region. This action turned into a general campaign against the combined forces of Northern Zhou and Later Liang in which Xiang Province was retaken, but the effort to depose the rival Liang state and seize Jiangling was unsuccessful. Following this campaign, Xu proceeded to depose his nephew and take the throne himself in 569 (r. 569–582, posthumously Emperor Xuan).

Chen Xu initially continued the aggressive military policies of his brother and his uncle. He challenged the nominal allegiance of Ouyang Wei's son He, now the governor of Guangzhou, and sent troops to seize the province by force when Ouyang rebelled. Chen Xu launched yet another major campaign to wrest the central Yangzi from Northern Zhou control, once again coming close to success but ultimately to no avail. The resulting truce with Northern Zhou led him to shift his attention to Northern Qi, which still controlled the pivotal territory between the Huai and Yangzi rivers. The subsequent campaign, launched in 573, was remarkably successful, allowing Chen Xu to expand his regime to the Huai river, the traditional forward line of military defense for the empire. At this point, notwithstanding the substantial loss of much of the central and upper Yangzi, the regime built by Chen Baxian and his heirs appeared to have largely re-established the geographical reach of the preceding Southern Dynasties.

Phase 3: Impending Conquest by the North, 576–589

The success turned out to be short-lived and largely illusory, however, masking considerable military and institutional overreach. The tide began to turn with the Northern Zhou's rapid conquest of the Northern Qi in 576–577. Chen Xu's armies made some effort to profit from this development by seizing the territory from the Huai north to the Yellow River, a dangerous gambit because they had yet to consolidate their hard-won control over the Huai river defensive line. The campaign was immediately countered by a Northern Zhou offensive that knocked the Chen forces back to the Huai river and also captured their best general, Wu Mingche; a prompt Northern Zhou follow-up offensive seized all the lands south of the Huai down to the north bank of the Yangzi. By 579 Chen Xu's regime had shrunk back to where it had been six years earlier, but with a much-tarnished reputation, a greatly weakened military, and a far more threatening and aggressive northern neighbor.

The Chen regime got a respite from this threat as the Northern Zhou regime went through its own succession crisis, leading in 581 to the founding of the Sui dynasty by the general Yang Jian (posthumously Emperor Wen). Several major provincial governors in the central Yangzi region rebelled against the new northern regime. Chen Xu hoped to capitalize on this crisis

by sending troops to aid and facilitate a shift of allegiance over to his side. However, Yang Jian's forces moved quickly to defeat the rebels and Chen's forces were once again thwarted in their efforts to gain advantage.

Chen Xu died the following year, and his designated heir Chen Shubao, aged thirty, took the throne; he is known only as the "Last Sovereign" (Houzhu) of Chen.⁵⁴ He had grown up largely at court, with no significant military authority, and had only weak allegiance from either the military or the court bureaucracy. His succession was immediately challenged by an unsuccessful assassination and coup attempt from his brother, who had no more substantive experience than did Chen Shubao. Over the next several years the court drifted through various ceremonies and intrigues, while the invigorated Sui regime, under Yang Jian, prepared its forces for yet another southern campaign. They eliminated the puppet Liang regime at Jiangling in 587. Then early in the winter of 588–589 they launched a three-pronged naval campaign from Sichuan, Jiangling, and Xiangyang down the Yangzi, coordinated with a combined land and river assault through the Huai valley. The Chen regime was in no way prepared for this onslaught and proved wholly unable to stop the land forces from crossing the Yangzi downstream from the capital and forming a massive pincer movement from both directions. By early spring 589 Jiankang was in the hands of Sui forces, and the empire was no more. Indeed, following a last-ditch rebellion by Jiankang nobles the following year, the city itself was leveled and turned into farm fields, its military and administrative functions moved to a nearby military garrison and its population largely dispersed or enslaved.⁵⁵

CONCLUSION

The Southern Dynasties represent the mature years of the imperial regimes based at Jiankang that had begun with the Three Kingdoms state of Wu. Frequently dismissed by historians as little more than a weak, divided, and partial fragment of the "unified" empires (i.e. the preceding Han and subsequent Sui and Tang dynasties), the Jiankang empire under the Southern Dynasties was in fact a large, powerful, and confident empire in its own right. It was frequently racked by civil wars, but these were primarily contests for control over the imperial center of Jiankang itself, not separatist regimes. Prior to the Hou Jing crisis, the territorial integrity of the empire was not seriously contested, even in outlying areas such as Sichuan, Guangdong, and

⁵⁴ Charles Holcombe, "The Last Lord of the South: Chen Houzhu (r. 583–589) and the reunification of China," *EMC* 12 (2006), pp. 91–121.

⁵⁵ *SS* 31.876; *ZZTJ* 177.5516.

Jiaozhi (northern Vietnam). The empire reached its pinnacle of military power under the early Song emperors, who were closest culturally and personally to their military supporters, and whose writ stretched north to the banks of the Yellow River and south to the land of the Cham. In cultural, ideological, and economic influence, the subsequent Liang dynasty was unmatched, due to its lively and relatively unfettered commercial economy and its innovative adaptation and amalgamation of Buddhist and Han classical traditions, resulting in a powerful claim to universal authority. The relentless crises of imperial succession and the utter failure to resolve the undermining weakness of a loose, personalized military system eventually led to the empire's downfall and subordination to the North, but not before it had laid a template that had tremendous political and cultural influence on the Sui and Tang empires that would succeed it, as well as on the development of nascent peripheral regimes ranging from Japan to Southeast Asia.

PART 2

Society and Realia

CHAPTER 12

THE ART OF WAR

David A. Graff

The four centuries from the breakdown of Han authority after 184 CE to the conquest of southern China by the Sui dynasty in 589 are by far the longest period of disunity and division that China has experienced since it was first brought under unified imperial rule by the Qin dynasty in 221 BCE. Like other ages of division in Chinese history, the Six Dynasties period was marked by frequent, if not incessant, warfare, as a plethora of rival political authorities sought aggrandizement at the expense of their neighbors, and the most powerful and ambitious among them aimed to re-create, under their own authority, the lost imperial unity of Han times. As in other such periods, from the Warring States of the fourth century BCE to the warlord era of the early twentieth century, division and conflict were conducive to the emergence of new military techniques and new methods of organizing both the state and its armies for success in war. Yet the Six Dynasties stands out from other such periods not only because of its greater chronological extent, but also due to the multiplicity and complexity of its patterns of conflict.

PATTERNS OF CONFLICT

By 220 CE, the chaotic warlordism into which the Han empire had descended, after the suppression of the Yellow Turban uprising in 184, had resolved into a more stable configuration of three strong regional states: Wei in northern China, Shu-Han in Sichuan and Hanzhong, and Wu controlling the lower and middle Yangzi as well as areas farther south. All of them eventually asserted symbolic and ritual claims to rule over the whole of the ancient Chinese world. In the north, Cao Cao's heir Cao Pi took the throne from the last, captive Han emperor at the end of 220, while the Shu-Han regime founded by Liu Bei claimed to be the legitimate continuation of the Han dynasty. Around the same time, in 229, Sun Quan, the ruler of Wu, put forward his own claim to imperial sovereignty. Although relations between Wu and Shu-Han were not free of tension and conflict, the main struggle of the era pitted Wei, the

strongest of the “three kingdoms” and the one that controlled the old imperial heartland, against the weaker regimes in the south. In 264 the Wei state, now dominated by Sima Zhao, succeeded in overthrowing Shu-Han, and in 280 it was Wu’s turn to fall to attack from the north. Taking full advantage of the recently won position in Sichuan, Sima Zhao’s son Sima Yan—who had supplanted the Wei with his own Jin dynasty in 266—launched a fleet downriver along the Yangzi in co-ordination with other columns marching overland from the north. The Three Kingdoms period, though short-lived, anticipated some of the most salient characteristics of the subsequent age of division from 311 to 589, including the fundamental political and military conflict between north and south as well as the uneasy coexistence of multiple regimes asserting irreconcilable claims to sovereign authority over the whole of the Chinese world.

The imperial reunification under Jin proved even more short-lived than the Three Kingdoms. After the death of Sima Yan in 290, a combination of instability at the center with the distribution of military forces and important regional governorships to princes of the Jin imperial family formed an explosive mix that gave rise to the so-called “Disturbances of the Eight Princes” between 300 and 306. This prolonged and bloody internecine conflict in turn created an opening for non-Han peoples, long settled in parts of northern China, to rebel against Jin authority. The most serious of these challengers were the Xiongnu based in what is now Shanxi province, who sacked the Jin capital of Luoyang in 311. A Jin prince based in the lower Yangzi region made himself the ruler of a rump (Eastern) Jin state in the south with its capital at Jiankang (today’s Nanjing), while a shifting *mélange* of leaders whom the Han Chinese regarded as barbarians irrevocably overtook and controlled the north of China as far as the Huai river and the Qinling mountains. In addition to reconfirming the salience of the north–south divide, the collapse of Western Jin highlights two other important military patterns of the Six Dynasties period: the extent to which the various states and dynastic regimes were prey to their own internal conflicts, and the continuing pressure of North Asian peoples, often of nomadic origin, on the Chinese world.

As a result of the collapse of Jin authority in the north and its survival in the south, the most fundamental and lasting political and military confrontation of the Six Dynasties period occurred between the series of legitimist ethnically Han regimes based at Jiankang on the Yangzi and the non-Han states and rulers that dominated northern China. The boundary between these two vast zones shifted frequently in accordance with the fortunes of war. In the west, the Sichuan basin was ruled from Jiankang for most of the period from 347 on, but fell under northern control after 553. At the eastern end of the frontier, the southern governments were sometimes able to push their authority as far north

as the Yellow River. At other times, northern control extended all the way to the left bank of the Yangzi. More often than not, the south—with its legitimist claims, irredentist and revanchist ambitions, a court dominated by northern émigrés or their descendants, and a (usually) higher degree of internal organization—was on the offensive.

With only lukewarm support from the Jin court, the émigré leader Zu Ti was able to recover much of Henan in the years between 313 and 321. The Jin commander Huan Wen struck north from the Han river valley into Guanzhong in 354, and in 369 he launched a second great campaign, this time across the Huai river, and advanced north through Henan to the Yellow River. In 410 another Jin general, Liu Yu, recovered the territory that is now Shandong Province, and in 416 he marched westward into Guanzhong. Emperor Wen of the Liu-Song (whose father, the above-cited Liu Yu, had supplanted the Jin in 420) campaigned in Henan as far north as the Yellow River in 430 and 450. The Song was itself supplanted at Jiankang by the Qi dynasty in 479, and ultimately Qi by Liang in 502, yet these regime changes did not end southern efforts in the north. In fact, Emperor Wu of Liang launched northern campaigns in 505 and 528, and the last of the Southern Dynasties, the Chen, carried out a final offensive in 573 to recover the lands between the Yangzi and the Huai.

The various political disorders and configurations of multistate competition in north China fueled many of these “northern expeditions”—especially the more successful of them. The Xiongnu chieftains who had put an end to Jin rule in the north proved unable to unite the region under a stable government. By 327 they controlled only the Wei river valley and some adjacent territories, while most of the rest of northern China was dominated by another warlord of non-Han origin, Shi Le. The far northwest, today’s Gansu, was in the hands of a breakaway regime known to historians as Former Liang, and various tribal peoples of Xianbei or Xiongnu derivation—among them the Tuoba, Yuwen, and Murong—held sway over segments of the steppe frontier zone. By the 360s, the Murong had pushed south from Manchuria to control the North China Plain as far south as the Huai river, while the Xiongnu had been supplanted in Guanzhong by a “Former Qin” state formed around leaders of the Tibetan-related Di people. The Qin ruler Fu Jian went on to defeat the Murong and to impose a fragile and short-lived unity on the North, creating the conditions for the first major northern campaign against the South. However, this episode ended in disaster for Fu Jian at the Battle of the Fei River in 383, one of the most famous and yet least understood struggles in all of Chinese history. The Jin dynastic history reports that the Qin ruler led an enormous army of 870,000 men on this campaign, but goes on to portray the northern juggernaut as collapsing almost spontaneously, without any

large-scale combat, when confronted by a much smaller Jin force. The implausibility of this account led one scholar, Michael C. Rogers, to doubt that any battle had occurred at all, and instead attribute the collapse of the Former Qin to internal weaknesses.¹

Whether or not the unraveling of Fu Jian's empire was precipitated by a military setback at the Fei river, the ultimate beneficiaries were the Tuoba Xianbei, based in the Dai region (around today's Datong, Shanxi). By the middle of the fifth century, the Tuoba ruler of Dai had succeeded in uniting northern China under the control of his own Northern Wei dynasty. This leader, Emperor Taiwu, went on to smash the Song northern campaign of 450. He launched a counteroffensive that reached the north bank of the Yangzi opposite Jiankang in 451, once again demonstrating that northern unity was the prerequisite for any serious threat to the South.

During the 520s, and continuing for half a century thereafter, the North was again riven by internal conflict, this time triggered by tensions between the Wei frontier garrisons and the more sinicized Tuoba elites in the new capital at Luoyang. By 534 the Wei had split into two rival regimes, the Western Wei based at Chang'an in Guanzhong and the Eastern Wei with its capital at Ye on the plains of southern Hebei. Each of these states began with a member of the Tuoba Wei imperial family as its nominal ruler, but in each case real power was in the hands of a parvenu warlord who had risen during the civil strife of the 520s: Yuwen Tai in the west and Gao Huan in the east. During the decades of east–west warfare that followed, the descendants of both strongmen acted to legitimize their de facto control by replacing the Wei house with their own dynasties—the Qi in the east from 550 and the Zhou in the west from 557. The struggle was not resolved until 576 when the Zhou, initially by far the weaker of the two Wei successor states, captured the Qi military heartland in central Shanxi and went on to conquer the remainder of its territory. This provided the basis for a new campaign from north to south that was carried out in 589, several years after a coup at the Zhou court by the imperial in-law Yang Jian had led to the replacement of the Zhou by the Sui dynasty, with Yang as its first emperor. Following much the same strategy as the Jin three centuries earlier, a great Sui flotilla descended the Yangzi from Sichuan while other columns crossed the river farther east to capture the Chen capital of Jiankang. Not only was Yang Jian able to bring to bear the human and material resources of a united North, but he also had inherited from his Wei and Zhou predecessors a set of new military institutions that facilitated

¹ JS 114.2917 ff. David Graff, *Medieval Chinese warfare, 300–900* (London, 2002), pp. 66–68; Michael C. Rogers, "The myth of the Battle of the Fei River," *TP* 54 (1968), pp. 50–72; Mark Edward Lewis, *China between empires: The Northern and Southern Dynasties* (Cambridge, MA, 2009), p. 276, n. 45.

access to those resources by bridging the state–society divide that had opened in the North in the early fourth century. The result was that the Sui forces attacking Chen totaled more than half a million men, outnumbering the defenders by a ratio of approximately five to one.²

For almost three centuries before 589, however, the overall prevalent pattern in the armed conflict between North and South was long-term stalemate. Each side launched occasional offensives and might gain some land at the expense of the other. Yet these gains were rarely lasting and never extended to the core territories of the dominant power in each region. As suggested by the preceding narrative, the North's protracted failure to overcome the south was largely a function of its own prolonged internal disunity. Even when a regime such as Fu Jian's Former Qin was able to impose a superficial unity on the North, the underlying contradictions remained serious and could be fatal—as when Fu Jian's Qiang and Xianbei subjects seized the opportunity provided by his setback at the Fei river in 383 to rebel and restore their own independent states. At the operational level, northern armies composed largely of cavalry from the steppe margin were at a considerable disadvantage amidst the rivers, canals, waterlogged fields, and dense vegetation of the Yangzi valley, and could also be stymied by walled cities and other fortified positions.

Southern armies moving northward faced their own set of problems. Relatively weak in horsemen, they were at a great disadvantage confronting cavalry-rich northern armies on the open plains of Henan. The problem was not simply the dominance of lancers and horse archers over infantry in battle, which might be overcome by training or ingenuity. One example is when the Jin general Liu Yu overcame the Southern Yan in today's Shandong Province in 409 by deploying large numbers of carts as a mobile barrier to shield his army against cavalry attack. Nevertheless, the strategic mobility of cavalry permitted devastating strikes against vulnerable supply lines. Logistics was usually the Achilles heel of southern offensives against the North. Southern armies expecting to live off the land, like the one that Huan Wen led into Guanzhong in 354, could be forced into retreat by a scorched-earth strategy. Supply from the south was also problematic. In addition to being vulnerable to cavalry raids, supply lines usually had to be routed along rivers and canals due to cost savings and the greater efficiency of moving grain by water in pre-modern times. This meant that possible lines of advance were limited and often predictable, and offensives could be held up indefinitely by fortresses blocking these riverine arteries.³

² ZZTJ 176.5497–5499.

³ Graff, *Medieval Chinese warfare*, pp. 125–126.

Not only did the southern regimes encounter great difficulty supplying their forces, but also they were usually at a disadvantage in terms of the resources they could draw upon to support their war effort. In early medieval China, with its overwhelmingly agrarian economy, the military power of any state depended heavily on the number of registered farm households from which it could draw *corvée* labor and taxes in the form of grain and homespun fabric, as well as recruits for its armies. The few surviving figures from this period show that southern rulers commanded a smaller resource base than the more substantial one of their northern rivals. As of 464, for example, the Song dynasty was credited with 940,000 households.⁴ In the North, in contrast, a single regional regime, the Former Yan state in Hebei, Henan, and Shandong that confronted Huan Wen's northern expedition of 369, could claim 2,460,000 households and 9,990,000 individuals.⁵ Later, in the second half of the sixth century, the Northern Zhou acquired 3,030,000 households from its conquest of Northern Qi whereas the Sui conquest of the Chen state in the South netted only some 600,000 registered households.⁶ When the North was united as a single realm, as it was under Northern Wei, the regional imbalance was even greater. The actual population of the South, with its burgeoning economy and waves of migration from the North, was surely far larger than the above figures suggest. The important point, however, is that southern rulers never had full access to extract resources from this population because so many people were sheltered as the tenants or dependents of powerful families.⁷

This, in turn, points to the further limitations that politics and institutions imposed on southern military power. From its inception, the Eastern Jin dynasty based at Jiankang depended upon an uneasy coalition of southern elite families—especially those of Jiangnan, along the lower Yangzi—and émigré elites from the North. The southerners were already in possession of large landholdings (with tenants and other dependents), while prominent northerners came south leading not only their own kinsmen and armed followers, but even whole communities. They soon carved out great estates of their own from the relatively open and sparsely populated landscape of the South. Since the old southern elites had little interest in military adventures to recover the North, it is no surprise that the most serious Jin campaigns were launched by émigré leaders such as Zu Ti and Huan Wen. And these efforts were always shaped—usually in a detrimental way—by the politics of the

⁴ ZZTJ 129.4070. For a more precise accounting that includes figures for individuals as well as households, see *SoS*, *juan* 35–38.

⁵ ZZTJ 102.3238. ⁶ SS 29.807.

⁷ Graff, *Medieval Chinese warfare*, p. 127; Tang Changru, *Wei Jin Nanbeichao Sui Tang shi san lun* (Wuhan, 1992), pp. 88–90.

southern court. The Eastern Jin founder was so preoccupied with consolidating his power in the south that Zu Ti was left to recover Henan with his own, mostly private, resources. A generation later, Huan Wen was regarded suspiciously as potentially a greater danger to the Jin court than to the barbarians in the north. As time passed, even the émigré elites, now long resident in the South, lost interest in the recovery of their ancestral homeland; thus, campaigns in the North were motivated more by southern politics or border security than for the cause of imperial reunification. Liu Yu's Guanzhong campaign of 416–417, for example, was intended to pave the way for his establishment of the Song dynasty, and it is significant that he did not bother to renew military operations in the North after taking the southern throne in 420.

Although the South was not divided between multiple, competing dynastic regimes as was so often the case in the North during the period of disunion, it was nevertheless prey to its own patterns of internal conflict. The most pronounced of these was the recurrent political and military tension between Jiangnan (including the capital) and upriver centers such as Jiangzhou (around today's Jiujiang), Jingzhou (around today's Wuhan), and Yongzhou (north of Jingzhou, with headquarters at Xiangyang in the Han river valley). These rather widely dispersed regions, including more than 600 kilometers of river between Jingzhou and Jiankang, were all important resource centers capable of supporting substantial military forces. The Han river valley was of particular importance both as the home of a substantial concentration of northern émigrés and as one of the few areas in the South that was suitable for raising horses. The dominant local culture of Yongzhou, in particular, was distinctly warlike, with martial prowess prized more than literary accomplishments. Men of the garrison families were tempered not only in campaigns against the northern regimes, but also in constant raiding and skirmishing against the tribal Man peoples inhabiting the nearby mountains, and they gloried in competitive martial spectacles such as tug-of-war and boat races ancestral to today's dragon boat contests.⁸

The potential threat posed to the capital by this upriver base was exacerbated by the practice of appointing provincial governors who held important military commands concurrently and often were given control of several adjacent provinces. Problems first appeared quite early in the Eastern Jin when Wang Dun, an émigré leader based at Jingzhou, led his forces down the Yangzi to defeat the court's army, dominating the capital from 322 to 324. After Wang Dun had passed from the scene, his upriver base eventually fell

⁸ Andrew Chittick, *Patronage and community in medieval China: The Xiangyang garrison, 400–600 CE* (Albany, 2009), especially pp. 109–113.

into the hands of another émigré warlord, Huan Wen, whose son and successor Huan Xuan rebelled against the Jin court in 402. The younger Huan's venture ended in 404 when his fleet was defeated in a river battle by forces loyal to Liu Yu near today's Echeng, Hubei. The last years of the Liu-Song dynasty saw the outbreak of a new round of armed conflict between the court and upriver governors, which created the opportunity for a general named Xiao Daocheng to usurp the throne at Jiankang and establish the Qi dynasty. After only twenty-two years, the Qi was itself overthrown by the revolt of an imperial cousin named Xiao Yan, the governor of Yongzhou in the Han river valley, who descended the Yangzi to take Jiankang and establish the Liang dynasty in 502. His campaign was the most successful instance of a recurring pattern: Yongzhou governors (often imperial princes) routinely forged patron–client ties with local military families who could then be mobilized to challenge the imperial court.⁹ After the fall of Liang and its replacement at Jiankang by the last southern dynasty, the Chen, in the middle of the sixth century, a rump Liang state survived on the middle Yangzi for several more decades as a vassal of Northern Zhou and Sui.

The north had its own complex patterns of conflict. At the most obvious level, there were the repeated struggles among an ever-changing array of regional regimes and aspirant imperial dynasties, beginning in the early fourth century with the wars between the Later Zhao of Shi Le and the Former Zhao, ruled by the Xiongnu chief Liu Yuan's heirs, and concluding with the epic struggle between Northern Zhou and Northern Qi in the second half of the sixth century. Regimes based in Guanzhong pitted themselves against opponents based in the Hebei plains, with strategic points in between—such as the city of Luoyang and the Hedong region of southwestern Shanxi—being fought over repeatedly. Within the competing states, however, there were additional lines of conflict, not simply between political rivals at the various imperial courts, but also between the ruling elites of North Asian warriors and their Han Chinese subjects. This division was at its most acute during the fourth century, when warlords of “barbarian” origin rampaged across North China, and local populations, led by their elites, abandoned existing settlements and moved to more defensible areas, building fortified communities and defying their new overlords.¹⁰ Rulers such as Shi Le had to devote great effort to subjugating and extracting resources from these strongholds. Under such circumstances, establishing control of people was typically more important than ruling territory, and successful campaigns were frequently followed by the forcible transfer of thousands from the newly

⁹ Chittick, *Patronage and community in medieval China*.

¹⁰ Graff, *Medieval Chinese warfare*, pp. 55–56.

conquered areas to the core territories of the victor.¹¹ Tensions between Han subjects and North Asian rulers moderated with the passage of time, but did not disappear; even in the second half of the sixth century, as will be seen; they help to explain the differing fortunes of Northern Zhou and Northern Qi.

China's frontier with the northern steppe zone, usually the most prominent locus of military activity during periods of imperial unity, continued to be fought over during the Period of Division. Although Liu Yuan, Shi Le, and their followers arose from within the Western Jin empire rather than invading it from without, other tribal state builders such as the Tuoba and Murong Xianbei soon moved into northern China from the neighboring steppe. A key accomplishment of Tuoba Gui, who proclaimed the establishment of the Northern Wei state at Dai (today's Datong, Shanxi) on the steppe margin in 386, was the subjugation of the then-fragmented tribes of the northern grasslands. The resulting control over the steppe and its resources, especially horses, was a tremendous asset for Tuoba Gui's expansionist drive—and for his successors—which brought almost all of northern China under Wei rule by 439. Even as the Tuoba Wei rulers were consolidating their control of the North, however, a new tribal confederation, the Ruanruan, was rising on the steppe. To counter this threat, the Wei established a string of garrisons along their northern frontier from Dunhuang to the vicinity of today's Beijing. Ruanruan raiding, coupled with simmering discontents within garrison communities, helped to trigger the revolt of frontier warriors in 523, which led to the division of the Northern Wei empire into two competing states. After the middle of the sixth century, the Türks (Tujue), who had supplanted their erstwhile masters the Ruanruan as rulers of the northern steppe, fully exploited this division. The Türks extracted concessions from each of the Wei successor states by threatening to ally with its rival, and the Northern Qi in particular responded to this situation by building hundreds of miles of defensive walls during the 550s.¹²

TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES OF WAR

The Six Dynasties period was, in many respects, a time of continuity rather than of change in Chinese warfare. The revolutionary transformations of the Warring States period (c.450–221 BCE), including disciplined masses of foot soldiers supplanting aristocratic chariot forces, the adoption of the crossbow as an important infantry weapon, and the incorporation of steppe-style light cavalry as a component of Chinese armies, formed a baseline that continued to define military practice in both North and South. Surviving bibliographies

¹¹ Graff, *Medieval Chinese warfare*, pp. 60–61.

¹² Graff, *Medieval Chinese warfare*, pp. 142.

record the titles of dozens of military texts and treatises written during the Six Dynasties; their titles (along with the contents of the very few extant examples) testify to the overwhelming influence of the classical military writings surviving from Warring States, Qin, and Han times. It is significant that perhaps the most prominent and influential military text written between the second and seventh centuries is a commentary on the ancient *Sunzi bingfa* (*Sunzi's Method of Warfare*)—penned by no less a figure than Cao Cao, the pre-eminent warlord of the Three Kingdoms. In the seventh century CE, the end of the time frame covered in this volume, the early Tang military writer Li Jing was still revolving within the conceptual universe provided by the ancient military classics. To a very considerable extent, both the materials of warfare and the intellectual framework within which war was waged continued to reflect the legacy of antiquity.

This element of continuity was especially pronounced in fortification and siege craft. Although the walls of the Northern Wei capital of Luoyang were reinforced with brick toward the end of the Six Dynasties period, most city walls and other fortifications were still built of pounded earth (*bangtu*) using autochthonous construction methods, evolving little since Neolithic times. If adequately garrisoned and kept in good repair to counter the effects of rainfall and erosion, these often massive walls were difficult to conquer by either assault or battery. The poliorcetic techniques employed by early medieval generals to overcome such defenses also had a pedigree dating back at least to the Warring States period.¹³ They included lever-operated, muscle-powered traction trebuchets that could hurl fifty-pound stones against city walls from distances of a hundred yards or more, massive crossbows for use against the defenders on top of the walls, and battering rams and covered approach vehicles enabling attackers to break down gates or chip away at the base of the wall. Attackers dug tunnels to undermine city walls and built earthen mounds, wooden towers, and overlook vehicles to permit archers to shoot down on the defenders. Ramps of earth could be piled up to give assault troops access to the battlements, or the attackers might employ “cloud ladders” (*yunti*)—wheeled vehicles carrying long, two-sectioned ladders that could be extended by means of counterweights—for an escalade of the walls.

Defenders did not have to wait passively until these measures had produced their intended effect. Long before the Six Dynasties, a range of ingenious countermeasures had been devised to thwart every one of the approaches mentioned above. The siege of the Western Wei stronghold of Yubi by Eastern Wei forces under Gao Huan in 546 is a highly instructive example

¹³ Joseph Needham and Robin D. S. Yates, *Science and civilisation in China*, Volume 5, *Chemistry and chemical technology*, Part 6, *Military technology: Missiles and sieges* (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 413–485.

of the difficulties attackers faced when they encountered a determined defense.¹⁴ When Gao Huan's men built an earthen mound to overlook the town wall, the defenders countered it by raising the height of their towers. When the attackers turned to tunneling, the defenders intercepted their tunnels by digging a deep trench parallel to the wall. A battering ram failed to open a breach because the defenders lowered mats from the top of the wall to blunt its impact. When sapping by the attackers finally caused a section of wall to collapse, the defenders quickly filled the gap with a makeshift palisade. After fifty days the besiegers withdrew, with nothing to show for their efforts except heavy losses.

Throughout the Six Dynasties period, spearheads, arrowheads, and blades of all sorts were mostly made of iron or steel, while the bronze weapons that dominated the battlefields of antiquity had long since been relegated to rituals and ceremonies. The transition from bronze to iron was already well advanced by the Western Han period, but a new and more efficient method of converting iron into steel developed during the age of division, which Joseph Needham called "co-fusion," involved the mixing of wrought iron and pig iron in a furnace to produce steel, making it possible for the first time to equip very large numbers of troops with high-quality steel weapons. In use in northern China before the middle of the sixth century, it required less time and skill than the old method of producing steel blades by repeated forging. During this same period, the adoption of more sophisticated techniques of quenching (calling for the immersion of newly forged blades in urine or fat rather than water) provided the average weapon with a sharper cutting edge than ever before.¹⁵

The medieval Chinese armory included a tremendous variety of edged weapons and missile weapons. Those most frequently encountered on the battlefield were bows, sabers (*dao*), and polearms of various sorts. Although there were some changes, such as the gradual replacement of the ancient leaf-shaped lance head (*mao*) by a sturdier but less graceful spearhead (*qiang*), continuity was again the major theme. The saber, widely used by both cavalry and infantry, was a single-edged chopping blade that had superseded the straight, two-edged sword (*jian*) of ancient China during Han times. A related but less frequently encountered weapon was the saber-staff or long-handled saber (*changdao*), essentially a saber-blade hafted to a pole or staff. The composite bow, made from overlapping layers of wood, horn, and sinew,

¹⁴ A full account of the siege is provided in Benjamin E. Wallacker, "Studies in medieval Chinese siegecraft: The siege of Yü-pi, A.D. 546," *JAS* 28.4 (1968), pp. 789–802.

¹⁵ Needham, *The development of iron and steel technology in China* (London, 1958), p. 26; also see Yang Kuan, *Zhongguo gudai yetie jishu fazhan shi* (Shanghai, 1982), pp. 247–249, 282, 284.

conformed to the basic pattern that had been used by the peoples of the Inner Asian steppe from ancient times. It could send war arrows as far as 280 yards, but had to be employed at much closer ranges in order to be tactically effective. A powerful missile weapon deserving special mention is the cross-bow (*nu*). Though no longer a basic arm of the infantry as in Han times, probably due largely to the dominance of steppe-style mounted archery in the North, it was still employed on a smaller scale, especially in the South.¹⁶

To protect themselves from arrows and crossbow bolts, spear thrusts and saber cuts, fighting men were equipped with armor and shields. Foot soldiers had little for protection other than perhaps a large, basically rectangular shield made of either wood or leather, and a helmet. Most armor was of the lamellar type, made of many small, overlapping rectangular iron, steel, or lacquered leather plates (*lamellae*) laced together horizontally and vertically. Lamellar construction was also used for helmets, a number of which have been found by archaeologists. Alternatively, some pieces of armor were made from solid sheets of leather or hide, and sleeveless or short-sleeved coats of scale armor were also in use (though often associated with warriors of foreign origin). A perennially popular pattern during the Six Dynasties was “double-faced” (*liangdang*) armor, which consisted of a front and back piece joined by straps at the shoulders. More elaborate variations on these themes were also worn, especially by cavalymen. In addition to a *liangdang* cuirass or lamellar corselet, these could include *épaulières* covering the shoulders and upper arms, and long flaps, aprons, or even lamellar chaps to shield the legs. During the sixth century, *liangdang* armor with paired circular plaques, apparently of metal, as additional protection for chest and back became increasingly popular. Near the end of the period, and on into Sui and Tang, this type of armor attained its most elaborate form with the addition of cords to support and anchor the plaques.¹⁷

Heavy cavalry and armored horses are attested in China before the end of the Eastern Han, but widespread adoption of the foot stirrup during the fourth century must have contributed to a dramatic rise in both their numbers and their tactical importance. In a battle fought around CE 200, Cao Cao claimed that with only ten sets of horse armor (*makai*) he had faced an opponent with 300. For battles fought in the early fourth century, however, the sources report the capture of thousands of armored horses. It is surely not a coincidence that this is the period from which we have what is thought to be the earliest

¹⁶ Yang Hong, *Zhongguo gu bingqi luncong* (Beijing, 1985), p. 229.

¹⁷ For more detailed examinations of Six Dynasties armor, see three works by Albert E. Dien: “A study of early Chinese armor,” *AA* 43 (1982), pp. 5–66; “Armor in China before the Tang dynasty,” *JEAA* 2.3–4 (2000), pp. 23–59; and *Six Dynasties civilization* (New Haven, 2007), pp. 331–336.

confidently datable Chinese representation of a pair of riding stirrups (on a horse figurine from a tomb dated to CE 322) and what are probably the earliest specimens of actual stirrups.¹⁸ Early Northeast Asian stirrups were typically oval in shape; made of wood, metal, or metal over a wooden core; and had a rectangular handle at the top for attaching the strap. Although not an absolute prerequisite for effective “shock” combat by heavily armored cavalry, which was already enabled by existing saddle forms, these stirrups certainly gave their users much greater stability and freedom of motion. From the fourth century onward, Chinese battlefields were dominated by a heavy cavalry composed of armored warriors riding armored horses. A complete barding included a metal head protector (*chanfron*) for the horse and lamellar armor covering almost the whole of its body above the lower legs. Heavy cavalry of this type went on to play an important role in the Sui conquest of the south in 588–589, and squadrons of armored horsemen formed the core of the army that Sui Yangdi led against Koguryō in 612.¹⁹ In the view of one authority on early Chinese warfare, the relationship between infantry and cavalry is summed up in a painted brick of Sui date unearthed near Liu’an, Anhui, which shows an unarmored foot soldier who has thrown away his saber and shield and is kneeling in supplication beneath an armored horseman.²⁰

Heavy cavalry were the mainstay of both northern and southern armies for most of the Six Dynasties period; however, very few regional differences can be discerned in representations of their armor.²¹ The same would also seem to be true with regard to weaponry; the heavy horseman of Sui times and earlier is usually depicted as a lance-armed warrior whose weapons and equipment indicate reliance upon “shock” tactics in battle. He was not, however, the only sort of mounted warrior encountered on the battlefield. In the North, and especially on the steppe frontier, lightly armored archers riding unarmored horses continued to play an important role. With the establishment of the Tang dynasty, conflicts with mobile tribesmen rather than sedentary opponents became the chief security concern of China’s rulers, and the light cavalry accordingly eclipsed the heavy.

Another key distinction between warfare in northern and southern China was the much greater importance of naval or riverine forces in the watery landscape of the South, where rivers—most obviously the mighty Yangzi and its major tributaries—served as the main arteries of communication.

¹⁸ For more thorough consideration of the evidence, see Albert E. Dien, “The stirrup and its effect on Chinese military history,” *AO* 16 (1986), pp. 33–56, especially pp. 33–38.

¹⁹ *ZZTJ* 176.5499, 181.5660; *SS* 8.160.

²⁰ Yang Hong, *Gudai bingqi shibua* (Shanghai, 1988), p. 140.

²¹ Dien, “A study of early Chinese armor,” p. 40. But see also Tian Likun and Zhang Keju, “Qian Yan de jiaji juzhuang,” *WW* 1997.11, p. 74.

Throughout the Six Dynasties period, the usual setting for naval operations was China's rivers and lakes rather than its coastal waters, which were not threatened by foreign invaders and offered few targets for overseas expansion. During the many civil wars of the Southern Dynasties and the great conflicts between North and South, war fleets were used to transport armies across or along the waterways, and to prevent hostile forces from getting across the major rivers. Their vessels were of many types and sizes, ranging from towering, multi-decked warships (*louchuan*) that could carry as many as 2,000 men down to very small patrol craft. An especially important role was played by the light, fast boats known as *ge*. Some sixty to eighty feet long and propelled by a team of thirty rowers, these maneuverable craft were most useful for scouting, patrolling, raiding, and cutting enemy supply lines, though they also performed well in more conventional naval engagements. They became increasingly prominent in southern warfare during the Six Dynasties, and were seen as functionally analogous to the light cavalry of the land armies.²²

In general, Chinese ship construction was quite different from that in the West. Instead of laying a keel and then attaching ribs and strakes, the usual Chinese approach was to attach the hull planking to solid transverse bulkheads. The result was a flat-bottomed, carvel-built hull with transoms at stem and stern. Most war vessels were powered both by sails, usually of rattan and matting construction, and by oars. A variety of martial tactics were used in aquatic battle. There is some evidence that ramming was part of the tactical repertoire, especially for the smaller craft, and that vessels might be seized by grappling and boarding. In constricted inland waterways, fire ships were also dangerous and effective weapons. The most common tactics, however, involved the use of missiles to damage enemy vessels and kill or injure crew. Most vessels carried archers or crossbowmen, and the larger warships deployed lever-operated trebuchets on their topmost decks. Differences between the ranges of the crossbows used by the two sides could prove decisive in battle. To protect against missiles, some vessels had their upper decks roofed over or their sides armored with ox hides, and crewmen took refuge behind wooden battlements or shot their weapons through loopholes in the sides of the ships. A new weapon employed by the Sui forces during their descent of the Yangzi to overthrow the Chen in 588–589 was the *paigan*, a fifty-foot-long, spike-bearing boom that could be dropped from the vertical position to damage enemy vessels or pin them to be raked by close-range missile fire. For several centuries after the Sui reunification, with only a few exceptions, such as the

²² Andrew Chittick, "The transformation of naval warfare in early medieval China: The role of light fast boats," *JAH* 44.2 (2010), pp. 128–150.

Tang conquest of the South in 621, the Yangzi watershed would not see as much military activity as it had during the Six Dynasties.

MILITARY INSTITUTIONS

By the end of the Eastern Han the system of universal military service, developed during the Warring States period and maintained into Western Han, had been abandoned, as China's rulers found smaller, more professional forces to be of greater utility in guarding the steppe frontier and also less of a threat to the central authority (they were, for example, less susceptible to being suborned by local elites).²³ These forces included highly effective cavalry contingents recruited from among steppe peoples, such as the Wuhuan of the Northeast. The trend toward the creation of a long-serving, professional soldiery culminated during the multi-cornered civil wars at the end of the second century and crystallized in the form of new military institutions during the Three Kingdoms period. The breakdown of the central authority of the Han court gave much greater power to field commanders and regional governors such as Cao Cao, who emerged as autonomous warlords, while unsettled civil-war conditions meant that they found no shortage of willing recruits from among the ranks of fugitives, refugees, and destitute peasants. To these were added captives taken from opposing armies (such as the Yellow Turban prisoners enrolled en masse in Cao Cao's forces) and groups of non-Han fighting men acquired by various means from both northern steppes and southern mountains. The prolonged warfare of the time favored the emergence of a soldiery expert in the use of arms, dependent on their commanders, disconnected from civilian society and their own local origins, and thus easily redeployed over great distances.

Against the backdrop of a divided and greatly weakened imperial state, local magnates converted their agricultural dependents into soldiers and military leaders recruited their own private retainer corps. Fighting men of both sorts came to be called *buqu*, an old Han term for regular units of military organization that may be translated simply as "troops." The relationship of the *buqu* to their commander was typically both servile and hereditary. When the commander died, a son, brother, or nephew would inherit command of his troops, and when a soldier died one of his close male relatives would inherit his place in the ranks. During the third century, the government armies of the Wei and Jin dynasties adopted a pattern of military service that was largely copied from the private *buqu* forces. Soldiers and their families were assigned

²³ Mark Edward Lewis, "The Han abolition of universal military service," in *Warfare in Chinese history*, ed. Hans van de Ven (Leiden, 2000), pp. 33–76.

a status as “military households” that was separate and distinct from that of peasants and other commoners, with the associated terminology varying over time and from state to state. In the Cao-Wei realm in the north such households were designated “yeoman families” (*shijia*); in the southeastern state of Wu they were “military families” (*bingjia*) or “military households” (*binghu*). Their names were recorded in special military registers, and they were controlled by military headquarters (*junfu*) rather than the local civilian administration. A man served in the army for life, and when he perished or became too old or infirm to continue, it was expected that a son or another close male relative, from the same military household, would come forward to replace him.²⁴

As this suggests, not all members of military households were expected to perform military service at the same time. When Emperor Wu of the Jin dynasty was preparing his great campaign to subdue the South, he issued an edict calling for the mobilization of one man from each military household with two or three adult males, two from each military household with four adult males, and three from those with six or more adult males. The men were to be between the ages of seventeen and fifty, and those who were married and had children were to be taken first.²⁵ It seems that only the strongest males of the household served as soldiers, while the others farmed the land or performed different support duties. In addition, family members left at home could be used as hostages to ensure the loyalty and good behavior of their kinsmen on active duty (a common practice of the Cao-Wei regime). Military families, called “encampment households” (*yinghu*), could be redeployed together with military units, which were themselves often designated as “encampments.” The size of these units seems to have been variable, though in 289 the Jin established encampments of “amassed crossbowmen” (*jinnu*) and “amassed archers” (*jishe*) that were each 2,500 strong.²⁶

In addition to the military households, there were other households assigned to military agricultural colonies (*tuntian*) whose primary responsibility was to grow foodstuffs and provide logistical support for the armies. These households were registered separately from both the military households and the general population. The institution of *tuntian*, employed by

²⁴ For more extended discussion of the system of hereditary military status, see Graff, *Medieval Chinese warfare*, pp. 38–39, and Gao Min, “Cao Wei shijia zhidu de xingcheng yu yanbian,” *Lishi yanjiu* 1989.5, pp. 61–75.

²⁵ *Wenguan cilin* 662.5a–b, quoted in Zhang Zexian, “Jinchao junzhi de jige wenti,” *Zhongguoshi yanjiu* 1989.2, p. 123.

²⁶ *Taiping yulan* 239.8b, p. 1262b, quoted in Zhang, “Jinchao junzhi de jige wenti,” *Zhongguoshi yanjiu* 1989.2, p. 128.

several states including Wei and Wu, had well-established precedents reaching back at least to the Former Han.

The majority of men, who did not belong to designated categories of military households, had no regular military service obligation. The Han (and pre-Han) institution of calling up men from commoner households for corvée labor, however, survived intact throughout the Six Dynasties period, and labor drafts of this sort were often used to construct fortifications or haul supplies for armies in the field. In cases of urgent need, men who were not registered as members of military households might still be conscripted for combat duty. In the Yongjia Period (307–312), Pei Dun in Xuzhou required free commoners (*liangren* 良人) to serve as soldiers, as did Yu Yi, the Eastern Jin governor of Jingzhou, in 343–344. Between 397 and 418, Sima Yuanxian pressed the people of the capital, Jiankang, into military service, and the Liu-Song regime turned to conscription to raise troops to resist the Northern Wei attack of 450. Such measures were at first considered irregular or even illegal and were deeply resented by the target populations. Nevertheless, as time passed the later Southern Dynasties of Qi, Liang, and Chen made more use of both conscription and voluntary recruitment to fill the ranks of their armies.²⁷

The system of military households during the Period of Division, however, remained the basic manpower resource for the armies of the first three of the Southern Dynasties based at Jiankang, the Eastern Jin, Liu-Song, and Southern Qi. Despite the reality that powerful families of both northern and indigenous origin controlled most of the South's resources—including large numbers of agricultural laborers and *buqu*—these Southern Dynasties were still capable of fielding powerful forces. Although dependents of the rich were usually off-limits, new military households were formed from among southern aboriginal groups (such as the Man peoples) as well as vagabonds and migrants who lacked influential protectors. On one occasion in the late fourth century, a Jin general had his troops surround a large marsh in Hailing county, just north of the Yangzi mouth, and set fire to the reeds, driving out 10,000 families of vagrants who were then registered as military households.²⁸

Perhaps the most effective forces ever raised by the South were the “Northern Headquarters Troops” (*beifu bing*). The name, which may have been a term of popular approbation rather than an official designation, derived from the prefectural headquarters that were set up by Eastern Jin north of the lower Yangzi as early as 317. These prefectures controlled large numbers of northern émigrés who were regarded as especially good military material. A major recruitment drive was launched by Xie Xuan after he became prefect

²⁷ He Ziquan, “Wei Jin Nanchao de bingzhi,” in *idem*, *Dushiji* (Shanghai, 1982), pp. 297–302.

²⁸ *JS* 81.2126.

of Yanzhou (based at Guangling) in 376, and under Xie's leadership this force grew to 80,000 men and played a key role in defeating Fu Jian's invasion of the south in 383. These men then went on to assume a no less significant role in the internal politics of Eastern Jin as contenders for power, such as Liu Laozhi and Liu Yu, who emerged from their leadership cadre. Although the Northern Headquarters forces were severely damaged in the civil wars precipitated by the rebellion of Huan Xuan (402), some of their remnants were involved in Liu Yu's seizure of power in 412, opening the way for his establishment of the Song dynasty eight years later.²⁹

There is considerable disagreement among modern scholars as to whether the Northern Headquarters Troops were recruited from already existing military households, or whether their impressive fighting strength derived from voluntary recruitment without hereditary obligations.³⁰ In any case, the long-term trend during the Southern Dynasties was toward less reliance on military households. Harsh terms of service and the enlistment of *déclassé* elements (such as convicts and slaves) led to a decline of morale among the military households and high rates of desertion. At this time, mercenaries recruited on a voluntary basis—and without any special hereditary status—were no doubt found to be more effective. The shift was underway during the Song and Qi dynasties in the fifth century, and the last two regimes based at Jiankang, the Liang and Chen, relied mainly on voluntary recruits (*mubing*).³¹

The evolution of military institutions in the North followed a different trajectory. Beginning in the early fourth century, the Xiongnu, Xianbei, and other non-Han groups that established ephemeral regimes in the region deployed armies built around tribal cavalry forces. In general, northern armies were structured in concentric fashion. At the core was a central army (*zhongjun*) composed primarily of cavalymen who shared their state ruler's ethnic origin. Identified as "compatriots" (*guoren*), these soldiers were initially organized along tribal lines: they were led by their chiefs, had lifelong obligations of military service that were passed on to their offspring, and brought their families along with them when they were redeployed. They had the dual function of guarding the ruler's capital and providing a powerful field army that could be mobilized quickly for far-flung campaigns. This system could also accommodate subordinated groups of other ethnicities, under the

²⁹ JS 84.2188; Yang Debing, "Beifu yu Beifu bing," in *Wei Jin Nanbeichao Sui Tang shi ziliao*, ed. Wuhan daxue lishixi and Wei Jin Nanbeichao Sui Tang shi yanjiushi, Volume 4 (Hong Kong, 1992), pp. 28–35; Zhou Nianchang, "Dong Jin Beifu bing de jianli ji qi tedian," in *Wei Jin Sui Tang shi lunji*, ed. Huang Lie, Volume 2 (Beijing, 1983), pp. 149–167.

³⁰ Zhou, "Dong Jin Beifu bing de jianli ji qi tedian," pp. 158, 160; Kawakatsu Yoshio, "Tō Shin kizokusei no kakuritsu katei," *Tōbō gakubō* 52 (1980), pp. 330–331.

³¹ Tang, *Wei Jin Nanbeichao Sui Tang shi san lun*, 186.

command of their own tribal leaders, as elements of the central army. The outer army (*waijun*), in contrast, usually included outlying garrisons and forces controlled by area commanders (*dudu*) or other local authorities. The line between central and outer armies was not always clear-cut, however; in some of the northern regimes such as Fu Jian's Former Qin, for example, garrisons outside the capital could be identified as an "outer army" but still function as components of the central army.³²

Since the central/outer division was paralleled by governmental structures that established separate administrative hierarchies for the Han and non-Han elements of the population, Han fighting men were more likely to be found in the outer armies. They were brought into the service of the conquest regimes in various ways. In the early fourth century, leaders such as Liu Yuan and Shi Le co-opted defeated local magnates, fortress chiefs, and their followers (including *buqu*) into military service. As the northern states become more firmly established and gained better control over the farming population, they were able to use direct conscription. For his great campaign of 383, Fu Jian supposedly called up one man out of every ten.³³ Han conscripts could be employed as infantry, but their fighting quality was typically inferior and they were more likely to be occupying inglorious support roles, such as hauling supplies or constructing siege works. While North Asian cavalry formed the permanent core of the army, Han were conscripted as needed and then sent home at the end of the campaign.

The military institutions of the Tuoba Wei state did not at first depart significantly from the earlier northern pattern. Like their precursors, the early Tuoba rulers distinguished between central and outer armies and relied primarily on Xianbei cavalry in their campaigns and conquests. Over time, however, as the Northern Wei expanded and became more firmly established, new trends appeared in its military organization. From the middle of the fifth century onward, as Wei armies campaigned frequently against southern forces, infantry raised from the Han population became an increasingly large and important component of the military establishment. Many of these soldiers were prefectural troops (*zhoubing*) commanded by local administrators, and they seem to have performed short tours of rotational service modeled after the corvée labor system. This system (*ding bing*) was continued by Wei's successor states of Northern Qi, Northern Zhou, and Sui, with the length of rotations frequently changing and varying considerably over time, ranging from two weeks up to two months per year. Another notable development was

³² He Ziquan, "Shiliuguo shiqi de bingzhi," in *Yanyuanlun xueji: Tang Yongtong xiansheng jiusi dan chen ji nian* (Beijing, 1984), pp. 292–293.

³³ He, "Shiliuguo shiqi de bingzhi," 298.

the gap in status that opened between the Xianbei who served in the guard in the capital and those who were sent to the frontier garrisons, becoming especially marked after the capital was moved from Pingcheng to Luoyang in 493. As the garrisons were augmented from various sources including convicts, vagrants, and prisoners of war, the status of the Xianbei warriors there declined dramatically. Together with the various *déclassé* elements, they were reclassified as “garrison households” (*fubu*)—now, in effect, a hereditary servile status group—and excluded from the formal ranking system that established the eligibility of the Luoyang Xianbei for government offices.³⁴ These conditions contributed greatly to the disturbances in the northern frontier garrisons that set in motion the chain of events that would eventually shatter the Northern Wei state.

The breakup of Northern Wei created irresistible pressures for the release of garrison households, both to attract fighting men to serve the various contenders for power and as a means of raising their morale. Under the Eastern Wei and Northern Qi, Xianbei warriors enjoyed high status. Some were based at the capital, Ye, and others at Jinyang (today’s Taiyuan, Shanxi), and they provided the powerful cavalry core of the state’s armies. Although the predominant flavor of the Eastern Wei–Northern Qi military was North Asian, with Xianbei as the language of command, Han soldiers also continued to play a role, either through rotational service or as the dependents (*buqu*) of local magnates. Nevertheless, Wei’s eastern successor state commanded the loyalty of enough Xianbei horsemen that there was very little incentive for innovation.

The most significant and far-reaching developments occurred in the Western Wei (later Northern Zhou) state founded by Yuwen Tai. Beginning with a rather small army of only a few thousand North Asian horsemen, the Western Wei leaders desperately needed to tap new manpower sources simply to survive, let alone compete effectively with their stronger rival to the east. Yuwen Tai and his associates thus had little choice but to recruit Han Chinese and other elements of the ethnically mixed population of Guanzhong to fill out the ranks of their army. An obvious source of fresh manpower was the private militias that had been raised by local strongmen during the breakdown of Northern Wei. By the late 540s, the Western Wei government was organizing these “local troops” (*xianbing*) into a hierarchical command structure headed by its own appointees, who received the title of brigadier commanders (*shuai dudu*).

Although the local troops were a welcome addition to the Western Wei military, they did not provide the backbone of the regime’s military power

³⁴ See, for example, the complaint of Wei Lan’gen in *BQS* 23.329–330.

after 550. That role instead belonged to the so-called “Twenty-Four Armies,” a force that initially reported directly to Yuwen Tai’s headquarters rather than to his puppet Wei emperor. The upper-level command structure of the Twenty-Four Armies is fairly well documented, with six close associates of Yuwen Tai each commanding two senior generals (*da jiangjun*) who each in turn commanded two armies (*jun*) made up of an indeterminate number of battalions (*tuan*). What is much less certain is how these forces were recruited and organized at the lower levels. It would appear that the trend over time was from the use of already organized local militias to the recruitment of fighting men as individuals—albeit with locally influential figures continuing to play an important role at the lower command levels. Due to both the use of *xiangbing* and the expansion of the Twenty-Four Armies, the forces of Western Wei–Northern Zhou grew dramatically, such that Emperor Wu of the Zhou was reportedly able to mobilize 170,000 men against Northern Qi in 575.³⁵ To a considerable extent this was accomplished by enlisting ordinary Chinese farmers, the great majority of whom must have fought as infantry rather than cavalry. They (and possibly also their families) were removed from the civilian household registers and reregistered by the military authorities. Theirs was not, however, a base or servile status (as with the military households under the Southern Dynasties), but an honorable position that carried exemption from taxes and corvée labor. The last important military innovation of Northern Zhou came in 574, when Emperor Wu gave the soldiers of the Twenty-Four Armies the title of “officer in attendance” (*shiguan*), previously reserved for men of high rank and status who served in direct attendance upon the emperor. This surely added to both the prestige of the soldiers in their home communities and their feelings of loyalty toward the sovereign, and it may have been at this time that they began to perform guard duty by rotation in the environs of the imperial palace.

Out of these developments emerged the army that enabled Emperor Wu to conquer Northern Qi in 576–577, and also the core military institution of the Sui dynasty and the early Tang: the system of *fubing* (variously translated as “soldiers of the headquarters,” “territorial soldiery,” or “garrison militias”), farmer-soldiers enrolled in locally based units of 600–1,200 men, who have been given much of the credit for the Sui conquest of the South and the expansion of the Tang empire in the seventh century under the emperors Taizong and Gaozong.

³⁵ ZS 6.93; ZYTJ 172.5346.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

Charles Holcombe

The greatest challenge in discussing China's foreign relations during the Six Dynasties period may be in determining what the concept of "foreign" even meant during this exceptionally complicated, cosmopolitan era. Not only was China divided—with each Chinese dynasty interacting with the others as if they were foreign countries—but, between 304 and 581, most of north China usually lay under non-Chinese rule. South China, meanwhile, had until recently been something of a frontier zone, and it continued to have a large non-Chinese aboriginal population. At the same time, characteristic elements of Chinese culture, notably including the use of the Chinese written language, were spreading to neighboring Korea and Japan, while what is today northern Vietnam could actually have been considered to be part of China. A city located near what is now Hanoi had been a major center of Chinese presence in the far south during the previous Han dynasty, and was not fully eclipsed by the rise of Guangzhou until as late as the seventh or eighth century.¹ Ironically, however, at a time when what is now northern Vietnam was fairly securely "Chinese," it was reported in 231 that much of modern Guangdong and Guangxi remained a haven for untamed aboriginal "bandits."²

The Six Dynasties were also thoroughly permeated by outside influences. The most spectacular of these was obviously Buddhism, which progressed from what had still been largely a foreign religion in late Han times to become China's dominant faith. By the sixth century, there were reportedly more copies of the Buddhist scriptures circulating in China than there were of the Confucian classics. Accompanying Buddhism came various other foreign cultural embellishments. For example, an early Chinese image of the Buddha, dated 420, is depicted wearing Indian clothing and "a Hellenistic-style outer garment," and

¹ Lü Shipeng, *Bei shu shiqi de Yuenan: Zhong Yue guanxi shi zhi yi* (Hong Kong, 1964), pp. 103, 119; Gungwu Wang, *The Nanhai trade: A study of the early history of Chinese trade in the South China Sea* (Singapore, 1998), pp. 16–17, 25.

² *Đại Việt sử ký toàn thư, ngoại kỷ*, comp. by Ngô Sĩ Liên, 1479 (Tokyo, 1986) 4.138; SGZ 53.1253.

it was not uncommon at this time for Chinese people to take Sanskrit personal names.³ Unrelated to Buddhism, the personal name of the classic Six Dynasties Chinese literary heroine “Mulan” may have also originated as a non-Chinese, Altaic language, word.⁴ Several food items that were introduced into China during this period still retain the Chinese word for northwestern foreigner, *Hu*, in their names, such as sesame (*huma*), walnut (*butao*), and cucumber (*bugua*).⁵

Most of the non-Chinese people who were active in the north during these centuries sprang from the general vicinity of north China (including Inner Mongolia and Manchuria), but at least a scattering of individuals—noticeable for their deep-set eyes, protuberant noses, and thick beards—may have originated significantly further west, perhaps in what is now Xinjiang.⁶ Some Turkic-speaking people, who may have originated in southern Siberia, also played a role in China’s Northern Dynasties. From his deathbed, for example, the great northeastern warlord Gao Huan (496–547), who was himself of intriguingly ambiguous descent, entrusted his son and heir to such a Turkic figure (a Chile) as one of two senior advisers.⁷ At a time in Eurasian history conspicuous for the migrations of peoples (*Völkerwanderung*), the lines sometimes blurred between what was Chinese and what was not.

THE INVESTITURE SYSTEM

Premodern China’s approach to diplomatic relations is conventionally called the “tribute system.” The central conceit of this system was that foreign rulers were expected to acknowledge the Chinese emperor as supreme overlord, and provide offerings of local products as tribute in exchange for generous Chinese honors and gifts.⁸ This concept focuses attention on the interests of the imperial court at the expense of what were sometimes more substantive, if unofficial, frontier interactions. It is even possible that the frequency of tribute embassies mentioned in the historical record may have, under some

³ *Fozu tongji*, 39; T.49.359b. SS 35.1099. Bingying Chen, “Gandhara in Gansu,” in *Monks and merchants: Silk Road treasures from northwest China—Gansu and Ningxia, 4th–7th century*, ed. Annette L. Juliano and Judith A. Lerner (New York, 2001), pp. 214–215; Zhou Yiliang, “Zhongguo de Fanwen yanjiu,” in *idem*, *Wei Jin Nanbeichao shi lunji* (Beijing, 1963), pp. 334–335.

⁴ Sanping Chen, *Multicultural China in the early Middle Ages* (Philadelphia, 2012), pp. 43–59.

⁵ John Ferguson, “China and Rome,” in *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt: Geschichte und Kultur Roms im Spiegel der neueren Forschung*, ed. Hildegard Temporini and Wolfgang Haase (Berlin, 1978), p. 590.

⁶ Liu Xueyao, *Wu Hu shi lun* (Taipei, 2001), pp. 34–37; Tang Changru, “Wei Jin za hu kao,” in *idem*, *Wei Jin Nanbeichao shi luncong* (Beijing, 1955), pp. 414–427.

⁷ *BQS* 2.23–24. Edwin G. Pulleyblank, “The ‘High Carts’: A Turkish-speaking people before the Türks,” in *idem*, *Central Asia and non-Chinese peoples of ancient China* (Aldershot, 2002), pp. 21–22. For Gao Huan, see Charles Holcombe, “The Xianbei in Chinese history,” *EMC* 19 (2013), pp. 29, 31–32.

⁸ See the essays in John King Fairbank, ed., *The Chinese world order: Traditional China’s foreign relations* (Cambridge, MA, 1968).

circumstances, been inversely related to the actual stability and regularity of commercial relations.⁹ Nonetheless, especially during the formative early period of the East Asian cultural community, what might better be understood as an “investiture system” (*cefeng tizhi*), involving the conferment of Chinese titles on local leaders, really was crucial.¹⁰ The acquisition of Chinese official titles by local strongmen often proved helpful in legitimizing those figures and elevating them above their competition. This could be true whether or not they were Chinese, whether or not they were actually independent of central government control, or even whether the titles were genuine or fabricated.

For example, in 372 the King of Paekche, in southwestern Korea, dispatched an embassy to the Eastern Jin dynasty in southern China, and was awarded the titles “General Garrisoning the East” (*zhendong jiangjun*), and “Concurrent Governor of Lelang” (a Han-era administrative unit located in northern Korea) (*ling Lelang taishou*). In 415, another Paekche monarch was formally recognized with the Chinese title “King of Paekche.”¹¹ Similarly, in 238, a priestess-queen from Japan called Himiko sent an emissary to the Three Kingdoms’ Wei dynasty, and was rewarded with the title “Queen of Wa [the oldest written name for Japan], Friendly to the Wei” (*Qin Wei Wo wang* 親魏倭王). This may have helped buttress her authority over the multiple communities in the still un-unified Japanese islands.¹²

After 306 there was a lengthy interruption in diplomatic exchanges between the Japanese islands and China. Then, between 413 and 502, there are records of thirteen Japanese embassies to the Chinese Southern Dynasties. These exchanges resulted in the conferral of titles that not only augmented the Japanese rulers’ domestic prestige, but also were now sought in support of Japanese claims to partial dominion over the Korean peninsula.¹³ In reality, however, rather than ruling a portion of the Korean peninsula, the Japanese were probably mostly active there only as military auxiliaries.

⁹ See O. W. Wolters, *Early Indonesian commerce: A study of the origins of Śrīvijaya* (Ithaca, 1967), pp. 167, 230–231.

¹⁰ Wang Zhenping, *Ambassadors from the islands of immortals: China–Japan relations in the Han–Tang period* (Honolulu, 2005), pp. 1–2, 31–32; Wang Zhenping, *Han Tang Zhong Ri guanxi lun* (Taipei, 1997), p. 16.

¹¹ *JS* 9.223; *Samguk sagi*, Volume 2, pp. 34, 42.

¹² *SGZ* 30.857. The Chinese text reproduced this queen’s name phonetically as *beimibu* (in modern Mandarin), which is thought to represent Himiko in Japanese. Rather than a proper name, this was probably really a title, perhaps meaning something like “princess.” See J. Edward Kidder, *Himiko and Japan’s elusive chiefdom of Yamatai: Archaeology, history, and mythology* (Honolulu, 2007), pp. 8–9, 131; Roy Andrew Miller, *The Japanese language* (Chicago, 1967), p. 22.

¹³ Ueda Masaaki, *Kikajin: Kodai kokka no seiritsu o megutte* (Tokyo, 1965), p. 150; Wang Zhenping, *Ambassadors*, pp. 16, 229–230.

Japan's apparent tributary subordination to China, similarly, should not be taken entirely at face value. A document that was purportedly received by the Chinese southern dynasty Song court in 478 from the ruler of Japan styled that monarch as "your subject" (*chen*), and Japan as a "vassal country" (*feng guo*). Given the limited evidence for literacy in Japan at that early date, however, it seems unlikely that this document was really written by any Japanese person.¹⁴ Such subservience better reflects what the Chinese court wished to hear, rather than the probable actual attitudes of Japanese sovereigns.

During the initial phase of state formation in Japan, ambitious leaders repeatedly did seek the external validation provided by Chinese titles. By as early as the fifth century, however, Japanese monarchs were already beginning to depict themselves at home as supreme kings (the title "emperor" was probably not adopted until the late seventh century) ruling all "Under Heaven." By the time the oldest surviving native Japanese history (the *Kojiki*) was completed in 712, it could employ the classic Chinese expression all "Under Heaven" some ninety times—but in reference to Japan, without even mentioning China.¹⁵

Chinese titles could help buttress the position of local strongmen, and the investiture system did establish a shared diplomatic world order. However, the awarding of titles was also of special interest as an exercise in self-validation for the courts that bestowed them, as a demonstration of their alleged supremacy. In 204, for example, no fewer than three different Chinese warlords competed to bestow titles on a Wuhuan (non-Chinese) chieftain in southern Manchuria, leaving him wondering which of the three was "correct."¹⁶ The founder of southern dynasty Song, in his haste to create an image of his own legitimacy, within a month of usurping the throne in 420 conferred titles on the rulers of Paekche, Koguryō (in northern Korea and southern Manchuria), and Japan without even waiting for them to send embassies.¹⁷

THE NORTHEASTERN INTERACTION ZONE

Southern Manchuria provides a particularly vivid illustration of how elusive any clear line of demarcation between Chinese and foreign was in this era. Toward the end of the Han dynasty, in 190, a Chinese family native to southeastern Manchuria named Gongsun established an independent regime

¹⁴ SoS 97.2395; David B. Lurie, *Realms of literacy: Early Japan and the history of writing* (Cambridge, MA, 2011), pp. 80–83; Wang Zhenping, *Ambassadors*, p. 146; Wang Zhenping, *Han Tang Zhong Ri*, 131.

¹⁵ Nishijima Sadao, *Nihon rekishi no kokusai kankyō* (Tokyo, 1997), pp. 76–80; Herman Ooms, *Imperial politics and symbolics in ancient Japan: The Tenmu dynasty, 650–800* (Honolulu, 2009), p. 36.

¹⁶ ZZTJ 64.2057–2058. ¹⁷ Wang Zhenping, *Ambassadors*, pp. 23–24.

in the area.¹⁸ To counter the threat from the non-Chinese Xianbei to their west and proto-Korean Koguryō to their east, the first Gongsun warlord married a daughter to the chieftain of Puyō, another non-Chinese community located in the Sungari river basin of central Manchuria, in between the Xianbei and Koguryō. Eventually, “nine kinds” of different northeastern non-Chinese peoples all reportedly aligned themselves with these Gongsun warlords.¹⁹

In 238, the Gongsun regime was destroyed by Three Kingdoms’ Wei. This conquest may have resulted in a brief reassertion of Chinese imperial control in both southern Manchuria and northern Korea. However, the Wei dynasty was assisted in defeating the Gongsun warlords by the Murong branch of the non-Chinese Xianbei people, and these Murong Xianbei now established their own base in southern Manchuria. By the late third century, the Murong had probably already terminated any direct Chinese rule not only in Korea but also over much of Manchuria. Because Chinese titles were bestowed upon the Murong leaders, however, some illusion of continued Chinese rule may have been preserved.²⁰

In 352, the Murong ruler himself assumed supreme Chinese-style imperial titles.²¹ The Murong Xianbei ultimately forged a succession of short-lived northeastern dynasties called Yan, which were hybrid regimes that could simultaneously be viewed as both Chinese and not Chinese. Their internal diversity is reflected in the surprising variety of burial styles revealed by archaeology.²² At their peak, the Murong controlled much of northeast China. Around 342, the Murong also sacked the capital of proto-Korean Koguryō on the Yalu river, taking some 50,000 captives.²³ In 398, however, the Murong Xianbei capital (of what was then called the Later Yan dynasty, 384–409) was itself captured by yet another Xianbei subgroup, the Tuoba Xianbei, and thousands of Murong, together with Koguryōans and others resident among them, were relocated west to the Tuoba capital near what is now Datong.²⁴

The Tuoba Xianbei went on to forge a mighty empire called Northern Wei (386–534), which succeeded in reunifying north China, and which is conventionally regarded as a legitimate Chinese dynasty. Yet, despite much

¹⁸ SGZ 8.252–253. ¹⁹ SGZ 30.842; JS 14.426–427.

²⁰ Gina L. Barnes, *State formation in Korea: Historical and archaeological perspectives* (Richmond, 2001), p. 24; Holcombe, “The Xianbei,” p. 14; BS 94.3112.

²¹ JS 110.2834.

²² Tian Likun, “San Yan wenhua muzang de leixing yu fenqi,” in *Han Tang zhi jian wenhua yishu de hudong yu jiaorong*, ed. Wu Hong (Beijing, 2001), pp. 205–230.

²³ LS 54.803; *Samguk sagi*, Volume 1, p. 342; WS 95.2060, 100.2214.

²⁴ Li Ping, “Bei Wei Tianxing yuan nian de Gaogouli yimin ji qi zhuangkuang,” in *idem*, *Beichao yanjiu cun gao* (Beijing, 2006), pp. 65–68.

sinicization, its rulers remained unmistakably Xianbei. It was also notably cosmopolitan. For example, the mother of the Northern Wei emperor who is posthumously known as Xuanwu (r. 500–515) was from proto-Korean Koguryō, and her Koguryōan brother became an influential figure at the Northern Wei court.²⁵

Koguryō, meanwhile, straddled the modern border between Manchuria and Korea. Its attentions were deflected southward onto the Korean peninsula, however, toward becoming a more exclusively Korean kingdom, by the rising power of the (Tuoba Xianbei-ruled) Northern Wei dynasty in north China. Archaeological evidence suggests that certain styles of horse gear had spread from the Murong Xianbei to Koguryō, and there is also some evidence of reciprocal Koguryō influence on Murong material culture.²⁶ Although early ironworking techniques in the Korean peninsula appear to have derived independently from those in China, and the cuirass-style body armor of southern Korea and Japan in the fourth and fifth centuries is also distinctive, by the fifth century Northern Dynasty Xianbei-style cavalry armor seems to have infiltrated through Koguryō into southern Korea, and even across the water to Japan.²⁷

Koguryō's ruler had reportedly claimed the Chinese-style title "king" by as early as 32 CE,²⁸ but the other two of Korea's formative "Three Kingdoms" (Paekche in the southwest and Silla in the southeast) probably did not actually become organized states until the fourth century. These early Korean kingdoms emerged under stimulus from the Chinese model, but at a time when the Chinese empire itself was in disintegration, and they were simultaneously deeply rooted in their own—each somewhat different—indigenous cultures. Silla was the most remote and the slowest to develop. Silla reportedly did not adopt the Chinese title "king" or standardize the written form of its own country's name until 503.²⁹ Silla would, nonetheless, be the kingdom that would ultimately unify the Korean peninsula, after 668.

Paekche was initially more precocious, however, and Paekche established particularly close relations with Southern Dynasties China. A Buddhist monastery that was completed at the Paekche capital in 527, for example, was named after the contemporary reign period of a Liang dynasty Chinese

²⁵ Li Ping, "Bei Wei liang wei Gaoshi Huanghou zushu kao," in *idem*, *Beichao yanjiu cun gao* (Beijing, 2006), pp. 163, 176–177.

²⁶ Sun Wei, *Xianbei kaoguxue wenhua yanjiu* (Beijing, 2007), pp. 118–119, 143–144.

²⁷ Barnes, *State formation*, pp. 127–128, 141; William Wayne Farris, *Sacred texts and buried treasures: Issues in the historical archaeology of ancient Japan* (Honolulu, 1998), pp. 74–77; Wang Jinlin, *Han Tang wenhua yu gudai Riben wenhua* (Tianjin, 1996), pp. 176–177.

²⁸ *LS* 54.802. ²⁹ *Samguk sagi*, Volume 1, p. 72.

emperor.³⁰ In 541, Paekche requested and received from Liang a specialist in the *Book of Odes*, Buddhist sutras, craftsmen, and artists.³¹ In addition, Paekche also had some wider connections. Buddhism was first introduced to Paekche by a western, non-Chinese, monk coming via the Eastern Jin dynasty in 384, and there apparently was even some direct Buddhist exchange between Paekche and India.³² And Paekche also served as an especially influential conduit for the transmission of Buddhism to Japan.

There had been some limited direct communication between the Japanese islands and Chinese dynasties in the third and fifth centuries, but early Japan's most important contacts with the continent came through Korea. Exchange may have even been surprisingly frequent. A third-century text describes residents of small islands lying between the peninsula and Japan as "riding boats north and south to market grain."³³ By the late sixth century, there reportedly was a "constant exchange of embassies back and forth" between Japan and the southern Korean kingdoms of Paekche and Silla.³⁴ The Japanese seem to have been the more active seafarers, and before the consolidation of powerful kingdoms in southern Korea there may have been numerous Japanese forays onto the peninsula.³⁵ Nonetheless, the direction of cultural influence was overwhelmingly from the continent to the islands, introducing a stream of new technologies and ideas to Japan.³⁶

The Japanese relationship with Paekche was particularly strong. In a quest for support against their rival northern kingdom of Koguryō, in 397 a Paekche royal hostage was dispatched to the Japanese court. In 405, following the death of the Paekche king and a subsequent usurpation, this hostage prince was returned to Paekche with a Japanese military escort and successfully placed on the throne.³⁷ Through Paekche, the incipient Japanese state absorbed Southern Dynasties Chinese material and cultural influences.

It was probably not until the seventh century, however, that imperial titles and the current Japanese-language name for "Japan," *Nihon*, were adopted, and there was a sudden burst of written documentation.³⁸ Japan's imperial titles are ultimately of Chinese derivation, but they were claimed in a spirit of rival supremacy rather than tributary submission. Moreover, if Japan can be

³⁰ Jonathan W. Best, *A history of the early Korean kingdom of Paekche: Together with an annotated translation of the Paekche annals of the Samguk sagi* (Cambridge, MA, 2006), p. 135.

³¹ NS 7.216; *Samguk sagi*, Volume 2, pp. 64–65.

³² *Samguk sagi*, Volume 2, p. 37; Naobayashi Futai, "Torai kei shizoku Bukkyō no hitotsu kōsatsu," *Indogaku Bukkyōgaku kenkyū* 43.1 (1994), p. 48.

³³ SGZ 30.854. ³⁴ BS 94.3137. ³⁵ Kidder, *Himiko*, pp. 41–48.

³⁶ William Wayne Farris, "Ancient Japan's Korean connection," *KS* 20 (1996), pp. 3–4, 15–17.

³⁷ *Samguk sagi*, Volume 2, pp. 40, 42.

³⁸ Amino Yoshihiko, *Nihon shakai no rekishi*, Volume 1 (Tokyo, 1997), pp. 108–109; Lurie, *Realms of literacy*, 3.

regarded as a case of secondary state formation that was influenced by the older Chinese model, Japan was also a part of Eurasia's relatively sheltered periphery, in contrast to a China that was part of the exposed Eurasian core. In intriguing ways, Japan's long-term historical trajectory can even be said to have more closely paralleled that of similarly peripheral Europe and Southeast Asia than it did China.³⁹

SOUTHERN SEA LANES

Amid the ruins of the disintegrating Han dynasty, around 196, a local Chinese governor named Shi Xie (137–226) assumed control of the area of modern northern Vietnam, Guangxi, and Guangdong.⁴⁰ He formed an independent regime, somewhat like that of the Gongsun warlords in Manchuria, which became a haven of relative peace for Chinese refugees. After Shi Xie's death in 226, northern Vietnam (then known as Jiaozhou or Jiaozhi) was for the first time administratively decoupled from Guangxi and Guangdong.⁴¹ Jiaozhou, thereafter, operated progressively ever more independently with only nominal subordination to Chinese dynasties, until, by the late fifth century, it could be called "a completely isolated island."⁴² Between 541 and 548, a native chieftain (claiming Chinese descent) rebelled and assumed supreme imperial titles. In 602, however, Jiaozhou was consolidated into the reunified Chinese Sui dynasty, and what would become Vietnam did not achieve permanent independence until 939.⁴³

Meanwhile, much of modern Guangxi and Guangdong remained undeveloped and aboriginal. The exceptions were the two regional administrative capitals of Jiaozhou (in modern Vietnam) and Guangzhou, which had long been flourishing Chinese commercial centers where those who ventured as merchants were said to often become wealthy.⁴⁴ These cities were the twin termini of an increasingly important maritime trade. By the early fourth century, for example, people in both Jiaozhou and Guangzhou were making glass of a reportedly foreign composition that may have derived from Egypt.⁴⁵

The Southeast Asian kingdom of Funan, in the lower Mekong delta, was said to be "only separated by a small sea" from the eastern coasts of India, and

³⁹ See Victor Lieberman, *Strange parallels: Southeast Asia in global context, c. 800–1830*, Volume 2, *Mainland mirrors: Europe, Japan, China, South Asia, and the islands* (Cambridge, 2009), pp. 49–114, 371–493.

⁴⁰ Keith Weller Taylor, *The birth of Vietnam* (Berkeley, 1983), pp. 70–74, 79, 87.

⁴¹ *Annam chí lược*, compiled by Lê Tắc, 1340 (Beijing, 1995), 7.171–173. ⁴² NQS 58.1017.

⁴³ *Đại Việt sử ký toàn thư*, ngoại kỷ, 4.147–148; Jennifer Holmgren, *Chinese colonization of northern Vietnam: Administrative geography and political development in the Tongking delta, first to sixth centuries AD* (Canberra, 1980), pp. 134–136; Lü Shipeng, *Bei shu shiqi*, pp. 69, 117.

⁴⁴ SS 31.887–888.

⁴⁵ *Baopuzi neipian jiaoshi*, Volume 2, p. 22; Shen Fuwei, *Zhong Xi wenhua jiaoliu shi* (Taipei, 1989), p. 99.

by the third century Funan had become an important link in trade between India and China.⁴⁶ Indian merchants were frequent visitors to both Funan and Jiaozhou, and there was reportedly even some contact with “Rome” (Da-Qin).⁴⁷ In the fifth century, however, Funan, which was located on the mainland, began to be eclipsed by increasingly flourishing ports in eastern Sumatra (predecessors of the famous Śrīvijaya), which were strategically situated near the entrance to the straits of Malacca and in a favorable position from which to catch monsoon breezes for direct navigation to China.⁴⁸ North of Funan in what is now central Vietnam, meanwhile, the rise of a native kingdom known to the Chinese as Linyi (later called Champa) led to frequent armed conflict with Jiaozhou, weakening that southernmost Chinese outpost, and possibly contributing to Jiaozhou’s eventual decline relative to Guangzhou.⁴⁹

Even as archaeological evidence suggests that the urban economy in northern India and Central Asia may have been decaying by the fourth century, maritime trade with India’s eastern ports flourished. Contacts between India and China were only increasing—including trade in specialized Buddhist holy goods such as the so-called “seven treasures” (*saptaratna*).⁵⁰ A significant number of Buddhist monks are known to have traveled to China by sea from the south in this period.⁵¹ The renowned Chinese Buddhist pilgrim Faxian (c. 339–420), for example, travelled to India overland, departing from Chang’an in 399, but returned by sea to the Eastern Jin dynasty in 412.

Besides Buddhism, and Buddhist art, Indian contributions to Chinese culture during the Six Dynasties period included a range of Sanskrit-vocabulary items, such as both of what became the two standard Chinese words for “glass,” and a number of books on Indian medicine.⁵² In addition, the solid chair (as opposed to the folding stool with a soft seat, which may have come to China slightly earlier from northern Africa) appears to have been introduced to China from India as a spin-off from Buddhist monastic practice during the Six Dynasties.⁵³ Indian influences also helped shape the development of “recent-style” poetry during the late

⁴⁶ *Tang huiyao*, 100.1786; George Coedès, Walter F. Vella, ed., Susan Brown Cowing, trans., *The Indianized states of Southeast Asia* (Honolulu, 1968), pp. 40–41.

⁴⁷ *LS* 54.798.

⁴⁸ Wolters, *Early Indonesian commerce*, pp. 36, 71, 152–153, 157–158, 197, 212, 221, 226–228.

⁴⁹ See, for example, *LS* 54.785.

⁵⁰ Xinru Liu, *Ancient India and ancient China: Trade and religious exchanges, AD 1–600* (Delhi, 1988), pp. 37, 39, 100–102, 146.

⁵¹ Feng Chengjun, *Zhongguo Nanyang jiaotong shi* (Taipei, 1993), pp. 31–35.

⁵² Xinru Liu, *Ancient India*, pp. 58–59; Shen Fuwei, *Zhong Xi wenhua*, 188.

⁵³ John Kieschnick, *The impact of Buddhism on Chinese material culture* (Princeton, 2003), pp. 229–247.

Six Dynasties, as well as the genre of narrative fiction that came to fruition not long afterwards.⁵⁴

Maritime trade probably did not surpass the importance of the old overland Central Asian trade routes until the mid-Tang dynasty. Most of the shipping during the Six Dynasties period was, furthermore, in Southeast Asian rather than Chinese hands.⁵⁵ However, Three Kingdoms' Wu did dispatch a series of Chinese imperial maritime expeditions, beginning around 227, to various now unidentifiable islands—possibly including the Ryūkyūs and Hainan—and to Funan and other destinations in the South Seas.⁵⁶ To the north, Wu also tried to outflank Three Kingdoms' Wei by establishing maritime relations with the Gongsun warlord regime in southern Manchuria in 229–233, and with Koguryō in 236, in both cases without lasting success.⁵⁷

NORTHWEST PASSAGES

In addition to the increasingly important maritime exchanges between India and China, there was also an old overland trade route between Sichuan and Bengal.⁵⁸ The classic east–west trade routes, however, remained the legendary northwestern “Silk Roads” that skirted around the Tarim Basin of what is today Xinjiang. Xinjiang had been brought under Chinese control by as early as the Western Han dynasty, but the region was only sporadically tractable to Chinese authority. Even when Chinese imperial power was at its height, Chinese dynasties still tended to preserve the names of local kingdoms and administer the region indirectly through native vassals.⁵⁹ During the Six Dynasties period, moreover, much of the Silk Road traffic (which was always mostly short-distance and small in scale) was in the hands of Indo-European-speaking Sogdians from Central Asia. Throughout this period, Xinjiang—then commonly known simply as the “Western Regions” (*Xiyu*)—remained a thoroughly exotic foreign world in Chinese eyes.

⁵⁴ Victor H. Mair and Tsu-lin Mei, “The Sanskrit origins of recent style prosody,” *HJAS* 51.2 (1991), pp. 375–470; Victor H. Mair, “The narrative revolution in Chinese literature: Ontological presuppositions,” *CLEAR* 5.1–2 (1983), pp. 1–27.

⁵⁵ Kenneth R. Hall, *Maritime trade and state development in early Southeast Asia* (Honolulu, 1985), p. 42.

⁵⁶ Feng Chengjun, *Zhongguo Nanyang*, pp. 11–18; Xiang Da, “Han Tang jian xiyu ji hainan zhuguo gu dilishu xulu,” in *idem*, *Tang dai Chang'an yu xiyu wenming* (Taipei, 1988), p. 567.

⁵⁷ Rafe de Crespigny, *Generals of the south: The foundation and early history of the Three Kingdoms state of Wu* (Canberra, 1990), pp. 479–481; Li Donghua, *Zhongguo baiyang fazhan guanjian shi, di, ge'an yanjiu (gudai pian)* (Taipei, 1990), p. 95; *SGZ* 3.107, 8.253, 47.1136–1138.

⁵⁸ *SGZ* 30.860.

⁵⁹ Zhou Hong, “Cong kaogu ziliao kan Han Tang liangchao dui gudai Xinjiang de guanxia jingying,” *Xinjiang shifan daxue xuebao (zheshe ban)* 2000.4, p. 40.

The first known Chinese Buddhist pilgrim to “study abroad,” in 260, for example, went no further than to Khotan (Yutian), in the southwestern Tarim Basin, to obtain a Sanskrit text of a sutra.⁶⁰ At the time, the Khotanese were speakers of an Iranian language that had been heavily infused with Sanskrit vocabulary.⁶¹ The residents of Kashgar (Shule), in the far western Tarim, were reported somewhat later, in Tang times, to have green eyes, and to practice tattooing and cranial deformation.⁶² At Niya, in the south-central Tarim, around the third century, the natives were speakers of an unidentifiable language (possibly Indo-European), but documents were written in an Indic dialect and script (Kharoṣṭhī), as well as in Chinese, and modern explorers have found there seal impression images of Athena, Hermes, Heracles, and Zeus.⁶³

At the same time, ironically, the northwestern Gansu corridor that leads into Xinjiang proved to be something of a haven for Chinese elite culture during the chaos of the fourth century. Between 301 and 376, the Chinese-ruled Former Liang dynasty maintained exceptional stability in this region. At its peak, Former Liang may have controlled most of modern Gansu and Xinjiang, as well as parts of Qinghai and Ningxia, and facilitated increased exchanges between China and the Western Regions.⁶⁴ Despite the fragmentation of ancient unified empires everywhere throughout Eurasia by the fourth century, Chinese knowledge of the routes west was actually improving.⁶⁵

In the fifth century, control over the Tarim Basin was contested between the Tuoba Xianbei-ruled Northern Wei dynasty, based in China, and the Ruanruan nomads of Mongolia. In the late fifth and sixth centuries, both were joined in the competition for dominion by the Tuyuhun coming from the south, the Gaoche (who had been subordinate to the Ruanruan until 487) in the vicinity of Turfan, and the Hepthalites (or White Huns, known to the Chinese as Yada) coming from the west. The Ruanruan may have sprung from similar origins as the Xianbei, and they are frequently identified with the Avars of the west. Little is known about them for certain, however, including even what language they spoke or what they may have called themselves in

⁶⁰ Haneda Akira, “Tō-zai kōtsū,” in *Kizoku shakai*, ed. Kyōdai tōyōshi kankōkai (Osaka, 1981), p. 97; *Gao seng zhuan*, 4.92–93.

⁶¹ Valerie Hansen, *The Silk Road: A new history* (Oxford, 2012), pp. 209–210.

⁶² *Da Tang xiyu ji*, 12.995; *XTS* 221a.6233.

⁶³ Hansen, *Silk Road*, pp. 25–55; M. Aurel Stein, *Ruins of desert Cathay: Personal narrative of explorations in Central Asia and westernmost China*, 1912 (New York, 1968), pp. x, 273–275, 284.

⁶⁴ Chen Yinke, *Sui Tang zhidu yuanyuan luelungao* (Shijiazhuang, 2002), pp. 22–30; Yu Taishan, ed., *Xiyu tongzhi* (Zhengzhou, 1996), pp. 80–81, 109; *JS* 86.2237.

⁶⁵ Xinru Liu, *Ancient India*, 31.

their own tongue.⁶⁶ The Tuyuhun, meanwhile, originated as a branch of the Murong Xianbei who had migrated west from southern Manchuria to the Qinghai region in the late third century, where they came to be known by the personal name of their first leader.⁶⁷ The Gaoche, or “High Carts,” were a Turkic-speaking people, while the Hephtalites were Zoroastrians and probable speakers of an Indo-European language (although, like other large nomadic empires, they may have really been something of a mixture).⁶⁸

According to the report of a Buddhist pilgrimage in 518, the Hephtalites did not live in cities but “governed as a mobile army,” receiving tribute from over forty countries stretching from Persia to Khotan.⁶⁹ During periods of intense struggle, trade and communications in the Tarim Basin could be seriously disrupted, but when any one of these competing groups was ascendant, or during intervals of balanced power, interactions were often deliberately encouraged. For example, when the Hephtalites were strong in the western Tarim Basin, communications were established between China, India, Persia, and even the Byzantine Empire.⁷⁰

Sassanid Persian coins from the Six Dynasties era have been found not only in Xinjiang, but also in China proper as far south as modern Guangdong.⁷¹ A Buddhist temple in the early sixth-century Northern Wei capital of Luoyang supposedly accommodated over 3,000 foreign monks from as far west as “Rome.”⁷² There were twelve recorded Sassanid Persian embassies to China’s Northern Dynasties, as well as two to Southern Dynasty Liang, and the Byzantine (Eastern Roman) Empire sent three known embassies to Northern Wei. In 363, an embassy from Constantinople even arrived at the Eastern Jin dynasty capital in south China, purportedly renewing earlier relations.⁷³

⁶⁶ Lin Gan, *Dong Hu shi* (Hohhot, 2007), p. 134; Samuel Szádeczky-Kardoss, “The Avars,” and Denis Sinor, “The establishment and dissolution of the Türk empire,” both in *The Cambridge history of early Inner Asia*, ed. Denis Sinor (Cambridge, 1990), pp. 207, 291–293.

⁶⁷ *JS* 97.2537–2539; Gabriella Molè, *The T’u-yü-hun from the Northern Wei to the time of the Five Dynasties* (Rome, 1970), pp. xii–xiii.

⁶⁸ Edwin G. Pulleyblank, “The Chinese and their neighbors in prehistoric and early historic times,” in *The origins of Chinese civilization*, ed. David N. Keightley (Berkeley, 1983), pp. 455, 457–458; Pulleyblank, “The high carts,” pp. 22–23; Liu Xueyao, *Wu hu shi lun*, pp. 453–455. Chinese sources identify the Hephtalites as descendants of the Yuezhi people who had inhabited the Gansu corridor at the beginning of the Han dynasty.

⁶⁹ *Luoyang qielan ji jiaozhu* by Yang Xuanzhi, comm. Fan Xiangyong (Shanghai, 1978), 5.288–289; W. J. F. Jenner, trans., *Memories of Loyang: Yang Hsüan-chih and the lost capital (493–534)* (Oxford, 1981), pp. 259–260.

⁷⁰ Li Yanling, “Youmu shili zai Talimu pendu de juezhu ji qi dui jiaotong de yingxiang: yi Rouran, Tuyuhun, Gaoche, Yada wei zhongxin,” *Xiyu yanjiu* 2009.4, pp. 27–36.

⁷¹ Albert E. Dien, *Six Dynasties civilization* (New Haven, 2007), pp. 280–281.

⁷² *Luoyang qielan ji jiaozhu*, 4.235–236; Jenner, *Memories of Loyang*, p. 249.

⁷³ *Jin qiju zhu*, quoted in *Taiping yulan*, 787.5a, p. 3617a.

North of the Tarim Basin in Xinjiang lies the steppe, a belt of grassland reaching from Mongolia westward to the Hungarian plain that was home to nomadic peoples who were premodern China's most frequent foreign adversaries. Between 402 and 555, the nomads dominant in the region of modern Mongolia were the Ruanruan. (Prior to their conquest of north China, the Tuoba Xianbei rulers of the Northern Wei dynasty had themselves been active in the region of Inner Mongolia.) After the Northern Wei dynasty split into two halves in 534, the Ruanruan became enough of a force that both eastern and western leaders in north China took Ruanruan brides. The eastern of these Ruanruan princesses colorfully refused to speak the Chinese language her entire life, bringing a whiff of nomadic customs onto the Chinese Central Plain.⁷⁴

By 555, the Ruanruan had been defeated and absorbed by the Türks (Tujue), their own former subjects, who allied with Sassanid Persia after 563 to smash the Hephtalites and construct a great nomadic empire stretching from Mongolia to the Black Sea. These Türks appear to have originated as ironworkers in the service of the Ruanruan in the southern foothills of the Altai Mountains—a region where the use of coal to smelt iron had been reported as early as the fourth century.⁷⁵ After 545, the establishment of relatively close relations between these Türks and the northwestern dynasties in China (first Western Wei, 534–557, and then its successor Northern Zhou, 557–581) provided those dynasties with leverage against their rivals, as well as supplies of horses and military equipment. This relationship may have contributed to the transformation of these northwestern dynasties from what were initially the weakest states in a divided China into the strongest—foreshadowing the reunification of China in 589 under the next northwestern-based dynasty, the Sui (581–618), and the end of the Six Dynasties.⁷⁶

⁷⁴ BS 14.518; Xue Zongzheng, *Tujue shi* (Beijing, 1992), p. 87.

⁷⁵ Xue Zongzheng, *Tujue shi*, pp. 71–73; Yu Taishan, *Xiyu tongshi*, pp. 104, 107–108. For coal, see “Shi shi Xiyu ji,” fourth century, quoted in *Shui jing zhu*, 2.24.

⁷⁶ Li Wencai, “Shilun Bei Zhou waijiao de jige wenti,” in *idem*, *Wei Jin Nanbeichao Sui Tang zhengzhi yu wenhua lungao* (Beijing, 2006), pp. 237–241; Lü Chunsheng, *Bei Qi zhengzhi shi yanjiu: Bei Qi shuailiang yuanyin zhi kaocha* (Taipei, 1987), pp. 80–81; Xue Zongzheng, *Tujue shi*, pp. 87–88.

CHAPTER 14

THE NORTHERN ECONOMY

Victor Cunrui Xiong

In the wake of the Yellow Turban rebellion (184), a long civil war ensued that raged on well into the third century. For the North, the economic impact of this war was devastating. Great urban centers such as Luoyang and Chang'an were ravaged, vast tracts of land were laid waste, and the population was decimated. As the century progressed, the economy recovered from this destruction only to be plunged into crisis again, beginning in the fourth century. During the early medieval period, spanning 400 years (from the late second century to 589), the economy was volatile and marked by such extreme ups and downs. It was, however, also a period when north China went through significant economic development—old patterns were transformed and new ones emerged. Such practices as “settlement farming” (*tuntian*, lit. “settlement fields”) of the Cao-Wei and the “equal-field” (*juntian*) system of the Northern Wei were of far-reaching significance. Technical breakthroughs were achieved to increase productivity, and evidence seems to point to a marked improvement in the yield of staple crops over the previous period. However, space here prevents full coverage of the breadth of this subject and allows only a focus on some of the more important areas—land tenure, taxation, corvée labor, money, manufacturing and trade, population, and urbanism.

LAND TENURE, TAXATION, AND CORVÉE LABOR

As a primarily agrarian society, it was a basic principle in traditional China that all land belonged ultimately to the state. Governmental policies were promulgated to ensure that the distribution of arable fields and the labor to work them enabled the land to be fully productive so as to provide the financial resources for the state to govern and defend itself. While the central court and its bureaucratic establishment in theory sought vigorously to administer a program of land regulation, within the local administration there was always a strong and not always unreasonable tendency to aggrandize its own interests.

When the state administration faced serious crises, both internal and external, and its central control faltered, the imposition of higher taxes or the inability to provide order led on the one hand to increased levels of violence, the abandonment of the land, and an expanding fugitive population, and, on the other, to local leading families, out of concern for self-defense, expanding their holdings and establishing their own means of protection. The resumption of central control led to a return of those fields to official land registers so as to channel to the coffers of the government the funds acquired by taxation. The accompanying initiation of new land policies and distribution of land was intended to reduce any threat from local magnates.¹

In the late Eastern Han and early Three Kingdoms periods, the land-tenure practice of “settlement farming” gained prominence and enjoyed widespread adoption. Settlement farming had existed as early as the Western Han, when refugees were organized, often by coercion, to cultivate state-owned land in the northwestern frontier area. Gradually, two types of this practice evolved: one with civilian laborers working on civilian settlement farms, and the other with members of the military working on military settlement farms. Farmers of both types had extremely low social status. During the disturbances that marked the late Eastern Han, multitudes of farmers across the socioeconomic spectrum fled, leaving behind vast areas of arable land that lapsed into wilderness. As a result, supporting agricultural production to feed the army and the populace became increasingly urgent, and settlement farming offered a convenient way to address this need. Cao Cao, who was in the process of establishing the dynasty that eventually succeeded the Han, was an enthusiastic advocate for these settlements, no doubt because he recognized their added benefits. First, these agricultural settlement farms allowed him to compete against the powerful local families for control of labor and other resources; second, they served as an effective way to absorb refugees and surrendered soldiers. Those who were settled on these settlement farms were taxed a half of their yield. Those who were supplied with oxen to pull the plows were charged an extra 10 percent. In addition, these settlers were also required to fulfill ad hoc *corvée* and military obligations.²

Contemporaneous with settlement farmers were numerous private farmers or freeholders, a legacy of the Han land-tenure system, who owned their own means of production, including land. For all the attention given to settlement farmers, freeholders seem to have outnumbered them. This might be because

¹ Gao Min, *Wei Jin Nanbeichao jingji juan*, in the series *Zhongguo gudai jingji tongshi*, Part 3.2 (Beijing, 1998), pp. 869–872 (crop yield); He Dezhang, *Zhongguo jingji tongshi*, Volume 3, *Wei Jin Nanbeichao juan* (Changsha, 2002), pp. 447–450.

² Kuang Shiyuan, “Cao-Wei tuntian kao,” in *idem*, *Wei Jin Nanbeichao yanjiu lunji* (Taipei, 1984), pp. 82–120.

most freeholders were former refugees, including bankrupt farmers who had been settled on land received from the government. Whether a refugee became a settlement farmer or freeholder depended on geography as well as on local and court policy. A freehold household paid two types of tax levy: a household land tax that required payment in grain per *mu* of land owned, and a household cloth tax payable in silk and silk floss. These replaced the poll taxes payable in coin money under the Han.³ By 264, the Cao-Wei had begun to abolish civilian settlement farms.⁴ This was an important step toward downsizing the state-run sector of the agrarian economy, as settlement farmers were allowed to move up the social ladder to become freeholders.

In approximately 280, a population classification was introduced for the first time for purposes of registering land and taxation. Males and females between sixteen and sixty *sui* were “full adults” (*zhengding*); those between thirteen and fifteen, and between sixty-one and sixty-five, were considered “secondary adults” (*ciding*). Everyone below twelve and above sixty-six were “elderly or children” (*laoxiao*).⁵ These categories would remain the basis for future classification systems in the subsequent dynasties for centuries to come. At the same time, the Western Jin issued an ordinance (*shi*) concerning the upper limits on the amounts of land that could be held by an individual (*zhantian*). An adult male could own up to seventy *mu*, and an adult female up to thirty *mu*. The ordinance allowed an official to own up to 1,000 to 5,000 *mu* of land, depending on his rank.⁶ Elsewhere the sources refer to taxable lands (*ketian*): fifty *mu* per adult male, twenty *mu* per adult female, and half that latter amount for teenagers. It was likely that these lands were the taxable portions of the land one had registered.⁷ On the other hand, there is no clear indication whether the lands were transferrable. Some evidence points to a government ban on the sale of land, which failed. The ban itself suggests that the initial intention was not to give freeholders full control of lands in their possession.⁸ A striking feature of this system was the enormous

³ Gao, *Wei Jin Nanbeichao jingji juan*, pp. 324–331, 508–520. Since the cloth and floss were produced within the households, the burden of buying coins to pay the tax was removed.

⁴ Zheng Xin, “Cao-Wei tuntian zhidu yanjiu,” in *idem*, *Wei Jin Nanbeichao shi tansuo* (Jinan, 1989), pp. 97–103.

⁵ *JS* 26.790. *Sui* is the traditional means of counting age wherein the child is one year old at birth and adds a year on each New Year, not on birthdays.

⁶ He, *Zhongguo jingji tongshi*, 3.318–327. *Zhantian* is an ambiguous term that defies precise definition. It seems to mean the ownership and registration of an amount of land to which one was entitled. See Wu Jianguo, *Juntianzhi yanjiu* (Kunming, 1992), pp. 16–17, 32–43. As Yang Lien-sheng, “Notes on the economic history of the Chin dynasty,” *HJAS* 9.2 (1946), p. 124, says, “Actually this limitation may not always have been necessary because most of the people must have owned less.”

⁷ He, *Zhongguo jingji tongshi*, 3.325.

⁸ Li Jiannong, *Zhongguo jingjishi gao*, Volume 2, *Wei Jin Nanbeichao bufen* (Beijing, 1963); Gao, *Wei Jin Nanbeichao jingji juan*, pp. 363–378.

discrepancy between officials and freeholders as recipients of land. Even the lowest official of rank nine was entitled to an acreage ten times that of a typical freehold household. Modern scholars often speculate as to how the *zhantian* and *ketian* were related: was the *ketian* included in the *zhantian*, or were they in addition? On the basis of what the sources say, it is unlikely that this question can be resolved.⁹ For cloth taxes, each household headed by an adult male had to pay three bolts (*pi*) of silk and three catties (*jin*) of silk floss. However, the figures documented in the ordinance represented the average amounts of tax payable. In practice, the taxpaying households were classified into nine categories based on household wealth, and were taxed accordingly.¹⁰

In the Sixteen States period, settlement farming, which, in its “military” variety, had been practiced throughout the Western Jin, was adopted by such non-Han Northern regimes as the Later Zhao, Former Yan, and Former Qin. Under the Northern Wei, both civilian and military settlement farming experienced a renaissance. Additionally, after the Wei Tuoba tribesmen had been converted to sedentary settlers en masse,¹¹ a different land-tenure system, known as *jikou shoutian* (allocation of land based on individuals), debuted in the environs of Pingcheng, the capital. This system granted varying amounts of land according to household size and the ages of recipients. In some ways, this system adumbrated the rise of the equal-field system.¹²

The equal-field system, aimed at boosting agricultural production and tax receipts on a long-term basis, was officially unveiled in 485 with the promulgation of the first equal-field statute. It expanded on previous rules regarding land allocation and took into consideration not only household size and age, but also gender. There were provisions of additional land for oxen and bondservants.¹³ Unlike its predecessor, *jikou shoutian*, this new system was adopted widely in the North.¹⁴

⁹ See Li, *Zhongguo jingjishi gao*, 2.123–125; Yang Lien-sheng, “Notes,” pp. 122–129; He, *Zhongguo jingji tongshi*, 3.325.

¹⁰ Yang Jiping, Chapter 4, “Wei Jin Nanbeichao de zudiao liyi zhidu,” in *Zhongguo fuyi zhidu shi*, ed. Zheng Xueming (Fuzhou, 1994), pp. 84–85. Recently discovered fifth-century documents from Turfan also attest to the practice of this “progressive” taxation scheme. See Pei Chengguo, “Tulufan xin chutu Bei Liang jizi, jikou chusizhang yanjiu,” *Zhonghua wenshi luncong* 88 (2007.4), pp. 65–103.

¹¹ Wu Jianguo, *Juntianzhi yanjiu*, p. 49. ¹² Gao, *Wei Jin Nanbeichao jingji jian*, pp. 281–285.

¹³ Later, the Northern Qi, Northern Zhou, Sui, and Tang all issued their own equal-field statutes, which were variations of the original Northern Wei document. See Wu Jianguo, *Juntianzhi yanjiu*, pp. 64 ff.

¹⁴ On bondservants, see Scott Pearce, “Status, labor and law: Special service households under the Northern Dynasties,” *HJAS* 51.1 (1991), pp. 89–138. See also Yi-t’ung Wang, “Slaves and other comparable social groups during the Northern Dynasties (386–618),” *HJAS* 16 (1953), pp. 293–364; Yang Chung-i, “Buqu yan’ge luekao,” *Shihuo* 1.3 (1935), pp. 97–107; translated as “Evolution of the status of ‘dependents,’” in *Chinese social history: Translations of selected studies*, ed. E-tu Zen Sun and John de Francis (New York, 1966), pp. 142–156.

Reasons for the proposition and implementation of the equal-field system included the availability of a vast quantity of abandoned land as a result of war and famine, increasing attention being given to farming by the Tuoba leadership (as is attested by Emperor Xiaowen's numerous imperial edicts on agriculture prior to the introduction of the system),¹⁵ and the desire by the court to break the economic power of local magnates who sheltered residents under their control living in fortified villages (*wubao*, *wubi*, or *wulei*) that dotted the rural landscape of the North from taxation.

An innovative feature of this system was the distinction between open fields (*lutian*) and mulberry fields (*sangtian*)/hemp fields (*matian*). Open fields, used for grain crops, were returnable after the recipient reached a specific advanced age or died. Mulberry/hemp fields, however, were inheritable. Specifically, an adult male was entitled to a grant of forty *mu* of open field and twenty *mu* of mulberry field (or alternatively ten *mu* of hemp field); an adult woman was entitled to half of each category. The open-field grant could be doubled, or, less frequently, tripled, depending on the need for crop rotation. There was also one *mu* of land for gardens and dwellings per household. Each household also received an extra grant of thirty *mu* for each ox, up to four head. Male and female bondservants were also entitled to grants.

This reform in land tenure was accompanied by a new tax code that brought some clarity to a hitherto chaotic tax system, and by measures that not only weakened the dominance of local magnates but also created a network of grassroots organizations that kept local residents under surveillance. The basic annual taxes for a couple consisted of a bolt (*pi*)¹⁶ of silk (cloth tax) and two *shi* (bushels) of grain (land tax).¹⁷ In addition, there were taxes for unmarried adult males, bondservants, and owners of oxen, respectively at one-quarter, one-eighth, and one-twentieth of the basic rate. This seems to represent a major reduction of the tax burden for the average household. But in reality it forced more households to pay taxes individually rather than as part of large households, albeit at greatly reduced rates.¹⁸

The only contemporary textual evidence for the implementation of the *juntian* system during the Six Dynasties period is a Dunhuang document of the Western Wei dated 547, but which probably reflects policy dating back to

¹⁵ WS 7a.137, 141, 143–144, 148, 150. It must be pointed out that Empress Dowager Feng (d. 490), Xiaowen's grandmother, played a decisive role in the enunciation and implementation of the equal-field system.

¹⁶ Under the Northern Wei, one *pi* was four *zhang* or roughly 11.04 meters in length; one *zhang* (ten *chi*) was about 2.79 meters. See Wu Chengluo, *Zhongguo duliangheng shi* (Shanghai, 1937), pp. 90, 192.

¹⁷ One *shi* was about 39.63 liters under the Northern Wei. See Wu Chengluo, *Zhongguo duliangheng shi*, p. 71.

¹⁸ Gao, *Wei Jin Nanbeichao jingji juan*, p. 563.

the Northern Wei. It shows marked differences from the original statute. The amount of an open-field grant was reduced by half, with an adult male and an adult female receiving twenty *mu* and ten *mu* respectively. This probably indicates that adjustments were made in allocations where there was a shortage of arable land. Moreover, the official length of adulthood was shortened, reducing the duration of the legal possession of an open-field grant.¹⁹

After the 534–535 division of the Northern Wei, its successor states—the Eastern Wei–Northern Qi and Western Wei–Northern Zhou—continued to implement the equal-field system with modifications. In general the tax burden was heavier for the average household. Both states doubled the basic cloth tax from one bolt (*pi*) to one double-bolt (*pi*),²⁰ and levied an additional cloth tax of eight *liang* (ounces) of silk floss. The Northern Qi increased the land tax from two to two and a half *shi*; and the Northern Zhou increased the same to five bushels (*bu* = one *shi*), while refraining from taxing bondservants and oxen. The Sui that followed reduced the land tax to three *shi* and the cloth tax to two *zhang* (half a bolt).²¹

The equal-field system continued to be implemented into the Tang dynasty. This fact has been confirmed by contemporary documents that survive in the northwest (mainly Dunhuang and Turfan). But *juntian* became increasingly unenforceable because of the growth of private landownership, irreconcilable contradictions embedded in the system, and especially the growing numbers of runaways forced off the land by heavy taxes and natural disasters. By 780 the system had become officially defunct.²²

Of the three forms of land tenure—settlement farming, landowning, and equal field—all required their participants to pay taxes: land taxes based on per-unit crop yield under the Cao-Wei, and per-household land and household taxes in later times. The financial impact of these taxes varied greatly over time and from household to household. Settlement farmers were oppressively burdened by having to part with 60 percent of their income. The husband, wife, and their two or three children who composed a freehold household, or the equal-field household that received its full share of land grants, however, paid more reasonable annual taxes. For many households that received less than their legal share, the tax burden was heavier, but probably manageable. Still, on top of the regular tax obligations, there was a much more onerous financial burden called the *corvée*.

¹⁹ Wu Jianguo, *Juntianzhi yanjiu*, pp. 93–109. ²⁰ Wu Chengluo, *Zhongguo duliangheng shi*, p. 90.

²¹ SS 24.677–681; Étienne Balazs, *Le traité économique du "Soueï-chou"* (Leiden, 1953), pp. 141–151. Under the Northern Qi, cash could be used to pay cloth taxes. See SS 24.678.

²² Li Jiannong, *Zhongguo jingjishi gao*, 2.239–250; Victor Cunrui Xiong, "The land-tenure system of Tang China: A study of the equal-field system and the Turfan documents," *TP* 85 (1999), pp. 328–390.

Corvée, or mandatory free labor service for the government, was required of commoner subjects under all Northern regimes. Corvée labor was often used for, but not limited to, public works. First, there was regular corvée (*zhengyi*), which was mostly used in large-scale government projects. The standard length of corvée is not clearly documented for the Three Kingdoms and Jin periods. During the Southern Dynasties, however, an official record states that (regular) corvée service should not last more than twenty days per year.²³ In reality, however, governments routinely required their subjects to perform corvée duty for longer than twenty and even thirty days. The situation was particularly egregious during the Cao-Wei and the Sixteen States periods. Under Emperor Xiaowen of the Northern Wei (r. 471–499), there were signs that the length of corvée had become standardized to thirty days, which was extended later to forty days. Under the Western Wei, a statute required that the length of corvée be either ten, twenty, or thirty days, depending on the quality of the harvest. Under the Northern Qi and Northern Zhou, generally speaking, the corvée burden seems to have worsened.²⁴ In addition to regular corvée, there were ad hoc corvée levies associated with transportation, the military, and a miscellany of other items that involved clerical or menial work, craftwork, and certain military projects. These duties were not performed by ordinary taxpaying subjects but by hereditary “professionals” belonging to “clerical,” “craftsman,” and “military” households.²⁵

There were exemptions granted from taxes and corvée duties. Under the Cao-Wei, the court often transferred settlement farmers to officials as gifts. As land clients (*tianke*), these farmers were exempted from land taxes (50 or 60 percent of yield) and corvée. Numerous freeholders attached themselves to official households in order to avoid corvée. The officials themselves were probably at least partially exempted from taxes and completely exempted from corvée, based on historical precedents.²⁶ Under the Jin, the court exempted members of the royal house and the officialdom and the registered *shi* 士 (upper gentry) class from land taxes and corvée. The court also institutionalized the hereditary protective privilege (*yin*), which allowed its recipients to extend the exemptions to up to fifteen households and three “tenant clients”

²³ SS 24.674; Balazs, *Le traité économique*, p. 137.

²⁴ SS 24.679; Balazs, *Le traité économique*, p. 149; Gao, *Wei Jin Nanbeichao jingji juan*, pp. 648–649.

²⁵ Yang Jiping, “Wei Jin Nanbeichao de zudiao liyi zhidu,” pp. 132–136; Gao, *Wei Jin Nanbeichao jingji juan*, pp. 609–633, 645–669.

²⁶ The settlement farmers were exempt from corvée, and as land clients they continued to enjoy that exemption. See Yang Jiping, “Wei Jin Nanbeichao de zudiao liyi zhidu,” pp. 149–150; Gao, *Wei Jin Nanbeichao jingji juan*, pp. 669–673.

(*dianke*, similar to “land clients”).²⁷ Under the Northern Wei, members of the royal house, consort families, and Tuoba nobility were exempt from taxes and corvée. The exemption privileges were granted to some grassroots leaders as well. For example, in a community of 125 households, there were thirty-one leaders (three chiefs) chosen from thirty-one households, and all were granted exemption from corvée for one to three household members. Later, tax exemption was granted as well, but only to one male per household. The practice survived in the Eastern Wei–Northern Qi; but not in the Western Wei, where it had disappeared by 547.²⁸ As for the convention of exempting ranked officials from taxes and corvée, there is little or no evidence of its adoption under the Northern Dynasties.²⁹

Another significant financial burden of this period was military service. Under the Cao-Wei, the military consisted mainly of professional soldiers of hereditary military households, and military service had minimal impact on freehold subjects. Under the Western Jin, the practice continued, but for a variety of reasons the sources of troops dried up. Consequently, the government had to conscript and enlist freeholders and to convert bondservants, servile clients (*tongke*), and criminals to become professional soldiers. Because of the extremely low social status of military households and professional soldiers, the social and financial costs to the individuals involved were extremely high.³⁰ In the late Northern Wei, self-supporting Han freeholders were conscripted for regular rotational garrison duty. Later this practice was institutionalized and every taxpaying adult male freeholder became liable for military service lasting from twenty days to two months. Very likely, the military service was treated as a substitute for corvée, with harsh consequences for the one serving. Because of the long-lasting nature of military assignments, the conscripted freeholder was required to stay on duty for a considerably longer time than two months. In that case, he probably served not only for himself, but also on behalf of other freeholders in the same hamlet who provided him with a set amount of silk as compensation.³¹

²⁷ The *Jinshu* gives “fifty households,” probably in error; Chen Yande, “Wei Jin Nanbeichao de zu diao liyi zhidu,” pp. 150–152. On “clients,” see Tang Changru, “Clients and bound retainers in the Six Dynasties period,” in *State and society in early medieval China*, ed. Albert E. Dien (Stanford, 1990), pp. 111–138.

²⁸ Chen Yande, “Wei Jin Nanbeichao de zu diao liyi zhidu,” pp. 157–158.

²⁹ Gao, *Wei Jin Nanbeichao bingzhi yanjiu* (Zhengzhou, 1998), pp. 683–688.

³⁰ Gao Min, *Wei Jin Nanbeichao bingzhi yanjiu* (Zhengzhou, 1998), pp. 121–138; He Ziquan, “Wei Jin Nanchao de bingzhi,” in *idem*, *Dushi ji* (Shanghai, 1982), pp. 269–316. For more detail about the military during this period see David Graff, “The Art of War,” Chapter 12 in this volume.

³¹ Tang Changru, *Wei Jin Nanbeichao Sui Tang shi san lun* (Wuhan, 1992), pp. 194–209.

MONEY

During the Western Han, the monetary system was based on bronze coinage supplemented by gold bullion.³² It was thrown into total chaos by severe monetary inflation in the late second century which led to the collapse of the coinage. The adoption of a new coin by Dong Zhuo at greatly reduced weight amid the economic devastation brought on by prolonged warfare is usually blamed as the direct reason for the onset of the crisis. In response, Cao Cao reverted to the use of the *wuzhu* coin, the standard Han currency. A portion of the tax burden required payment in these bronze coins, and grain prices plummeted due to the coin shortage. With the establishment of the Wei dynasty under Cao Pi (r. 220–226), Cao Cao's son, historic steps were taken to end payment of taxes with coins and to ban the circulation of the *wuzhu* coin altogether. Business transactions were to be conducted in grain and silk, which suggests a significant decline in economic activity. Soon profiteers found ways to circumvent the new system, soaking grain in water to increase bulk and reducing the thickness of silk cloth to save on cost. During the next reign, that of Cao Rui (r. 226–239, posthumously Emperor Ming), the use of the *wuzhu* coin was restored. The rival states of Wu and Shu both had their own coinages, but they fared even worse and became grossly inflationary because of denomination increases.³³ Under the Western and Eastern Jin, the monetary system was plagued by the persistent shortage of coins, but neither regime bothered to mint new ones. The Western Jin continued to use the *wuzhu* coins of Han and Cao-Wei vintage, whereas the Eastern Jin used the old coins of the South.³⁴

The Northern Wei continued the early Cao-Wei practice of levying taxes in grain and silk. New *wuzhu* coins were minted, but the dynasty refrained for more than a century from issuing a new series. It was under Emperor Xiaowen (r. 471–499), that the first Northern Wei coin, the *taihe wuzhu*, was released in 495 and the two coinages both circulated. Not coincidentally, by that time, the court had already moved into the newly built capital at Luoyang in the

³² Under Emperor Taiwu (r. 424–451), silver coins had been introduced, but they were in circulation for only four years. Gold disappeared from circulation under the Eastern Han, which, according to some scholars, was a result of the growing demand for gold for making Buddhist statues. See Lin Ganquan et al., *Zhongguo jingji tongshi: Qin–Han jingji juan* (Beijing, 1999), pp. 613–614, 628–645.

³³ Gao, *Wei Jin Nanbeichao jingji juan*, pp. 1146–1149. The *wuzhu*, or five-*zhu* coin, was a standard monetary unit established in the Han. The *zhu* was said to be equivalent to the weight of a hundred millet seeds.

³⁴ *JS* 26.794–796; Yang Lien-sheng, “Notes,” p. 181. A late Western Jin satire on money seems to suggest that money, in spite of its corrupting influence, was omnipresent, and that money worship was prevalent in society. See Lu Bao, trans. Victor Cunrui Xiong, “On the Money God,” in *Hawai'i reader in traditional Chinese culture*, ed. Victor H. Mair, Nancy S. Steinhart, and Paul R. Goldin (Honolulu, 2005), pp. 256–259.

Central Plain, which had previously been known as the national commercial center. Still, the new coin was not accepted nationwide as the standard currency, and in many areas people preferred to use older coins.

After the court adopted a proposal in 517 encouraging the minting of new coins, the market was flooded with privately minted coins of inferior quality, resulting in the drastic devaluation of bronze coins and in inflation. Later, a serious effort was made to remedy the situation by minting a coin of complex design. But the effort eventually failed when large quantities of counterfeits appeared in circulation. The coinage system thus remained chaotic through to the end of the dynasty.

Of the two successor dynasties of the Northern Wei, the Eastern Wei initially showed a determination to address the coinage problems. On the suggestion of Gao Cheng, the eldest son of Gao Huan, who was in control of the state, a new coin was issued, aimed at replacing underweight coins in circulation. But the attempt failed due to widespread resistance. Gao Cheng then proposed a new solution by having coins checked at all marketplaces in the state in order to remove from circulation those that were underweight. He also suggested decriminalizing private minting, apparently as a concession to coin makers. But the proposal met strong opposition from officialdom and fell through.³⁵ Thus Gao Cheng's effort at legalization failed; and private minting, which had been widespread, continued unabated.

After the transition of the Eastern Wei to the Northern Qi in 550, another fully weighted coin was issued, but it did not have wide circulation. By the end of the dynasty, the coinage system remained in complete disarray. In Ye alone, there were no less than four types of coin in use. Often, coins varied from prefecture to prefecture, and inferior metals such as tin and iron were used for minting them.

Under the Western Wei, the other successor dynasty of the Northern Wei, the situation was more stable. *Wuzhu* coins were issued on two separate occasions. After the Northern Zhou replaced the Western Wei, it renamed its coins with archaic names, such as *buquan* and *bu*, and implemented a monetary policy resulting in the frequent issuance of coins, a dramatic increase in coin denominations, and zero tolerance for private minting. The last Northern Zhou coin, the *yongtong wanguo*, was issued in 579, with a face value of 500 *wuzhu* coins. But its commercial value was significantly less. Private minting, on the other hand, was rampant, even on pain of death.³⁶

Generally, in the monetary systems of the North the supply of coins was limited and occasionally there were even periods when the use of coins was

³⁵ WS 110.2863–2866.

³⁶ Gao, *Wei Jin Nanbeichao jingji juan*, pp. 1156–1161.

abandoned. The preferred mediums of exchange were grain and silk. This phenomenon prompts some scholars to characterize the Six Dynasties as a period of “natural economy.”³⁷ However, during this period, grain and silk were used as *commodity money*. In other words, although possessed of intrinsic use value they served as a standard measure of value. Transactions conducted using grain and silk were fundamentally different from those done in a natural economy, where goods changed hands essentially without the use of either coin or commodity money. Nevertheless, the long-term preference for grain and silk over coins as money did indicate a severe decline of commerce.³⁸

MANUFACTURING AND TRADE

Heavy government involvement in manufacturing was a long-standing tradition dating back to Han and earlier times and continued throughout the Six Dynasties period. Under Cao Cao and his Cao-Wei successors, there were government offices in charge of textile manufacturing and the mining and production of iron, copper, gold, and silver. One central government agency, the office of the Chamberlain for the Palace Buildings (*jiangzuo dajiang*), was responsible for overseeing the construction projects for the court as well as the artisans involved. Under the Western Jin, Northern Wei, and Eastern Wei–Northern Qi, the chamberlain’s office continued its usual function whereas the Palace Bursary (*shaofu* or *taifu*), another central agency, took charge of other manufacturing activities. Oversight of these agencies was provided by the Board of Works (*gongbu*), one of the six top executive offices under the Department of State Affairs. During the Northern Zhou, the chamberlain’s office was abolished and the name of the Board of Works was changed to the Ministry of Works (*dongguan*).³⁹

The government sector typically dominated certain capital-intensive areas in manufacturing, including ore mining, iron foundries, bronze making, shipbuilding, vehicle manufacturing, and the production of weaponry and architectural tools. Iron operations generally took place in present-day Hebei, Henan, Shaanxi, Shanxi, and Shandong, where iron ore deposits were found in

³⁷ In fact, the phenomenon persisted well into high Tang times. See Quan Hansheng, “Zhongguo ziran jingji,” in *idem*, *Zhongguo jingji shi yanjiu* (Hong Kong, 1976), pp. 1–142.

³⁸ During the Six Dynasties period, Byzantine gold coins and Sassanian silver coins were in use in the northwest, especially in Gaochang under the Qu family and in the Hexi area. See Sun Li, “Sashan yinbi zai Zhongguo de fenbu jiqi gongneng,” *Kaogu xuebao* 2004.1, pp. 35–54; Zhang Xushan, “Woguo jingnei faxian de Baizhanting jinbi jiqi xiangguan wenti,” *Xixue yanjiu* 2003.1, pp. 54–82.

³⁹ Wei Mingkong, *Zhongguo shougongye jingji tongshi: Wei Jin Nanbeichao Sui Tang Wudai jian* (Fuzhou, 2004), pp. 3–8, 19–22.

abundance. Copper ore deposits were mainly located in Shandong and Shanxi. Extant evidence points to Luoyang as the main manufacturing center of bronze objects.⁴⁰ The government sector also produced ordinary and luxury consumer products such wine, textiles, pottery, paper, and gold- and silverware, among others.

Commodities such as iron and salt were considered of vital economic interest to the state and were given special treatment. As early as the Western Han, the Iron Monopoly Offices (*tieguan*) and the Salt Monopoly Offices (*yanguan*) were set up to take monopolistic control of their production and sale. Toward the end of the Eastern Han, Cao Cao set up a government agency in Hebei to supervise iron making and ordered an official to take charge of the Iron Monopoly Offices. These monopolies continued to be enforced by later regimes, but not uniformly or consistently.⁴¹

The private sector took part in manufacturing activities of most types, and made particular contributions to textiles, paper making, and the production of ceramics, lacquerware, and tea. The North was host to all these businesses except for tea production, which was essentially limited to Sichuan and the South. A significant portion of manufactured goods in the private sector consisted of textiles: silk, hemp/ramie, and felt. Of these, hemp/ramie was mainly produced in the South; silk in both the North and the South; and felt in the North and Northwest; cotton was also grown but only in small quantities.⁴² The typical textile producer was an adult woman working on a spinning wheel in a farming household. With the decline of coin circulation, there was a consistent demand for textile products (especially silk cloth) as substitute currency and as a means of paying annual taxes to the government. Often, producers of manufactured goods and consumer products were self-employed craftsmen who possessed the necessary techniques and means of production. Poorer craftsmen without those means had to process raw materials for others. Some of them worked as indentured craftsmen for the government and were of very low status.

Toward the end of the Northern Wei, the government relaxed its control of salt production and iron making, two traditional government monopolies.

⁴⁰ Gao, *Wei Jin Nanbeichao jingji juan*, pp. 919–924, 934–939; Donald B. Wagner, *Science and civilisation in China*, Volume 5, *Chemistry and chemical technology*, Part 11, *Ferrous metallurgy* (Cambridge, 2008); for iron during this period, see pp. 249–277. On these various activities, see also Albert E. Dien, *Six Dynasties civilization* (New Haven, 2007), *passim*.

⁴¹ Gao, *Wei Jin Nanbeichao jingji juan*, pp. 976–978, 911–912, 943–944. On salt production in Sichuan, see Rowan K. Flad, *Salt production and social hierarchy in ancient China* (Cambridge, 2011).

⁴² Gao, *Wei Jin Nanbeichao jingji juan*, pp. 986–988. Cotton was more a curiosity at this period than not: see Michel Cartier, “À propos de l’histoire du coton en Chine: Approche technologique, économique et sociale,” *ÉC* 13, 1–2:421; Chao Kang, *The development of cotton production in China* (Cambridge, MA, 1977), pp. 4–12.

This allowed the private sector to become involved in these industries. Salt production and iron-making operations were expensive, requiring a large pool of manpower laboring in “workshops” for extended periods of time. Not surprisingly, it was the powerful members of the nobility and local magnates—those who possessed the means—who owned and controlled the “workshops.”⁴³

Intricately linked to manufacturing was its twin, trade. The long period of economic depression that followed in the wake of the fall of the Eastern Han was disastrous for trade in the Yellow River valley. Prosperous trading centers, such as Chang'an, Luoyang, Nanyang, Linzi, Dingtao, and Handan, were either reduced to rubble or went into precipitous decline. It was during the Cao-Wei and Western Jin that trade made a significant recovery. Both Luoyang and Ye became hubs of intense commercial activity. However, the tumultuous events that brought down the Western Jin resulted in a persistent economic downturn that seriously impacted commercial trade. Later, it was revived under the Later Zhao, and went through vigorous growth during the Former Qin. According to one record, at that time “the roads from Chang'an to various prefectures were lined with locust trees and willows; for every twenty *li* there was an inn, and for every forty *li*, a posthouse. Travelers made their purchases along the way; craftsmen and traders sold their wares by the roadside.”⁴⁴

Trade in the North suffered a setback when the Former Qin fell, but increased again under the Northern Wei, especially in the reign of Emperor Xiaowen, when Luoyang served as the dominant commercial center. With the collapse of the Northern Wei and the rise of its successor regimes, a cycle of decline and recovery followed.⁴⁵

Those who made a living by trade, known as *shang*, or merchants, were at the bottom of the Confucian social hierarchy of four groups (literati, farmers, craftsmen, and merchants). Most of the *shang* group were small tradesmen who barely made ends meet or operated on a small scale. But there was a handful of rich merchants who had amassed fabulous wealth by luck and by business acumen despite the social stigma against them. There were also high-ranking officials and local magnates doing business on the side. Power and official status gave them a tremendous trade advantage. Some of them amassed a fortune by extorting wealth from merchants passing through their turf. The best known of them is Shi Chong (249–300), a high-ranking local official notorious for his extravagant lifestyle.⁴⁶ To be sure, involvement by officials in

⁴³ Gao, *Wei Jin Nanbeichao jingji juan*, pp. 909–1021; Dien, *Six Dynasties*, pp. 256–260.

⁴⁴ *JS* 113.2895. ⁴⁵ Gao, *Wei Jin Nanbeichao jingji juan*, pp. 1023–1037.

⁴⁶ David R. Knechtges and Taiping Chang, eds., *Ancient and early medieval Chinese literature: A reference guide*, Volume 2 (Leiden, 2010), pp. 881–886.

trade had been common in earlier times. In the era of the Six Dynasties, however, it seemed particularly widespread, which, in turn, severely limited freedom of operation for ordinary tradesmen.⁴⁷

In cities, trade was often conducted in enclosed marketplaces, and cities normally had one marketplace. Capitals often had more. For example, from Western Jin to Northern Wei, Luoyang had three markets. Under the Northern Qi, Ye had two. In smaller cities such as county seats and other low-level settlements, traders operated periodic markets, which were open every three, five, ten, or ten-plus days.⁴⁸

Trade took place across borders as well: among the Three Kingdoms, and between the southern and northern states during the Period of Division (317–589). The historical sources give a glimpse of the types of goods that changed hands between the Northern Wei and the Liu-Song: mules, horses, camels, grape wine, sugarcane, salt, citrus fruits, rice dumplings, conch shell cups, felts, silk brocades, marten fur coats, leather caftans, sable robes, pipas, *konghou* harps, *zheng* zithers, bamboo flutes, and go pieces, among others.⁴⁹ Between North and South, there were no less than five main trade routes, mostly by water. They linked the Huai river valley with the lower Yellow River valley, the middle Yangzi valley with Hanzhong (south Shaanxi and northwest Hubei), and Guanzhong (“Within the Passes”—Shaanxi and Gansu) with Shu (Sichuan).⁵⁰

Land routes, collectively known as the Silk Road, facilitated trade with distant lands and extended from the Central Plain to Guanzhong, the Hexi corridor, and the Western Regions that lay beyond. There were two routes along the northern and southern edges of the Taklamakan desert. Later, a third route was opened that skirted the northern slopes of the Tianshan mountains. All three routes were operational in Cao-Wei times.⁵¹ More routes were added in the following centuries. One of them went from Lanzhou, Gansu, to Zhangye to the west via Xining in Qinghai. Another connected Pingcheng to the eastern section of the Hexi corridor. A third linked Zhangye through Qinghai to Yi prefecture (Sichuan) and eventually the South. This last one, also known as the “Henan route,” was especially important in the post-Jin era

⁴⁷ Li, *Zhongguo jingjishi gao*, 2.104–113.

⁴⁸ Gao, *Wei Jin Nanbeichao jingji juan*, pp. 1049–1055, 1088–1091.

⁴⁹ WS 53.1168–1170; SoS 46.1397–1398, 59.1600–1605; Albert Dien, trans., “The disputation at Pengcheng: Accounts from the *Wei shu* and the *Song shu*,” in *Early medieval China: A sourcebook*, ed. Wendy Swartz et al. (New York, 2014), pp. 43–55.

⁵⁰ Gao, *Wei Jin Nanbeichao jingji juan*, pp. 1101–1105; He, *Zhongguo jingji tongshi*, 3.172–188.

⁵¹ Zhou Weizhou, *Zhongguo zhongshi xibei minzu guanxi yanjiu* (Nanning, 2007), pp. 180–181; Gao, *Wei Jin Nanbeichao jingji juan*, pp. 1092–1119.

as it allowed states in the Western Regions to maintain commercial contact with the South.⁵²

Trade by sea seems primarily to have been engaged in by the southern states. The ship carrying Faxian, the Buddhist monk who returned from India in 413, intended to make landfall at Guangzhou, but, by misadventure, landed in Shandong. That Faxian had to act as translator would seem to indicate that the ship was not a Chinese one.⁵³

POPULATION

In studying the populations of the North, based on the extant demographic information of which the Chinese sources have preserved a large amount, a word of caution is in order. In most cases, population figures in the sources deal with households rather than individuals, and they do not distinguish between urban and rural populations. Further, the figures are based on the official registries, and include neither those who resided beyond the reach of a state in decline nor the *liumin*; that is, transients whose numbers could escalate in times of disorder. Thus some rough estimates have to be made.⁵⁴

Enough demographic records have been preserved to allow a preliminary examination of the population trends in the North during the period in question.⁵⁵ These records, however, are not based on surveys of entire populations but of “registered subjects”; that is, taxpayers and their dependents. Consequently, such records seriously undercount actual populations, probably by as much as a quarter to a third, if not more.

As Table 14.1 indicates, the registered populations in the Three Kingdoms era (7.67 million in 263) and the early Western Jin period (16.16 million in 280) are respectively 14 percent and 29 percent of the registered population in 157, showing prima facie evidence of drastic decline from the previous height during the Eastern Han. From 263 to 280, the records indicate a rapid

⁵² Tang Changru, “Nanbeichao qijian Xiyu yu Nanchao de ludao jiaotong,” in *idem*, *Wei Jin Nanbeichao shilun shiyi* (Beijing, 1983), pp. 186–195.

⁵³ Dien, *Six Dynasties*, pp. 380–381.

⁵⁴ The average household size is estimated to be five, and the urban household number of the seat of a prefecture/commandery is estimated to be 50 percent of the whole. For examples, see Liang Fangzhong, *Zhongguo lidai bukou tiandi tianfu tongji* (Shanghai, 1980), pp. 41–44, 56–68. There were also area commanders (*dudu*) in charge of both military and civil affairs, similar in power to prefects. Under the Northern Zhou, the term *dudu* was replaced with *zongguan*, and a higher-level rank was created called *da zongguan* (senior commander). See Yan Gengwang, *Zhongguo difang xingzheng zhidu shi (yibu): Wei Jin Nanbeichao difang xingzheng zhidu* (Shanghai, 2007), pp. 505–535.

⁵⁵ On traditional Chinese demography, see Hans Bielenstein, “Chinese historical demography, AD 2–1982,” *BMFEA* 59 (1987), pp. 1–288, esp. 15–19; *idem*, “The census of China during the period 2–742 A.D.,” *BMFEA* 19 (1947), pp. 125–163.

Table 14.1 *Registered populations, 157–280*

State	CE	Pop.	
Eastern Han	157	56.5 m	
Wei	263	5.37 m	After annexing Shu (0.94 m)
		(4.43 + 0.94)	
Wu	242	2.4 m	
	263	2.3 m	
	280	2.3 m	
Wei-Shu-Wu	263	7.67 m	14% of pop. at 157
Western Jin	280	16.16 m	After annexing Wu;
			29% of pop. at 157
	157–280		4.5% (annual growth rate)

Source: Liang Fangzhong, *Zhongguo lidai bukou tiandi tianfu tongji* (Shanghai, 1980), pp. 20, 38–39. Estimates are in italics. Note: Yang Lien-sheng, "Notes on the economic history of the Chin dynasty," *HJAS* 9.2 (1946), 114, estimates the population in 220 at one-tenth of the Eastern Han peak.

rebound in registered population, with a compound annual growth rate of 4.5 percent. However, this rate would not have been sustainable in an *actual* population in a traditional society.⁵⁶ For the following Sixteen States period, demographic calculations become much more difficult because of lack of reliable data. Any figures arrived at can only be regarded as rough estimates.

The next plunge of the registered population took place approximately in the first two to three decades of the fourth century when Jin China encountered two consecutive catastrophic events—the Disturbances of the Eight Princes and the Xiongnu invasion that culminated in the sack of Luoyang in 311. From 280 to 318–329, the demographic figures in the North indicate a population drop of close to 50 percent (Table 14.2).

From the ascendancy of the Former Zhao to the peak of the Former Qin, the registered population of the North was in an upward trajectory and reached 23 million in 383,⁵⁷ but it plummeted in the wake of the Battle of the Fei River (383) when the Eastern Jin routed the Former Qin army. Thereafter, the Former Qin disintegrated as six local regimes rose to fill the void.⁵⁸ The most promising of these was the revived Tuoba state under the dynastic title of (Northern) Wei, which went on to unite the North by 439. At its peak in 520, the Northern Wei had an estimated registered population of 21 million.

The end of the Northern Wei was accompanied by a serious decline of the registered population to 3.375 million households (or 13 million individuals).

⁵⁶ Zhao Gang and Chen Zhongyi, *Zhongguo tudi zhidu shi* (Taipei, 1996), pp. 129–131.

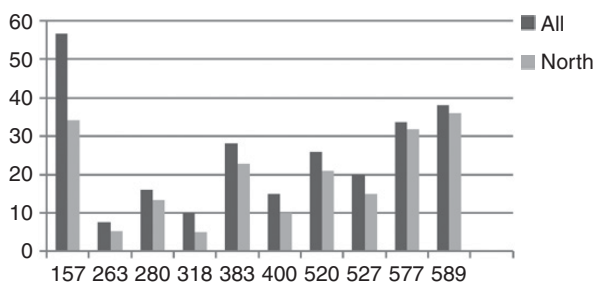
⁵⁷ Gao, *Wei Jin Nanbeichao jingji juan*, pp. 109–110.

⁵⁸ Northern Wei, Later Qin, Western Qin, Later Yan, Western Yan, and Later Liang.

Table 14.2 *Household numbers in the North, 280–318*

Area	CE	Household No.	
North under Western Jin	280	13.8 m	including Shu
Former Zhao	318–329	7 m	
Bondservants, servile clients (<i>tongke</i>), and criminals	280 to 318–329		≤50% (decline rate)

Sources: Liang Fangzhong, *Zhongguo lidai bukou tiandi tianfu tongji* (Shanghai, 1980), 38; Gao Min, *Wei Jin Nanbeichao jingji juan* (Beijing, 1998), 105–106

Figure 14.1 *Populations (in millions), 157–589*

Sources: Liang Fangzhong, *Zhongguo lidai bukou tiandi tianfu tongji*, 22, 38; Gao, *Wei Jin Nanbeichao jingji juan*, 93–119. Note: populations in 318, 400, 520, and 577 are rough estimates.

Under the successor regimes to the Northern Wei, the North experienced sustained growth in registered population. In 577, population registration reached 20 million in the Northern Qi and 11.68 million in the Northern Zhou, or 31.68 million in the entire North. It would grow to about 36 million in 589 under the Sui.⁵⁹

From the late Eastern Han to the Sui, the registered population of the North went through several boom-and-bust cycles. The first population decline lasted from the late second century to the second half of the third century and coincided with the fall of the Eastern Han and a prolonged civil war that followed. It was the worst decline for the whole era. The second decline took place in the early fourth century, caused by another civil war, rebellions by the non-Han peoples, and the collapse of the Western Jin. The third decline

⁵⁹ Victor Cunrui Xiong, *Emperor Yang of the Sui dynasty: His life, times, and legacy* (Albany, 2006), pp. 251–252.

occurred with the fall of the Former Qin in the late fourth century. The fourth decline unfolded following the breakup of the Northern Wei in the 530s.

Undoubtedly, the drastic crashes of the registered population were in large measure a result of or coterminous with the decline and breakup of dominant dynastic powers. Much of the decline may be attributable to social unrest, military conflict, and economic collapse. Moreover, in times of chaos, many households stayed out of the purview of state governments, which resulted in an even greater loss of population in government data.

URBANISM

Despite the predominantly agrarian nature of the economy and periods of de-urbanization in much of the North, throughout the Six Dynasties there was also a hierarchical urban network, which survived from the previous Han dynasty. At the bottom of the hierarchy were county (*xian*) seats, the lowest-level local governments headed by ranked officials appointed by the court. Next were prefectural (*zhou*) and commandery (*jun*) seats. These were major regional cities often with large populations. At the top were the dynastic capitals, which were the dominant political, economic, and demographic centers in the North.

A number of the cities that served as capitals at this time were located on the periphery of what is modern China proper, a characteristic that had not existed before. The earliest such capital was Shengle, set up by the Tuoba near present-day Horing, central Inner Mongolia, in the late third century. In 313, the Tuoba founded Pingcheng near present-day Datong, Shanxi, to the southeast of Shengle, as their southern capital. Pingcheng was designated the primary capital of the Northern Wei in 398, and during the next century it experienced spectacular growth in population and palace structures,⁶⁰ followed by decline once the court was relocated to Luoyang in 494.⁶¹

In the northwest, the most important frontier city was Guzang in present-day Wuwei, Gansu. It served as the capital of the Former, Later, Southern, and Northern Liang. With a population of at least 200,000 in 439,⁶² it was then

⁶⁰ On Shengle, see Victor Cunrui Xiong, "Ritual architecture under the Northern Wei," in *Between Han and Tang: Visual and material culture in a transformative period*, ed. Wu Hung (Beijing, 2003), pp. 34–37. On Pingcheng, see W. J. F. Jenner, *Memories of Loyang: Yang Hsüan-chih and the lost capital (493–534)* (Oxford, 1981), pp. 18–39.

⁶¹ Dien, *Six Dynasties*, pp. 24–25; *WS* 7c.175.

⁶² He, *Zhongguo jingji tongshi*, 3.107–109. The population figure for Guzang in 439 is 200,000 *bukou* (*WS* 4a.90). It would seem that the term *bukou*, commonly meaning "households," is used in the sense of "individuals" instead.

one of the largest urban centers in demographic terms in the North. After 439, however, the city suffered a serious population decline.⁶³

The last two of the frontier capitals were Longcheng, also known as Helongcheng, and Tongwan. Both had their halcyon days in the Sixteen States period.⁶⁴ Longcheng (Chaoyang, Liaoning) in the Northeast was set up by the Former Yan in 341, and continued to serve, after the fall of the Former Yan, as the capital of the Later Yan and Northern Yan.⁶⁵ Tongwan, near Uxin Qi, Inner Mongolia, was built in 417 as the capital of the Xia dynasty (407–432). An official panegyric clearly exaggerates when it characterizes this capital as superior to Chang'an and Luoyang. The main reason for its choice as capital over Chang'an was its more secure location.⁶⁶

Jinyang, some distance away from the northern frontier and southwest of present-day Taiyuan, Shanxi, was an especially interesting city. With access to Guanzhong, Hebei, and the Central Plain, and surrounded by mountains, it was traditionally considered second only to Guanzhong in strategic significance.⁶⁷ Although it never became a primary capital, Jinyang was accorded a special status as auxiliary capital in the Eastern Wei–Northern Qi.⁶⁸ Thanks to its political and geographical importance, Jinyang grew to become a thriving trade center, especially noted for its horses, wine, gold and silver, and jewelry.⁶⁹ We do not know Jinyang's population, but Taiyuan commandery, of which Jinyang was the dominant city, had a registered population in excess of 200,000 in 543–550,⁷⁰ half of which likely resided in Jinyang, making it one of the largest urban centers under the Eastern Wei–Northern Qi.

Deep in the heartland were the three great metropolises of the North—Chang'an, Luoyang, and Ye. The Chang'an area in Guanzhong, corresponding with present-day Xi'an and its environs, had been the first choice for the national capital for centuries. Following the fall of the Xin in 25 CE it fell into neglect and did not regain its past glory until 582–583 when Daxingcheng was built as the Sui capital. Nevertheless, the area experienced some revival under the Former Zhao, Former Qin, Later Qin, and Northern Zhou.⁷¹

The truly great city of the North was not Chang'an, however, but Luoyang (east of present-day Luoyang, Henan). During the Six Dynasties period, it was

⁶³ Liang, *Zhongguo lidai hukou tiandi tianfu tongji*, p. 56; Dien, *Six Dynasties*, p. 106.

⁶⁴ On Longcheng and Tongwan, see He, *Zhongguo jingji tongshi*, 3.109–112, 3.116–117.

⁶⁵ He, *Zhongguo jingji tongshi*, 3.109–112. ⁶⁶ JS 131.3210–3211; Dien, *Six Dynasties*, pp. 17–18.

⁶⁷ Gu Zuyu (1631–1692), *Dushi fangyu jiyao* (Beijing, 2005), 39.1774–1777; Dien, *Six Dynasties*, p. 23.

⁶⁸ Shi Hejin, *Bei Qi dili zhi* (Beijing, 2008), pp. 153–154.

⁶⁹ Wang Bo, "Dong Wei Bei Qi shiqi de Jinyang jiaotong maoyi," *Jinyang xuekan* 1998.4, pp. 81–87.

⁷⁰ Liang, *Zhongguo lidai hukou tiandi tianfu tongji*, p. 59.

⁷¹ Victor Cunrui Xiong, *Sui–Tang Chang'an: A study in the urban history of medieval China* (Ann Arbor, 2000), pp. 14–28; Miyakawa Hisayuki, *Rikuchō shi kenkyū: seiji shakai hen* (Tokyo, 1956), pp. 487–499.

home to two different cities, one atop the other: Wei-Jin Luoyang and Northern Wei Luoyang. The former was built on the site of its predecessor, Eastern Han Luoyang, which had been destroyed by Dong Zhuo in the late Eastern Han. After being designated the capital of the Cao-Wei in 220, Luoyang saw significant growth. But it was destroyed again when the Xiongnu and their allies sacked the city in 311, and it lay essentially dormant for almost 200 years. It was from the ashes of this Wei-Jin city that Northern Wei's Luoyang (494–538) rose. The planner enclosed an extensive Outer City surrounding the old city *enceinte*—which had been revived as the new Inner City. With a walled area of seventy-five square kilometers (a size record unbroken until the Sui built Daxingcheng in the Chang'an area) and a registered population exceeding half a million in the early 500s,⁷² Northern Wei Luoyang was by then the largest urban center in population and in area.⁷³

Planned on a majestic orthogonal grid, Northern Wei Luoyang was first and foremost the political center of the North with a sizable foreign population and a vibrant business community. Restricted business transactions were conducted in the three marketplaces in the Outer City. Businessmen and craftsmen lived nearby in what seemed like segregated communities. The powerful were concentrated in the Inner City and the westernmost part of the Outer City. Foreigners, including numerous defectors from the South, were confined to their enclave in the south Outer City. A striking feature that reflected the spirit of the age was the preponderant presence of Buddhist monasteries, 1,367 of which were counted in 534.⁷⁴

To the northeast of Luoyang in the shadow of the Taihang mountains was the site of Ye (southwest of Linzhang, Hebei). Its rise to fame began under the late Eastern Han, when Cao Cao made it his *de facto* capital. A victim of the vicissitudes of war and conquest similar to the 311 sack of Luoyang, it rose to prominence under the Later Zhao because Shi Hu chose to build his luxurious palace there.⁷⁵ But it did not begin to outshine the other metropolises until the Eastern Wei–Northern Qi period when the Gaos added a Southern City

⁷² Fan Xiangyong, ed. and annot., *Luoyang qielan ji jiaozhu* (Shanghai, 1978), p. 349.

⁷³ A Tang source called *Jinling ji*, cited in *Taiping huanyu ji*, compiled by Yue Shi (Taipei, 1963), 90.3, claims that Jiankang was forty *li* square or up to 467 square kilometers in area, and had 280,000 households (*hu*), or 1.4–1.5 million in population. Both claims are impossible.

⁷⁴ Jenner, *Memories of Loyang*, pp. 103–138; Dien, *Six Dynasties*, pp. 25–32; Miyakawa, *Rikuchō shi kenkyū: seiji shakai ben*, pp. 502–524. For a recent collection of archaeological reports and research papers on Luoyang, see Du Jinpeng and Qian Guoxiang, *Han Wei Luoyangcheng yizhi yanjiu* (Beijing, 2007).

⁷⁵ The report on the destruction of Ye is contained in Sogdian Ancient Letter II; Nicholas Sims-Williams, "The Sogdian Ancient Letter II," in *Philologica et linguistica: Historia, pluritas, universitas: Festschrift für Helmut Humbach zum 80. Geburtstag am 4. Dezember 2001*, ed. Maria G. Schmidt and Walter Bisang, with Marion Grein and Bernhard Hiegl (Trier, 2001), pp. 268–269.

adjacent to the old site, which then became the Northern City. Under the Gaos, Ye became the equal of any city in the world at that time. According to one source, there were more than 400 wards and 4,000 Buddhist monasteries inside the city.⁷⁶ We may challenge the accuracy of this record, but there is no denying that Ye was possessed of a large number of residential neighborhoods and Buddhist establishments. Its urban population was likely close to 300,000,⁷⁷ which was the largest in China by the mid-sixth century, when the populations of both Luoyang and Jiankang (Nanjing, Jiangsu) had been decimated, the former by the ongoing conflict between the two northern states, and the latter by the Hou Jing Rebellion.⁷⁸

By the early 580s, all three leading cities of the North had been reduced to rubble. Luoyang had been lying in ruins since the early sixth century. Although the penultimate Northern Zhou sovereign (Emperor Xuan) initiated a new Luoyang project, it was called off after Yang Jian, Emperor Wen of the Sui, came to power in 589; he also ordered the destruction of both Ye and Han Chang'an. Immediately after his troops sacked Jiankang in that same year, he had that city razed to the ground.⁷⁹ The destructive acts of Emperor Wen coincided with the closing of the Six Dynasties era as a new age of empire dawned.

⁷⁶ *Zhangde fu zhi*, cited in *Lidai zhaijing ji* by Gu Yanwu (1613–1682) (Beijing, 1984), 12.184.

⁷⁷ The estimate is worked out as follows: the capital commandery, Weiyin, had a registered population of around 440,000 in 543–550. If half of these were residents of the city, we arrive at 220,000 as the estimated registered population of Ye (Liang, *Zhongguo lidai hukou tianqi tianfu tongji*, p. 59). To that can be added an estimated 73,000 as people not counted in the census (including the royal household members and their domestics and attendants, officials and their dependents, members of the military, monks, traders, craftsmen, foreigners, students, transients, and others).

⁷⁸ Dien, *Six Dynasties*, pp. 19–22; Miyakawa, *Rikuchō shi kenkyū: seiji shakai ben*, pp. 537–546. On the Buddhist monasteries, see *Xu gaoseng zhuan* by Daoxuan (Tang), 10.501b. For a collection of articles on Ye's archaeological research, see Liu Xinchang, *Yecheng ji Beichao shi yanjiu* (Shijiazhuang, 1991). On Shi Hu's luxurious palace, see Edward H. Schafer, "The 'Yeh chung chi'," *TP* 76.4/5 (1990), pp. 147–207, and Shing Müller, *Yezhongji: Eine Quelle zur materiellen Kultur in der Stadt Ye im 4. Jahrhundert*, Münchner ostasiatische Studien 65 (Stuttgart, 1993).

⁷⁹ On the cessation of the Luoyang project and the destruction of Ye, see Gu Yanwu, *Lidai zhaijing ji* 9.148, 12.174. On the destruction of Han Chang'an, see Xiong, *Sui–Tang Chang'an*, p. 30; on Jiankang, see *ZZTJ* 177.5516.

CHAPTER 15

THE SOUTHERN ECONOMY

Liu Shufen*

FOREWORD

Large-scale population movement is an important phenomenon of the Six Dynasties period, one that also resulted in significant historical developments. No matter whether northern or southern regimes, all were established by those from the outside; it was the Han northern émigrés who played a critical role in the south. Four of the Southern Dynasties, Eastern Jin, Song, Qi, and Liang, were all regimes established by northern émigrés. Tan Qixiang has pointed out that of the 728 men who have biographical notices in the *Nanshi* (*History of the Southern Dynasties*), 506 had northern roots, and only 222 were southerners.¹ So it is clear that this large number of people who had moved to the south played a very influential role in the political, social, economic, and cultural spheres.² At the same time, within the southern realm, there were broad areas occupied by indigenous non-Han people, chiefly the Man, Liao, and Li.

The northerners who moved to the south after the Yongjia disturbances were called “émigrés” (*qiaoren*), and sometimes termed “northerners” (*beiren*); in contemporary records those Chinese who were native to that area were termed “southerners” (*nanren*), “Wu people” (*Wuren*), or the “indigenous people” (*jiumin*). The interaction between the émigrés and the Wu people was an important element in the unfolding of southern history.³ From the start of the Eastern Jin, the émigrés occupied the upper sociopolitical echelons while the “Wu people” were secondary. To settle the enormous number of northerners who had come south, many so-called émigré prefectures

* Translated by Albert E. Dien.

¹ Tan Qixiang, “Jin Yongjia luanhou zhi minzu qianxi,” in *idem*, *Changshui ji* (Beijing, 1987), 1.220; reprint from *Yanjing xuebao* 15 (1934).

² Hu Axiang, *Dong Jin Nanchao qiaozhou jun xian yu qiaoliu renkou yanjiu* (Nanjing, 2008), pp. 358–377.

³ Piao Hanji, “‘Qiao jiu tizhi’ de zhankai yu Dong Jin nanchaoshi: wei zhengti lijie nanbeichao shi de yige tiyi,” *Beichao yanjiu* 1995.4, pp. 15–17. *Qiao* here refers to the émigrés and *jiu* to the indigenous population.

(*qiaozhou*), émigré commanderies (*qiaojun*), and émigré districts (*qiaoxian*) were set up. In efforts to pacify and control the indigenous non-Han peoples, military garrisons were established in their areas while at the same time “assisted” (*zuo*) commanderies and districts were being set up, and indigenous people were even appointed to administer such units in the attempt to maintain peaceful relations with this population. The government had difficulty in collecting taxes from the non-Han peoples, while expending much effort and administrative costs in the military garrisons set up to control them. Further, special treatment of the émigrés included exemption from taxes, which affected the tax revenues of the Eastern Jin and Southern Dynasties. Both of these issues combined to continually strain southern finances, causing leaders to make changes in the former Qin-Han policy of “promoting agriculture and restraining commerce.” The new policy spurred the development of commerce in this period.

THE NEW ÉMIGRÉS COMING FROM THE NORTH

The struggle for the throne in the Luoyang area among the eight princes of the Western Jin, called the Disturbances of the Eight Princes (*bawang zhi luan*), lasted for sixteen years (291–306). During this time the rebellion of the Xiongnu in modern Shanxi led to the downfall of the Western Jin, which had had its capital in Luoyang. In 317 Sima Rui, the Prince of Langye, ascended the throne in Jiankang, modern Nanjing, and this extension of the Sima regime in the south is termed the Eastern Jin. During the tumultuous last years of the Western Jin in the north there had been a major shift of the population to the south. Caused by those unsettled conditions, the scale and duration of this movement over some 160 years to the third quarter of the fifth century is most striking. In the years following that migratory period, there were only small-scale population movements.⁴ The huge movement of Han to the south also changed the inhabited areas in the south. According to conservative estimates, the number of northern émigrés and their progeny was about two million.⁵ On the basis of historical materials, the modern scholar Tan Qixiang estimates that, in 307–313, during the Western Jin, those who moved south amounted to some 900,000; that is to say, that the north lost about one-eighth of its population. By 464, the northerners comprised

⁴ There are differences of opinion among scholars concerning this shift in population. See Tan, “Jin Yongjia luanhou,” 1.199–223; Wang Zhongluo, *Wei Jin Nanbeichao shi* (Shanghai, 2003), pp. 320–332; Ge Jianxiong, *Zhongguo yimin shi*, Volume 2 (Fujian, 1997), pp. 307–310; Hu Axiang, “Dong Jin Nanchao renkou nanqian ji qi yingxiang,” in *Wei Jin Nanbeichao shi shiwu jiang*, ed. Hu Axiang et al. (Nanjing, 2010), pp. 112–127.

⁵ Ge, *Zhongguo yimin shi*, 2.410–412.

approximately one-sixth of the population in the south.⁶ There were seven major peaks during this southward movement: the Yongjia disturbances, the Su Jun and Zu Yue disturbances in 327–329, the fall of the Later Zhao in 351, the Battle of the Fei River in 383, the northern campaign by Liu Yu in 416–418, the Northern Wei campaign reaching Guabu in 451, and the Song loss of four northern prefectures and Yuzhou west of the Huai in 467. During these more than a hundred years, northern émigrés were moving into those areas of modern Shandong and Henan which are south of the Yellow River, as well as to Jiangsu, Anhui, Hubei, Shaanxi, and Sichuan; there were also some who moved into Jiangxi and Hunan. Among these, the largest numbers settled in Jiangsu and southern Shandong; in Jiangsu they clustered around South Xuzhou (the area from modern Yangzhou to Huaiyin and Zhenjiang in Jiangsu), where their numbers surpassed those of the native population.⁷ In addition, there was also a large number of high-status officials and those of the elite who followed the imperial household to the capital at Jiankang and its surrounding area.

The routes followed by the northern émigrés, as well as their social status, also influenced their choice of residences in the south, and these patterns were key to social and economic developments during the 300 years of the Eastern Jin and Southern Dynasties. The northerner upper stratum, including the Jin imperial family and important ministers, for the most part moved to the capital at Jiankang and nearby areas, as well as the area between Kuaiji and Linhai commandery (modern southern Zhejiang). The middle stratum, the most numerous, and for the most part consisting of the lower ranks of battle-tested veterans, settled in the area of Jingkou (modern Zhenjiang, Jiangsu) and Jinling (modern Changzhou, Jiangsu). Those who came later settled at Xiangyang (modern Xiangfan, Hubei). These two areas were broad, sparsely populated, and not too far from the capital, and they became highly militarized places.⁸ The lowest stratum was that of the lower genteel ranks and the general run of the population who lived among the Wu people. The northern lower genteel ranks and ordinary émigrés in South Xuzhou (in modern central Jiangsu) outnumbered the native population by 20,000.⁹ The members of this lower genteel ranking were all experienced fighting men; Xi Jian (269–339), a leader of the northern émigrés, made use of these men to form a military force

⁶ Tan, "Jin Yongjia luanhou," 1.219–220.

⁷ Tan, "Jin Yongjia luanhou," 1.220; Wang Zhongluo, *Wei Jin Nanbeichao shi*, p. 345; Jiang Fuya, *Wei Jin Nanbeichao shehui jingjisbi* (Tianjin, 2005), p. 58.

⁸ Chen Yinke, "Shu Dong Jin Wang Dao zhi gongye," *Zhongshan daxue xuebao (shehui kexueban)* 1956.1, pp. 163–175; reprint in *idem, Jinmingguan cong gao chubian* (Shanghai, 1989), pp. 57–67.

⁹ Tan, "Jin Yongjia luanhou," 1.220.

at Jingkou, modern Zhenjiang, Jiangsu, and he developed this area into an Eastern Jin stronghold.

As the Former Qin became a threat from the north, Xie Xuan (343–388) in 377 took command of the military affairs of the lower Yangzi area and made use of the foundation laid by Xi Jian to mobilize these veterans into a new army based at Jingkou. Since that was north of the capital at Jiankang, this force was called the Northern Headquarters Troops (*beifu bing*); its commanding officers were also for the most part drawn from the northern émigrés at Jingkou.¹⁰ In 383, it was this army—numbering around 80,000—that defeated the Former Qin army of close to 100,000 led by Fu Jian. Later, Liu Yu, commander of the Northern Headquarters Troops and a descendant of the Jingkou émigrés, replaced the Jin imperial line and established the Song dynasty (420–479). The founders of the succeeding dynasties of Qi (479–502) and Liang (502–557) emerged from the descendants of émigrés at Jinling (modern Changzhou, Jiangsu). Another military force established by northern émigrés that impacted the history of the Qi and Liang dynasties was composed of the wave that arrived following the Yongjia disturbances, especially after the 383 Battle of the Fei River. These were from the Qin-Long and Luoyang areas and the local influential families of the Han river basin who settled around Xiangyang, outnumbering the original population. In 386 the Eastern Jin set up an émigré administrative (*qiao*) area named Yongzhou for them.¹¹ This population formed an important military force in the Southern Dynasties and played an influential role in the southern dynastic political scene.¹² The Jingkou Northern Headquarters Troops declined from the middle of the Song, and the soldiers drawn from the powerful families of the Xiangyang area came to be the important military force of the Southern Dynasties' Song, Qi, and Liang.¹³ The army on which Xiao Yan relied to establish the Liang was that of Xiangyang and Yongzhou.

The large number of incoming northerners changed the population structure of the south, and also had a profound impact on urban development. In general, émigrés from the lower Yellow River, Shandong, Hebei, and eastern Henan for the most part moved into the lower Yangzi area and Huai river basin, while those from what is modern Gansu, Shaanxi, Shanxi, and western

¹⁰ Chen, "Shu Dong Jin," pp. 58–60; Tian Yuqing, "Beifu bing shimo," in *Jinian Chen Yinke xiansheng danben bainian xueshu lunwenji*, ed. Beijing daxue Zhonggushi yanjiu zhongxin (Beijing, 1989), pp. 208–210; reprint in *idem, Qin Han Wei Jin tanwei* (Beijing, 2004), pp. 346–352.

¹¹ For more on émigré administrative units (*qiao*) that were created for northern refugees, see below.

¹² Yasuda Jirō, "Shin Sō kakumei to Yōshū (Shōyō) no kyōmin: gunsei shihai kara minsei shihai e," *Tōyōshi kenkyū* 42.1 (1983), pp. 110–134. Rprt. as "Shin Sō kakumei to Yōshū no kyōmin," in *idem, Rikuchō seijishi no kenkyū* (Kyoto, 2003), pp. 385–415.

¹³ Wang Yongping and Xu Cheng, "Luelun Dong Jin Nanchao shiqi Xiangyang haozu jituan de shehui tezhen," *Yangzhou daxue xuebao (renwen shehui kexue ban)* 2010.1, pp. 96–103.

Henan moved into the upper Yangzi and the Han river basin. Jiankang, the capital of the south, was a large metropolis, having a population of some 1,400,000, perhaps being the largest city in the world at that time. The Jiankang population was divided into two categories: one was that of the nobility and officials, and the other commoners. The former all came from the great northern lineages and had a large number of dependents not included in the household registers. These were in personal attendance on their masters or were used in Jiankang for privileged operations, including commercial enterprises, but also outside the city in all sorts of profitable undertakings. Most of these dependents were northern émigrés. Before and after the Yongjia disturbances, a number of northern eminent lineage members had been active in administrative affairs at Jiankang; however, since the adjacent area of southern Jiangsu and northern Zhejiang, often termed the Three Wu area—Wu commandery (modern Wuxian), Wuxing, and Kuaiji (modern Shaoxing)—was already highly developed and occupied by the southern leading lineages, the northerners could only establish their estates in southern Zhejiang, and engage there in economic enterprises, including agriculture, manufacturing, commerce, and transportation.

Already from the Eastern Han on, manufacturing industries had become highly developed on the southern bank of Hangzhou Bay (Ningshao Flatland, between modern Ningbo and Shaoxing). In the early fourth century, with its large influx of northerners, especially composed of the eminent lineages bringing their followers and the “shielded” dependents, settling south of Hangzhou Bay, there was a huge increase in population in that area. Consequently, Shanyin (modern Shaoxing, Zhejiang), the area’s key city, became eastern Zhejiang’s largest urban center. During the Liu-Song, its recorded population reached 30,000 households—at that time the number of recorded households in the ten districts of Kuaiji commandery (of which Shanyin was a part) was 52,228, meaning that the number of Shanyin recorded households was 57.4 percent of the whole commandery. Further, since a large number of elite northern émigrés (eminent lineages, imperial relatives, and high officials), along with their numerous dependents, were settled in this area, none of whom were included in the registered household numbers, the actual population increase was certainly much more substantial. There is no doubt that this was one of the largest urban centers in the south.¹⁴ In the Three Kingdom’s Wei and Jin periods, the stretch from Jingkou (modern Zhenjiang, Jiangsu) to Jinling was still a rather unsettled area, but in the

¹⁴ Liu Shufen, “Liuchao shidai de Jiankang: shichan, minju yu zhi’an,” and “San zhi liu shiji Zhedong diqu de jingji fazhan,” in *idem*, *Liuchao de chengshi yu shehui* (Taipei, 1992), pp. 135–136 and 205, and 211–218 respectively.

early years of the Eastern Jin, the large numbers of northern émigrés introduced agricultural innovations leading to development of the region.¹⁵ As a result of this influx of population and increased development, Jingkou, Piling (modern Changzhou, Jiangsu), Wujun (Suzhou, Jiangsu), Xuancheng (modern Xuanzhou, Anhui), Shanyin (modern Shaoxing, Zhejiang), Yuhang (modern Hangzhou, Zhejiang), and Dongyang (modern Jinhua, Zhejiang), all became important commercial centers.

In order to settle the northern émigrés at the start of the Eastern Jin, émigré (*qiao*) prefectures, commanderies, and districts were established.¹⁶ The earliest district was Huaidejian, established in 320 to settle the people from Langye commandery who had followed Sima Rui when he moved south to take up office in Jiankang. As the number of people coming south increased, such émigré entities continued to be set up, a policy continued by the Song regime. The names assigned to these units were those of the original native places of the migrants. There were two ways in which these differed from ordinary administrative units: (1) these entities consisted of the northern émigrés but there was no territory involved, and (2) their household registers were distinct from ordinary ones. Ordinary household registers, based upon which the government collected taxes and corvée labor, were on yellow paper, so they were called the “yellow registers” (*huangji*). The émigré units were registered on white paper and thus called “white registers” (*baiji*), which reflected the original native place of those émigrés. There was a very close connection in the medieval period between the eminent-lineage system and native place. Making special note of the original registration not only had the significance of being a marker but also emphasized the person’s standing in local society.¹⁷ The special treatment of the émigrés included in the household registrations of the “white registers,” such as exemption from payment of taxes and from corvée labor, served to attract wave after wave of northerners to Jiangnan; that is, the land south of the Yangzi river.¹⁸

The establishment of these *qiao* prefectures, commanderies, and districts created two administrative systems within the territory of the Eastern Jin and Southern Dynasties. Following their Eastern Jin establishment in the south,

¹⁵ Tian Yuqing, *Dong Jin menfa zhengzhi* (Beijing, 2005), pp. 32–85.

¹⁶ The most complete study of these *qiao* entities is the volume cited above by Hu Axiang; below we rely a great deal on his exposition. For an English study on this topic, see William G. Crowell, “Northern émigrés and the problems of census registration under the Eastern Jin and Southern Dynasties,” in *State and society in early medieval China*, ed. Albert E. Dien (Stanford, 1990), pp. 171–210.

¹⁷ Nakamura Keiji, “Nanchō kizoku no chiensei ni kansuru ichikōsatsu: iwareru kyō gunkun no kentō o chūshin ni,” *Tōyō gakubō* 64.1–2 (1983), pp. 33–68. Hu Axiang, *Dong Jin nanchao*, pp. 55–58, believes that the direct reason for establishing these *qiao* units was to clearly mark off the local elite (*junwang*). For the local nature of the Southern Dynasties’ aristocrats, see Wang, *Wei Jin Nanbeichao shi* 1.346–347.

¹⁸ Wang, *Wei Jin Nanbeichao shi* 1.346–347.

the exemption of the enormous populations of these *qiao* units from taxes and corvée not only impacted the government's finances and viability, but also led to conflicts between the northerners and the native population over administrative benefits, residential areas, and economic advantages. Once the northerners had been settled, there was no reason to continue the special treatment accorded to the émigrés who were fleeing from the north, especially exemption from taxation and corvée that gave rise to the southerners' dissatisfaction.¹⁹ In addition, the émigré and southern eminent lineages, as well as local powerful families, all had some unregistered dependents and slaves. These slaves could be bought and sold. They were either prisoners taken in battle or northern refugees. For example, the family members of Xie An (320–385) of the Eastern Jin extending down to Xie Hongwei (391–433) had several hundred slaves. Shen Qingzhi (386–465) had more than a thousand, and the family of Xiao Zhengde (d. 549), a member of the royal Liang house, had several hundred.²⁰ In these circumstances it became an urgent necessity to institute a reform of the émigrés' household registers and to include the aforesaid dependents of eminent lineages and local powerful families, resulting in a residence determination (*tudian*) or census to be used in collecting taxes and assigning corvée. In the period that followed, there were ten censuses in the years 327, 341, 364, 413, 433, 457, 473, 481, 502, and 560.²¹ But the scale and geographical scope of these censuses differed. For example, those of 364 and 413 were primarily in the Yangzhou area, and in 457 it was mainly in that of Yongzhou.²² The government repeatedly initiated censuses but because they went against the interests of the northern émigrés and the southern eminent lineages, population counts were never completely successful. There continued to be many unregistered households, making it impossible for the government to capture the whole of its fiscal resources. In 384, for example, the prefect (*cishi*) of Jiangzhou, Huan Yi, submitted a document claiming that Jiangzhou only had 56,000 households. Similarly, in 410, it was declared in a comparable document to be a national shame that there were only several hundred thousand in the whole realm.²³ Modern scholars who have investigated the numbers of registered households from the Six Dynasties state of Wu down to the Chen have found that during some 160 years from the fall of the Western Jin to the end of the Song—in spite of the large population movement from the Yellow River basin to the south—after the census-taking policy was instituted in the Eastern Jin and Song, the number of southern households had zero growth. The area ruled by the Chen dynasty was about the same as that of the Wu state, but the households at the end of the Chen

¹⁹ Hu, *Dong Jin Nanchao*, pp. 126–136.

²⁰ Jiang, *Wei Jin Nanbeichao shebui jingjishi*, pp. 60–61.

²¹ Hu, *Dong Jin Nanchao*, pp. 90–93.

²² *SsS* 6.120.

²³ *JS* 81.2119 and 85.2208.

numbered a mere 500,000, even fewer than at the end of the Wu. It may be, therefore, that the registered households in the South could have been merely one-fourth to one-fifth of the actual number.²⁴

THE SOUTHERN ABORIGINES AND THE SIX DYNASTIES REGIMES

The southern aborigines have not handed down their own historical account, so one only sees their activities as reported by the Han authorities. The record is clearly an incomplete one in that they appear in only three types of interactions: (1) when they are considered troublesome by the Han regimes or when the two are at war; (2) when the Han regime's authority or Han development reaches into aboriginal areas; and (3) when the Han regimes need to extract human resources or materials from those areas to supplement their own, and this leads to warfare. The northern non-Han regimes and their relationship with the Han population have been extensively studied—see, for example, the relevant chapters in this volume—but less attention has been paid to a much more contentious and troublesome relationship in the south with the huge numbers of aboriginal peoples who lived in central and southern China as well as in the Southwest. The Mountain Yue, Man, Li, and Liao created much difficulty for the southern regimes over a long period, such that they affected the policies and even the history of those states.²⁵

Even while contending against the Three Kingdom's Wei state in the north, that of Wu (221–280) in Jiangnan and Shu-Han (221–263) in Sichuan both faced internal problems with the aborigines living within their borders. In Wu it was primarily with the Man in the Jingzhou area, the Mountain Yue at Yangzhou, as well as the Li in Guangdong and Guangxi; among them the Mountain Yue were such a long-term internal threat that the Wu was unable to devote its full attention to the conflict with the Wei.²⁶ The Mountain Yue generally refers to the non-Han people who lived in modern Jiangsu, Zhejiang, Jiangxi and Anhui, which included most of the Wu territory. There are records of many Wu campaigns against the Mountain

²⁴ He Dezhang, "Liuchao nanfang kaifa de jige wenti," *Xuehai* 2005.2, pp. 19–20.

²⁵ Lü Chunsheng, *Chenchaode zhengzhi jiegou yu zuqun wenti* (Banqiao, 2001), pp. 27–72 and 185–238, discusses the close connection between the collapse of the Chen and movements of the southern aborigines. The most recent English language discussion of the southern aborigines during the Six Dynasties period is Catherine Churchman, *The people between the rivers: The rise and fall of a bronze drum culture, 200–750 CE* (Lanham, MD, 2016). Earlier treatments can be found in Herold J. Wiens, *China's march into the tropics: A study of the cultural and historical geography of south China* (Washington, DC, 1952), and Keith Weller Taylor, *The birth of Vietnam* (Berkeley, 1983).

²⁶ Lü Chunsheng, "Sanguo shidai de Shan Yue yu Liuchao de zuqun xianxiang," *Taiwan shida lishi xuebao* 33 (2005), p. 2; Sekio Shirō, "Cao Wei zhengquan yu Shan Yue," *Wen shi zhe* 1993.3, pp. 30–33.

Yue, either to extract manpower or to restore internal stability.²⁷ There is almost no mention of the Mountain Yue after the end of the Wu; many scholars believe, therefore, that the Mountain Yue gradually became assimilated with the Han due to that Wu effort. But the Mountain Yue did not completely cease to exist, for some still took refuge deep in the mountains and even appear in the historical records of the Tang and into the Southern Song.²⁸ During the whole of the Southern Dynasties period, there was this difficult problem of having such large numbers of non-Han peoples within their borders.

The Eastern Jin aboriginal peoples chiefly refer to the Man, Li, and Liao,²⁹ whose numbers were quite large. According to scholarly estimates, the Man people in the mid-Yangzi area numbered a million, the Liao of the Southwest were around 600,000, the Li of the Lingnan region were more than 500,000, while the Mountain Yue of the Southeast were also more than 500,000, giving an estimated total aboriginal population of over three million.³⁰ Another projection would have it that the Man, Li, and Liao population reached over seven to eight million, surpassing that of the officially registered households.³¹ In the mid-Yangzi and its surrounding area, the Man population did far outnumber that of the registered Han population of the time.³² They were quite widespread over the modern provinces of Henan, Hunan, Hubei, Anhui, Fujian, and Jiangxi, and there is evidence of Man activity dating into Song times.³³ Tan Qixiang has discovered from their surnames that quite a few lineages in Hunan are of Man extraction, which give us much to consider when thinking of population numbers of the aborigines and the breadth of their distribution in the South during the Six Dynasties period.³⁴

²⁷ Lu, "Sanguo shidai," 17.

²⁸ Chen Kewei, "Dong Yue, Shan Yue de lai yuan he fazhan," *Lishi luncong* 1964.1, pp. 174–176; Chen Guoqiang, Jiang Bingjian, Wu Mianji, and Xin Tucheng, *Bai Yue minzu shi* (Beijing, 1988), p. 304.

²⁹ In addition to these three there were also the Xi and others. The people of that time probably did not fully understand the multiplicity of ethnicities and tribal structures of these non-Han and generally used vague terms that would include many entities; see Zhu Dawei, "Nanchao shaoshu minzu gaikuang ji qi yu Hanzu de ronghe," *Zhongguoshi yanjiu* 1980.1, pp. 57–76. See also *idem*, *Liuchao shilun* (Beijing, 1998), pp. 402–436.

³⁰ Fang Gaofeng, "Liuchao shaoshu minzu renkou lishi," *Zhongguo jingji shi yanjiu* 2007.3, pp. 121–123.

³¹ Zhang Zehong, "Wei Jin Nanchao Man, Liao, Lizu dui nanchang jingji fazhan de gongxian," *Zhongguo shehui jingji yanjiu* 1989.12, p. 88.

³² Lu Xiqi, "Shi 'Man'," *Wen shi* 2008.3, p. 67; reprint in *idem*, *Renqun-juluo-di yu shehui: Zhongguo nanchang shidi chutan* (Xiamen, 2012), pp. 39–41.

³³ Kawamoto Yoshiaki, *Gi Shin Nanbokuchō jidai no minzoku mondai* (Tokyo, 1998), pp. 496, 505–511, 514–517, 524–525, 529–534.

³⁴ Tan Qixiang, "Jindai Hunanren zhong zhi Manzu xuetong," in *idem*, *Changshui ji*, 1.390–392, reprint in *Shixue nianbao* 2.5 (1939).

These non-Han for the most part lived in mountainous regions, and were called the Mountain People (*Shanmin*), but also Mountain Man (*Shanman*) and Mountain Liao (*Shanliao*), which would have carried disparaging connotations because of the characters chosen to match the sound of the tribal names. In the historical sources the terms “raw” (*sheng*) and “cooked” (*shu*) are also applied to them. “Raw” and “cooked” here had three senses: (1) they refer to the degree to which they had contact with the Han;³⁵ (2) they make reference to the distances between where the Han and non-Han lived;³⁶ and (3) the distinction made is whether the non-Han have accepted Han political governance, those not having done so being “raw.”³⁷ Each of these aboriginal peoples had their own languages and customs quite different from those of the Han. In the eyes of the Han, the non-Han were backward in culture and economy, not yet civilized, and the Han frequently used derogatory animal terms to refer to them or to describe them, such as *liao* 獠 “beast” or *hao* 貉 “raccoon,”³⁸ describing their language as “bird talk” or “like birds chirping or animals howling.”³⁹ Xie Zong (d. 243), a high official of the Wu, actually used the term “wild animals” (*qinsbou* 禽獸) to describe the Li of Jiaozhou.⁴⁰ This sort of discrimination and contempt of the non-Han goes through all of Chinese history and it was not until the 1950s that the Chinese government finally ordered that the characters for the names of minorities that had animal radicals were to be changed.

The Man, Li, and Liao for the most part practiced agriculture in mountainous areas, combined with fishing and hunting; for crafts in particular they used a kind of hemp to make fabric called *cong* cloth, which was clean and pliant, waterproof, very practical for summerwear, and traded throughout the south.⁴¹ The items on which they were taxed from the Han to the Jin were rice and this cloth; every year each household was to pay one measure of the

³⁵ SS 31.897 describes how some of the Man in Jingzhou and Yizhou lived among the Han with no differences between them, but others lived in the mountainous areas and were completely distinct.

³⁶ ZZTJ 187.5867, Hu Sanxing's commentary.

³⁷ Luo Xin, “Wanghua yu Shanxian: Zhongguo zaoqi nanfang zhu Man lishi mingyun zhi gaiguan,” *Lishi yanjiu* 2009.2, pp. 12–14, where he discusses the different views concerning the Mountain Yue held among scholars.

³⁸ Rui Yifu, “Xinan shaoshu minzu chongshou bianpang mingming kaolüe,” *Zhongyuan yanjiuyuan: Lishi yuyan yanjiusuo renleixue jikan* 2.1 (1941), pp. 73–117.

³⁹ Ss 92.2266; WS 96.2093.

⁴⁰ SGZ 53.1251: “[They are spread among] the mountains and rivers far and wide, the customs and practices are not the same; their languages differ, one can communicate only after many translations. The people are like wild animals, and they do not distinguish between young and old. They wear their hair in a bun and go barefoot; they wear ponchos and fasten them to the left.”

⁴¹ *Huayangguo zhi jiaobu tuzhu*, comp. Chang Qu, ed. Ren Naiqiang (Shanghai, 1987; reprint, 2007), p. 326.

cloth.⁴² When the Han attacked the Man, they also collected special products of these sorts. During the Later Han, when Feng Gun (d. 168) led a campaign against the Man at Wuxi, he obtained 300,000 pieces of the *cong* cloth. In 442 the famous Song general Shen Qingzhi attacked the Man at Yongzhou; included in the war booty were over 700 head of horses and a huge amount of rice and millet.⁴³ Further, the Lingnan Li and Liao carried on overseas trade, and the court levied taxes on the slaves, as well as such precious objects as jadeite, pearls, rhinoceros horns, and ivory tusks in which they traded.⁴⁴

*State Policies toward the Aboriginal Peoples during the Eastern Jin
and Southern Dynasties*

In the area occupied by the aboriginal peoples which extended almost over all of the territory of the Eastern Jin and the Southern Dynasties, these governments carried out two measures: (1) military garrisons were established to control those peoples, and (2) special commanderies and districts were set up to govern those who submitted.

The aboriginal peoples were a long-standing threat to the Han regimes, something displayed in two ways.⁴⁵ First, some of the powerful Man tribesmen did not accept the jurisdiction of the Southern Dynasties governments and periodically united to raid cities, creating much local damage. The most powerful of the Man were those who lived in the gorge areas along the Yangzi from modern Sichuan to Hubei. In 428 the Man from districts in Yongzhou made several raids, cutting off land and water lines of communication. During 457 to 479 the Man repeatedly raided the four commanderies within modern Hubei causing a mass exodus and a serious drop in population; the local administration could not collect taxes and this created a straitened situation in Jingzhou. Even though troops were sent time and again, the devastation could not be controlled. For example, in the 505–512 period, the governor (*taishou*) of Baxi, Zhang Qi of the Liang, annually mounted campaigns against the Man and Liao.⁴⁶ Second, the Man on the frontier between the northern and southern regimes vacillated between both and were affected by the border warfare. The Northern Wei had a policy of appeasing and drawing in the Man

⁴² *HHS* 86.2831; *JS* 26.790.

⁴³ *Quan Hou Han wen* 100.1014b; in Yan Kejun, comp., *Quan shanggu sandai Qin Han Sanguo Liuchao wen* (Beijing, 1991); *SsS* 77.1998. The amount of grain was said to be over 90,000 *bu*.

⁴⁴ *JS* 26.783; *SsS* 24.673.

⁴⁵ Wu Yongzhang, "Nanchao dui 'Man' zu de tongzhi yu 'funa' zhengce," *Jiang Han luntan* 1983.6, pp. 67–70; Zhang Zehong, "Liang Jin nanchao de Manfu he zuo junxian," *Sichuan shifan xueyuan xuebao* 1990.1, pp. 30–37.

⁴⁶ *SsS* 46.1395 and 97.2397–2399; *LS* 77.282.

of Yongzhou, resulting in the Man actively siding with the Northern Wei in its struggle against the Southern Qi.⁴⁷ For this reason, the southern states were forced to establish garrisons in a large number of the prefectures in the Man areas. On the one hand, because the aboriginal population was a very scattered one chiefly occupying mountainous and marshy areas, it was difficult for them to join together in order to pool their strength and establish an administrative structure. By the same token, living in dispersed groups meant that it was difficult to destroy them in one broad sweep;⁴⁸ thus, all through the Eastern Jin and the Southern Dynasties, the relationship between the state and the aboriginal peoples continued to be fraught. However, by the end of the Liang, there was an important shift in this adversarial situation. The military strength of the northern émigrés at Yongzhou on whom the Qi and Liang imperial houses had relied had begun to ebb, and Chen Baxian, who established the Chen dynasty, now began primarily to draw upon forces from the southern aborigine Xi, Li, and Yue tribes.⁴⁹

Assisted (Zuo) Districts and Commanderies and Symbolic Tax Levies

After the Eastern Jin, new commanderies and districts—outside the regular administrative units—were established for the aborigines who submitted. Man commanderies and districts were set up for the Man, Liao commanderies for the Liao, and Li commanderies for the Li. In each, their leaders served as commandery and district senior officials, while the original organization and lifestyles were preserved.⁵⁰ This was a sort of policy of “using the barbarians to control the barbarians” (*jimi*), or of “drawing in” (*lalong*).⁵¹ These so-called *zuo* (“assisted”) commanderies and districts were for the most part set up in Yuzhou, in areas where the Man lived. The extent was quite large and included parts of modern Anhui, Henan, and Hubei. Implied in the term *zuo* was that it was the Man who were being assisted in the administration, but to avoid offending the tribesmen, the word Man was omitted from the names of their governing jurisdictions. But in contemporary documents one still sees the use of the terms “Man households” and “Man people” in discussions of these *zuo*

⁴⁷ Wu Yongzhang, “Beichao yu Manzu,” *Minzu luntan* 1987.1, pp. 57–58; Cheng Youwei, “Nanbeichao shiqi de Huai-Han Manzu,” *Zhengzhou daxue xuebao (zhengxue shehui kexue ban)* 2003.1, pp. 18–19.

⁴⁸ Lü Chunsheng, “Wei Jin Nanbeichao sheqi de ‘Man’ ji qi gainian zhi yanbian,” in *Zheng Qinren jiaoshou qizhi shouqing lunwenji*, ed. Zheng Qinren jiaoshou qizhi shouqing lunwenji bianji weiyuanhui (Taipei, 2006), p. 53.

⁴⁹ Wan Shengnan, ed., *Chen Yinke Wei Jin Nanbeichaoshi jiangyan lu* (Hefei, 1987), pp. 202–214.

⁵⁰ Hu Axiang, *Liuchao jiangyu yu zhengqu yanjiu* (Beijing, 2005), pp. 370–375.

⁵¹ Taniguchi Fusao, “Nanchō no sagun saken ni tsuite: Rikuchō jidai ni okeru minzoku ninshiki no arikata o motomete,” *Tōyō daigaku bungakubu kiyō (shigakka ben)* 29 (2003), pp. 6–10.

commanderies and *zuo* districts.⁵² The area administered by these units shrank in the Liang and Chen because of occupation by the northern armies, so no further *zuo* commanderies or *zuo* districts were established.⁵³

The Eastern Jin and southern governments were almost without any means to tax the aboriginal peoples. There was no way to exert control over the Man who lived deep in the mountains, so of course levies could not be collected.⁵⁴ There is a question whether the aboriginal peoples in the *zuo* commanderies, *zuo* districts, Liao commanderies or Li commanderies differed, in terms of being taxed, from those who lived in the regular commanderies and districts.⁵⁵ The modern scholar Kawamoto Yoshiaki believes that during the medieval period the aboriginal peoples were taxed by the central government, and that such levies were part of central and local financing.⁵⁶ From the Liang on, some *zuo* commanderies and *zuo* districts were made into ordinary commanderies and districts, such as when Jianning *zuo* commandery became Jianning commandery; from this one can infer that originally there had been some differences between the two types. From the Eastern Han on, tax assessment levels for the aborigines were based on their degree of assimilation. That is to say, the households of so-called “distant barbarians” who were beyond the direct reach of state power were expected to pay less in taxes than the assimilated households. The *Suishu* specifically records that in the Six Dynasties the amount of taxes paid by the Man, Li, and Liao depended upon the degree to which they were dominated by the Han regimes.⁵⁷ In the Liu-Song period, those Man of Jing and Yong prefectures who fell in with the Han regime paid a symbolic few measures of grain per household and had no corvée duties; this was much lighter than that for the Han population, and as a result quite a few Han fled to settle among the Man.⁵⁸ The Man areas thus became a haven for fugitives.

Aside from the merely symbolic levies mentioned above, the Eastern Jin and Southern Dynasties occasionally collected levies, called “impost” (*tan*), from the aborigines, either in goods or in coin; these levies did not have a fixed rate.⁵⁹ One such example occurred in the early Sui when the famous general

⁵² Historians have many explanations for the meaning of *zuo* in such terms as *zuo* commandery and *zuo* district; Kawahara Masahiro, “*Sōsho* ‘Shūgunshi’ ni miru sagun saken no ‘sa’ no imi,” in *idem*, *Kan minzoku Kanan hattenshi kenkyū* (Tokyo, 1984), pp. 65–81. Yang Wuquan, “‘Manzuo’ shishi,” *Jiang Han luntan* 1986.3, pp. 68–72; Taniguchi, “Nanchō,” pp. 6–11.

⁵³ Wang Yanwu, “Liang Jin Nanbeichao de zhi Man jigou yu Manzu huodong,” *Zhongnan minzu xueyuan xuebao* 1983.3, pp. 31–35.

⁵⁴ *SōS* 97.2396: “The strong ones did not supply any official levies. They banded together to mobilize in the thousands, and since the prefectures and commanderies had little power, they could evade any taxes.”

⁵⁵ Wu, “Nanchao dui ‘Man’zu de tongzhi,” pp. 71–72.

⁵⁶ Kawamoto, *Gi Shin nanbokuchō jidai*, pp. 416–419.

⁵⁷ Luo, “Wanghua yu Shanxian,” pp. 416–419. ⁵⁸ *SōS* 97.2396. ⁵⁹ *JS* 26.783; *SS* 24.673.

Liang Rui (531–595) submitted a plea that a campaign be mounted against a Yi tribal leader of Nanning (modern Guizhou). To justify this incursion, he pointed out that, in the past, when there were inadequate military resources, levies were made on the Man (perhaps here a general term for aborigines), and that levies of these sorts were ordinarily imposed by military force. This also clarifies the purpose of the military garrisons placed among the Man: first, these could serve to suppress the Man tribesmen, and second, they could also extract resources to fund necessary expenses.⁶⁰ Still, excessive demands placed on the Man could lead to rebellion, such as in 472 when Shen Youzhi led a punitive expedition against the Man of Jingzhou, demanding ten million coins from the Man leader Tian Tou. He was willing only to give half that amount, and died of rage, leading the Man to attack the commandery city.⁶¹ In addition, local prefects, governors, or garrison commanders on their own would sometimes levy taxes on the Man; for example, there is the case of a Song general collecting taxes on the Man in his jurisdiction, claiming it was at the command of the court, only to keep the proceeds for himself.⁶² Sometimes these types of unscheduled taxes on the aborigines were shared by the government and the officials involved.⁶³ Raids by the aborigines on city dwellers might have been a reaction to Han campaigns against the indigenous people to seize human labor and material. These conflicts are an appropriate portrayal of the relations between the Han and the aborigines during the Eastern Jin and Southern Dynasties.

The Enormous Expense of Maintaining Garrisons

Starting from the Jin, garrisons were established in areas where the aborigines were active, with commandants (*xiaowei*) and vice commandants (*bujun*) in command.⁶⁴ The main purpose of these garrisons was to guard against the Man, so they were also called “Man bureaus” (*Manfu*). Among them, the South Man Commandant Bureau was the largest, with over 10,000 troops. These garrisons were independent military and administrative structures, and their duty was to oversee and control the not yet submissive Man as well as the Man who were enrolled in the special administrative “assisted” commanderies and districts, and the standard commanderies and districts within the Man areas. For example, the Ning Man bureau in the Qi period administered twelve commanderies, including West Xin’an commandery.⁶⁵ In addition, during

⁶⁰ SS 37.1126–1127. ⁶¹ NQS 22.405; ZZTJ 133.4172. ⁶² SoS 83.2117. ⁶³ WS 101.2247.

⁶⁴ For a list of these positions and their locations, see Wu, “Nanchao dui ‘Man’ zu de tongzhi,” pp. 67–70; and Zhang, “Liang Jin Nanchao de Manfu,” pp. 30–37.

⁶⁵ Zhang, “Liang Jin Nanchao de Manfu,” pp. 32–33.

the Eastern Jin and the Song, the Man had moved east of the Huai river, covering a very broad area. In response, the regimes adopted a strategy of “dividing into districts and establishing garrisons” (*fenqu shefang*); that is, garrisons under the command of vice commandants were set up at strategic points. These were smaller garrisons with some thousand troops where the leadership was usually assumed by the governor of the commandery involved.⁶⁶

The Man bureaus were separate from the military structure of the prefectures and commanderies; they operated with a set budget and had attached to them military personnel as well as a large number of staff, ranking on a par with those of the prefectures and commanderies. Where the Man were located, there were garrisons in addition to the usual local administrative system. Thus at Jingzhou, the senior official was the prefect, but there was also a Southern Man Commandant Bureau, providing a twofold administrative structure and fiscal outlay. The number of the Man and other aborigines in the territory and their degree of submission determined the authorized strength of these Man bureaus and the operating budgets, which were set to defray the expense of the administrative staff and military contingent (this included rations, weapons, river vessels, and horses). The only information available today providing insight about the annual cost is an item in *Nan Qishu* (*History of the Southern Qi*) that, when the Prince Xiao Yi (444–492) was governor of Jingzhou and of Xiangzhou, and commandant of the South Man (Bureau), the annual budget of the South Man Commandant Bureau was three million cash, 10,000 rolls of cloth, a thousand *jin* of silk floss, 300 rolls of woven silk, and a thousand *bu* of rice—surpassing the expense of running the Xiangzhou bureau and about the same as that for Jingzhou itself.⁶⁷ The South Man Commandant Bureau also administered a broad range of state farms (*tuntian*). Such fields controlled by the Xiangzhou bureau were estimated in the Liu-Song annually to have produced 300,000 to 600,000 *bu* of rice.⁶⁸ The South Man bureau’s yield of rice would not have been any less than that of the Jingzhou garrison. The Man bureaus’ military would have been a very heavy fiscal burden, such that in 481, in view of the enormous expense of the South Man Commandant Bureau, it was successfully proposed that the bureau, established in the Eastern Jin, be scrapped.⁶⁹

The main expenditures of the Eastern Jin and the southern states were military costs, the salaries of ranked officials, the cost of the administrative

⁶⁶ Wang, “Liang Jin nanbeichao de zhi Man jigou,” pp. 33–34. ⁶⁷ *NQS* 22.407.

⁶⁸ Tao Xinhua, “Wei Jin Nanchao de junfu guanli yu difang bianluan,” *Shixue yuekan* 2006.7, p. 24.

⁶⁹ *NQS* 49.848.

organs, and unexpected draws on the budget.⁷⁰ The source of the central government's funds was primarily local taxes. These tax receipts would first be sent to the central government's transmission granaries (*taichuan cangku*) in each prefecture, which were overseen by the transmission scribes (*taichuan yushi*), who were sent from the capital to oversee these funds and grain.⁷¹ The amount of funds that the central government allocated to local officials, and the administrative expenses, were set by the central government and drawn from the granaries in the prefectures and commanderies.⁷² The expenses for each local prefecture and garrison were to come from the taxes collected locally, but if this proved inadequate, then it could come from other prefectures. For example, Wang Shu (303–368) of the Eastern Jin pointed out the difficulty involved in having the Jiangzhou supplies shipped upriver on the Yangzi to provide for the Jingzhou garrison.⁷³ During the Eastern Jin and the Southern Dynasties, Yongzhou and Liangzhou both had to rely on Jingzhou and Xiangzhou for provisions and equipment.⁷⁴ In 449 Yongzhou was established at Xiangyang: the Jiangzhou garrison was moved there, and at the same time the tax receipts that would be sent to Jiankang were all sent there also.⁷⁵ There were many Man tribesmen at Jiangzhou and Jing prefectures, and each had both civil administrative and military offices; since the Man within their borders did not provide much in the way of taxes, what was collected came primarily from the Han. Further, the émigrés on the white registers did not pay taxes, and there were some local Han who resisted paying taxes (fugitives who had fled to the Man, merchants who had abandoned farming, or the dependents of the local powerful interests), therefore what little could be collected then had to cover the salaries of military and civil officials of the garrison and prefecture, as well as the salaries and keep of the troops. In the end, little remained in the transmission granaries. In 476 an official in the central administration gave the emperor a detailed account of the situation described above, explaining that court fiscal resources had been empty for the last thirty years, and since the tax returns from Jiangzhou and Jingzhou were extremely meager, what grain and cloth had been collected were all expended on the civil and military officials there. As for the prefectures of Yu, Yan, Si, and Xu, the amounts collected were inadequate to meet their required expenses, and at Qinzhou in

⁷⁰ Guan Shigang, "Dong Jin Nanchao zhongyang yu difang caizheng wenti tanxi," *Jiangxi shifan daxue xuebao* 2005.2, pp. 74–75.

⁷¹ The *tai* of the title refers to the Imperial Secretariat (*Shangshu tai*). Peng Shenbao, "Nanchao de taichuan," *Fudan xuebao* (*shehui kexueban*) 1980.3, pp. 103–104.

⁷² SS 24.674. ⁷³ JS 75.1962. ⁷⁴ Tian, *Dong Jin menfa zhengzhi*, pp. 106–112.

⁷⁵ *SaS* 79.2025.

the northwest the military forces did not even have adequate clothing and needed subsidies from the central government.⁷⁶ Again, in 484, the Prince Xiao Zilang (460–494) informed the emperor of a similar state of affairs—the taxes collected upriver from Jiankang were barely able to meet the administrative and military expenditures in each locality, so the capital was entirely reliant on what came from the area around the capital, which included taxes from the two important rice-producing areas of the San Wu (the Taihu basin) and eastern Zhejiang. Another source of income was the contribution made by returning officials to the imperial treasury from the wealth they had accrued while serving in their posts outside the capital.⁷⁷ Despite such a fiscal situation, the maintenance of military expenses in the Man areas was essential, as can be seen in the case of the centers nominally under the protection of Jingzhou, which suffered from repeated raids by the Man in 454 because such protection was not forthcoming, leading to the flight of their population.⁷⁸ Such circumstances confirmed that the state's financial requirements would need to rely on taxes collected in the commercial sector.

COMMERCE

Commercial taxes were the staple of the Eastern Jin's and Southern Dynasties' income, as was noted by a Northern Wei official, Zhen Chen (d. 524), who contrasted the North's reliance on agricultural taxes with that of the South on fees collected from commerce. Such fees in the South included tolls at passes and fords, taxes on transactions at markets, as well as tariffs levied on specific goods. Taxes on transactions included sales of land, buildings, animals, and slaves, set at 4 percent, with the seller paying three-fourths and the buyer one-fourth.⁷⁹ The range of taxable commodities was even broader, levied at 10 percent, including such everyday articles as firewood, fish, and so forth that came through the gates and fords, which was a hardship for the people.⁸⁰ There were taxes on alcoholic beverages, salt, and fruit trees as well.⁸¹ Earlier in Chinese history there had not been such clearly stated regulations on commercial taxes, indicating that the Eastern Jin's and Southern Dynasties'

⁷⁶ *SōS* 9.185. Liu Shufen, "Liuchao Jiankang de jingji jichu," in *idem*, *Liuchao de chengshi yu shehui* (Taipei, 1992), pp. 81–102.

⁷⁷ *NQS* 26.483. ⁷⁸ *SōS* 74.1932. ⁷⁹ Liu, "Liuchao Jiankang de jingji jichu," pp. 92–95.

⁸⁰ Shu-fen Liu, "Jiankang and the commercial empire of the Southern Dynasties: Change and continuity in medieval Chinese economic history," in *Culture and power in the reconstitution of the Chinese realm, 200–600*, ed. Scott Pearce, Audrey Spiro, and Patricia Ebrey (Cambridge, MA, 2001), pp. 35–52.

⁸¹ Gao Min, "Wei Jin Nanbeichao de zashui zhi zhi," *Zhongguo shehui jingjisbi yanjiu* 1990.3, p. 3.

reliance on these commercial taxes for their primary revenue dates from the late Southern Dynasties period.⁸²

In contrast to the importance placed on agriculture and disparagement of commerce from the Qin-Han down to the Western Jin, there was a clear shift in the policy of the Eastern Jin and the Southern Dynasties. Han law disparaged the position of merchants, stipulating that merchants were not to wear silk or to ride in vehicles, and that their children could not serve in an official position; further, they were to be heavily taxed in order to discourage commercial development.⁸³ One does not see such laws directed at suppressing merchants and commerce in the Eastern Jin and the Southern Dynasties. On the contrary, in the Southern Dynasties, special privileges had been granted to “pure” officials and military officers of the second grade and above that they be relieved of paying taxes collected at passes and fords,⁸⁴ thus virtually encouraging them to engage in commerce. Such involvement by officials was very common; for example, during the Liang, the entourage and followers of Xu Mian (466–535) encouraged him to become active in commerce and in the transport business.⁸⁵ Some lower-ranking members of the elite and some merchants attached themselves to civil and military officials as disciples (*mensheng*), thus relying on their status to avoid the tax on merchants and so enjoy greater profits.⁸⁶ Officials set up personal shops everywhere to engage in commerce and dealt in moneylending at high rates of interest. The Liang Prince Xiao Hong had several tens of such shops in Jiankang, engaging in moneylending, with land and dwellings used as security pledges; if the borrower was unable to repay within the set time limit, the pledged land or dwelling would be forfeited. Xiao Hong’s activities extended beyond Jiankang to the Three Wu area southeast of the capital, around Lake Taihu and further south, with the result that “more than one person in the area east of the capital lost their holdings.” There were also a number of other members of the royal household and high officials who directly engaged in moneylending in Kuaiji. Some officials took advantage of holding office outside the capital to engage in commerce where they were posted. Others, like Kong Hui and Kong Daocun, natives of Kuaiji who held office in Jiankang, carried on long-range trade. They asked for home leave, and left with over ten boatloads of silks, floss,

⁸² Yang Jiping, Chapter 4: “Wei Jin Nanbeichao de zudiao liuyi zhidu,” in *Zhongguo fuyi zhidu shi*, ed. Zheng Xueming (Fuzhou, 1994), p. 118; Guan Shigang, “Dong Jin Nanchao gushui chutan,” *Liucheng daxue xuebao (shekeban)* 2006.2, pp. 45, 47.

⁸³ HS 24B.1153. ⁸⁴ NS 77.1940. ⁸⁵ LS 25.383.

⁸⁶ Tang Changru, “Nanchao hanren de xingqi,” in *idem*, *Wei Jin Nanbeichaoshi luncong xubian* (Beijing, 1959), pp. 102–105. Kawakatsu Yoshio, “Kahei keizai no shinten to Kō Kei no ran,” in *idem*, *Rikuchō kizokusei shakai no kenkyū* (Tokyo, 1982), pp. 375–379; revision and new title of article “Kō Kei no ran to Nanchō no kahei keizai,” *Tōhō gakubō* 32 (1962).

paper, and mats, intending to sell them in Kuaiji.⁸⁷ There were peasants who abandoned their land and turned to commercial dealings because of the depreciation of coins under the Southern Dynasties' unstable monetary policies and the heavy taxation burden. There were examples of overseas trade. Sima Qi, a member of the royal family of the Eastern Jin, sent officials to Guangzhou to trade with foreign merchants there. Xiao Ze, before becoming Emperor Wu of the Qi, ordered his staff members to sell silk goods to foreigners. There were even some vagabond peasants who engaged in foreign trade.⁸⁸ Because garrisons needed an adequate supply of provisions and military equipment, markets sprang up in their vicinities. As the merchants engaged in trade with the garrison, close relationships were formed. In some cases, the two areas overlapped. Some officers, such as Lu Sengzhen, a Central Troop adjutant (*zhongbing canjun*) of the Liang, themselves had a mercantile background.⁸⁹

Such reliance by the government on commercial taxes, and so many high civil and military officials personally participating in trade, led to the elevation of the status of merchants so that by the second half of the fifth century there were cases of an emperor's closest associates having come from a mercantile background. Dai Faxing, a favorite of Emperor Xiaowu of the Song, for example, originally was a merchant who dealt in ramie.⁹⁰ Merchants appeared as themes in popular songs, even in the titles, such as *Guke yue* 賈客樂 ("Merchant Music") and *Guke ci* 賈客詞 ("Merchant Lyrics"), something which had never been the case in the past.⁹¹ It is worth noting that among the Southern Dynasties songs there were three that had the title "Guke yue," two of which were by emperors, one by Xiao Ze, Emperor Wu of Qi, and the other by Chen Shubao, the last emperor of the Chen. The former drew on his stay in the mid-Yangzi cities of Fancheng (modern Xiangfang, Hubei) and Dengxian (modern Dengxian, Henan), while the latter is placed in Jiankang.⁹² The popular songs of the time reflected the activities of merchants in the mid- and lower Yangzi region during the Eastern Jin and the Southern Dynasties. There were two main categories, the Wu songs (*Wu ge*) that took Jiankang as their center, and the other, the "Western tunes" (*Xi qu*) that centered on Jiangling. Some used the names of such cities as Jiangling and Xiangyang in their titles, all of these cities being major commercial centers in the mid- and lower

⁸⁷ NS 51.1278, 29.771–772, and 77.1940. ⁸⁸ Liu, *Liuchao de chengshi*, pp. 92–93, 332–338.

⁸⁹ Tang, "Nanchao hanren de xingqi," pp. 102–105; Kawakatsu, *Rikuchō kizokusei*, pp. 380–387.

⁹⁰ Kawakatsu, *Rikuchō kizokusei*, pp. 375–379; *idem*, *Gi Shin Nanbokucho* (Tokyo, 2003), pp. 254–257.

⁹¹ Li Han and Yu Ping, "Nanchao chengshi fazhan yu wenxue xinbian," *Nantong daxue xuebao* (*shehui kexue ban*) 2012.4, p. 23.

⁹² Lu Qinli, comp., *Xian Qin Han Wei Jin Nanbeichao shi* (Beijing, 1983), 2.1377 and 3.2509.

Yangzi. In these songs women see off merchants going on a long trip, reflecting the busy traffic and commercial activity of these cities.⁹³

The most important of the internal trade routes during the Six Dynasties were, first, from Jiankang via the Yangzi upriver to link with Jiangzhou, Xiangzhou, Jingzhou, and Yizhou. There was heavy ship traffic at the commercial cities that lined the shores of the Yangzi. A popular song described Baling as having a thousand junks, and the *Songsbu* (*History of the Liu-Song*) recorded that at Jiankang the boats could be counted in the myriads. Second, another important trade route was that by inland waterways leading from the Qinhuai river south of Jiankang and the web of water transport of the Three Wu area to connect to places in Jiangsu and Zhejiang. At this time the most important mercantile center was the capital, Jiankang, and north of the Qinhuai river there were over a hundred large markets and many smaller ones. In the eastern Zhejiang area the largest trade center was Shanyin (modern Shaoxing, Zhejiang), where thriving commerce made it difficult to maintain order in accordance with traditional market regulations.⁹⁴ In addition to agricultural products the markets also carried manufactured goods such as ceramics, paper, and cloth. The most significant ceramic kiln sites were Shangyu and Shining along the banks of the Cao-e river, while the most important markets for their products were at Jiankang and in the Three Wu area. As the ceramic objects unearthed from Six Dynasties tombs in the south demonstrate, aside from the local market for the products of the Deqing kilns at Deqing, Zhejiang, the Junshan kilns at Yixing, the Wuzhou kilns at Jinhua, and the Ou kilns at Wenzhou, the most important consumers were in the Jiankang and Zhenjiang area.⁹⁵ In addition, there were a few merchants who engaged in trade with the North and even went into the areas inhabited by the Man to carry on their dealings.⁹⁶

Foreign trade was of importance in Six Dynasties commerce. When the country divided into three parts during the Three Kingdoms period, the southern regime was motivated to seek foreign resources and this led to the development of overseas trade. In 226 the Wu took complete control of Jiaozhou (modern Hanoi, Vietnam) and so was in charge of the trade with the southeast Pacific. This commerce remained of much importance in the

⁹³ Wang Xiaoli, "Nanchao wenhua he yuefu mingde de chengshihua qingxiang ji qi dui Tang Song ci de yingxiang," *Jiangxi shehui kexue* 2002.5, pp. 33–34; Liu Chun, "Lun Nanchao yuefu mingde de shang-yehua tezheng," *Sheke zongheng (xinlilun ban)* 2007.6, pp. 160–162.

⁹⁴ Liu, *Liuchao de chengshi*, 205.

⁹⁵ Nakamura Keiji, "Kōnan Rikuchō bo shutsudo tōshi no ichikōsatsu," in *Chūgoku chūsei no bunbutsu*, ed. Tonami Mamoru (Kyoto, 1993), pp. 119–130; *idem*, *Rikuchō Kōnan chi-ikishi kenkyū* (Tokyo, 2006), pp. 231–237, 253–261.

⁹⁶ There is a record mentioning that during the Southern Qi a merchant named Tang Tianhuo did so; *NQS* 25.474.

following Eastern Jin and Southern Dynasties period. In a report by Xue Zong (d. 243), born and raised in Jiaozhou, there is a detailed list of the products of that area that would be of benefit to Wu; these included such products as aromatics, materia medica, ivory, exotic wildlife, and all sorts of treasures.⁹⁷ Since there was also a demand for such goods in Wei and Shu-Han, these became important items in the diplomatic exchanges and commercial transactions between Wu and the other two states. For example, in 220 Cao Pi, emperor of the Cao-Wei, offered horses to Wu in exchange for such foreign imports as “sparrow-head aromatics” (*quetou xiang*), large cowry shells, pearls, ivory, rhinoceros horn, hawksbill turtles (*daimao*), peacocks, and halcyon birds (*feicui*).⁹⁸ These foreign materials maintained their importance during the Eastern Jin and the Southern Dynasties. At that time China and India were in direct contact, and India served as a conduit transmitting goods from the countries to the west. The *Gaoseng zhuan* and the *Xu Gaoseng zhuan* record Indian and Chinese monks traveling between China and India on merchant vessels, so clearly at the time there were frequent merchant groups traveling from Guangzhou to the ancient state of Funan in the Mekong Delta, Sri Lanka, and India. Coming north, the ships would first call on central and then northern Vietnam, then following the sea coast of Guangxi would reach Guangzhou, and again following the coast would travel north past Fujian, Zhejiang, and Jiangsu to reach the mouth of the Yangzi, and from there go upstream to Jiankang, or even further up the Yangzi to trade inland. During the Liu-Song, a monk from northern India, Buddhahadra, saw five Indian ships at Jiangling.⁹⁹ Aside from Guangzhou, the most important seaports during the Six Dynasties period were those of Yongjia, Linhai, Yinxian and Maoxian (east of modern Ningpo). These ports were all located in Zhejiang and each had foreign ships anchored there. Overseas merchants from India, Sri Lanka, Funan, and Linyi (ancient states in modern Cambodia and Vietnam), and from various other western and southern states were active in southern China. The most important commercial center was at Jiankang, while places in eastern Zhejiang came next. There was also some trade with Paekche and Japan.¹⁰⁰

COINAGE

The situation of economic development in the South during the Six Dynasties differed locally and regionally; there were variations in the use of currency (including coins and kind). There were areas of sparse population and low

⁹⁷ *SGZ* 53.1252.

⁹⁸ Liu, *Linchao de chengshi*, p. 323.

⁹⁹ *Gaoseng zhuan*, T. 2059.335b.

¹⁰⁰ Liu, *Linchao de chengshi*, p. 205.

levels of economic development such as the upper and middle basin of the Yangzi where many Man aborigines lived. In what is now modern Fujian, Guangdong, and Guangxi, where many Li tribesmen lived, the economic situation was also quite backward. In both Jingzhou and Yongzhou, there was a strong military presence but these areas were unable economically to contribute to the central government. Due to its population density and improved agricultural productivity, it was only Yangzhou, which included Jiankang, as well as the Three Wu region, and eastern Zhejiang, that could realistically be called a viable economic area.¹⁰¹ In fact, accounts of commercial activity found in the Six Dynasties histories relate for the most part to these areas. The monograph on economics in the *Suishu* (*History of the Sui*) records that in the early years of the Liang, coins were used only in Jiankang and the neighboring Three Wu area, as well as in the prefectures of Jing, Ying, Jiang, Xiang, Liang, and Yi; while in Jiaozhou and Guangzhou, gold and silver currency was used because of the foreign trade. In the areas occupied by the aborigines, a mix of coins along with grain and cloth was used. In the second quarter of the fifth century, during the Liu-Song, in the Han river cities of Liangzhou and South Qinzhou, silk was used as the medium of exchange.¹⁰²

With the expansion of commerce in the Eastern Jin and the Southern Dynasties, there was an increased necessity for currency, yet throughout the period there was no adequate monetary policy, resulting in an insufficient supply. Moreover, there was the continuing phenomenon of debased and underweight coins.¹⁰³ During the Three Kingdoms period, each state had its own currency. The Cao-Wei continued to use the Han period *wuzhu* coinage, officially minting its own *wuzhu* coins, while Wu and Shu-Han also each produced their own coins. During the Jin unification of the country, coins of these types all circulated. The Eastern Jin used those of the Wu state, and there was also private minting of coins. Throughout this period there were twelve different mintings, but because there was an inadequate number of coins available, the coins were reduced in size, and while they weighed less than the old coins, their value, set by the government, was the same.¹⁰⁴ From the last half of the fifth century to the early sixth century, the private minting of coins was permitted but the quality suffered and led to the appearance of even more debased coinages.¹⁰⁵ For example, in 465 a two-*zhu* (rather than the five of the *wuzhu*) coin was minted, and at the same time private minting of the

¹⁰¹ He, "Liuchao nanfang," p. 24. ¹⁰² *Ss* 81.2074.

¹⁰³ Miyazawa, "Gi Shin nanbokuchō jidai," p. 59.

¹⁰⁴ He Ziquan, "Dong Jin Nanchao de qianbi shiyong yu qianbi wenti," in *idem*, *Du shi ji* (Shanghai, 1982), p. 179.

¹⁰⁵ Miyazawa, "Gi Shin nanbokuchō jidai," p. 59.

coins was permitted. This latter policy led to coins of ever smaller weight, such as the lighter “goose eye” (*eyan*) coin, and even more debased “pendant” (*yanhuan*) coins—so light they could float in water and break with one pinch. In 466 a decree was handed down to prohibit such private mintings; however, such debased coins continued to circulate. In 523 iron was used to mint coins but iron coins proved unacceptable and the “goose eye” coins continued privately to be used.¹⁰⁶ In the 530s the use of the official iron coins completely collapsed. Coins were commonly circulated in units of a hundred, which were literally strung together, but from 535 the value of these monies in the countryside was so devalued that in Jiankang ninety were counted as a hundred; while to the east, in the Three Wu area and eastern Zhejiang, eighty counted as a hundred; and to the west, along the Yangzi, seventy counted as a hundred. These values were linked to the level of authority of the state, as well as to the relative value of commodities; the more coins in the unit of currency (ostensibly a hundred coins) the greater the value of the commodity, and when there were fewer coins, the lower the price.¹⁰⁷ Further, the peasants, with poorer-quality coins, were at a disadvantage against the good-quality coins of the elite classes, which had relatively stronger purchasing power. Consequently, increasing numbers of the poor abandoned their fields, a high rate of unemployment developed, and the large gap between the wealthy and the poor only grew, leading to social unrest. This was one of the important reasons for the Liang collapsing so abruptly when attacked by northern freebooter Hou Jing in 548.¹⁰⁸

Many scholars have maintained that the shortage of coins, leading to the minting of iron coins, was the result of an inadequate supply of copper, so that substandard coins were minted throughout the period of the Southern Dynasties.¹⁰⁹ This writer believes that the situation was not the result of a shortage of the metal, but rather that large amounts of copper in the form of bronze were used for Buddhist images and the construction of Buddhist temples, as well as for such utensils as mirrors, flatirons, and seals. In the Liu-Song period there was a plan to collect from the populace all these utensils to ease the problem, but an official, Fan Tai (355–428), objected and it was not carried out. Further, in present-day Yunnan, Guangxi, and Guangdong the culture of the aboriginal peoples included the manufacture of bronze drums, important in their rituals, which also required large amounts of the metal. In 378 an edict forbade the importation of bronze coins to Guangzhou for this

¹⁰⁶ *SS* 24.690.

¹⁰⁷ He, “Dong Jin Nanchao de qianbi shiyong yu qianbi wenti,” p. 179; Miyazawa, “Gi Shin nanbokuchō jidai,” pp. 43–46.

¹⁰⁸ Kawakatsu, *Rikuchō kizokusei*, pp. 387–395; *idem*, *Gi Shin nanbokuchō*, pp. 257–260, 269–274.

¹⁰⁹ He, “Dong Jin nanchao de qianbi shiyong yu qianbi wenti,” p. 51.

purpose.¹¹⁰ But at the same time even greater amounts of bronze were used to make Buddha images and in the construction of temples. In 435, Xiao Mozhi, the governor of Danyang, proposed that permission be sought from the central authorities before casting a Buddha image, and that to build a temple, consent from the governor of that locale be required.¹¹¹ The emperor agreed and the relevant decree was issued, but it was not implemented, and Buddhist temples continued to be built and images cast during the four Southern Dynasties. The scale of the amounts of bronze used for such purposes can be seen, for example, when in 509 the monk Fayue of the Zhengjue Temple in Jiankang requested Emperor Wu of the Liang agree to the use of over 43,000 *jin* (one *jin* was about one pound) of copper to build a statue of the Amida Buddha some four and a half meters high.¹¹² Emperor Wu himself had once given 13,000 *jin* of bronze to his son Xiao Gang (503–551), later Emperor Jianwen, to have made a *lupan* (a disc-shaped object placed at the top of a pagoda) for the Shanjue Temple, and 10,000 *jin* for the Tianzhongtian Temple.¹¹³ From these bestowals we can understand why in 523 iron coins, not bronze, were minted. The inadequacy of the supply of coins must have also added to the popular discontent that marked the end of the Liang dynasty.

CONCLUSION

During the Six Dynasties period the southern development of commerce far exceeded that of earlier periods, causing the South to reach a remarkable level of development; earlier scholars have credited this to the advanced skills in production brought by the movement of northerners to the South. The lower degree of destruction associated with warfare, combined with that rapid economic development, led to a dynamic commodity economy.¹¹⁴ Additionally, the Six Dynasties commercial development was closely related to adjustments in their commercial policies, which were important for the finances of the southern regimes. These adjustments were necessitated by revenue shortfalls, for although huge numbers of northerners came south fleeing the non-Han takeover of their homeland, still the increase in population did not at all provide for an increase in tax revenues. The northerners were at first entered in “white registers” and not required to pay taxes. After things settled, the government attempted to have the northern émigrés and others who evaded taxes entered into regular household registers and pay taxes. But

¹¹⁰ JS 26.795. ¹¹¹ SoS 97.2386. ¹¹² *Gaoseng zhuàn*, T. 50, #2059, 13.412b–c.

¹¹³ Yan Kejun, comp., *Quan Liang wen*, 10.111, in *idem*, *Quan shanggu sandai Qin Han Sanguo Liuchao wen*, Volume 7 (Shijiazhuang, 1997).

¹¹⁴ Gao Min, *Wei Jin Nanbeichao jingjishi* (Shanghai, 1996), p. 919.

this residence determination policy was never completely successful, the number of southern registered households was very much smaller than that of the Wu period, and so the collection of taxes by the government was limited. In addition, within the southern territory there lived a large number of aboriginal peoples. Even those who had submitted and were entered into special administrative units called assisted commanderies and assisted districts merely paid symbolic and limited taxes. At the same time, in order to keep watch on the tribesmen who had not yet submitted, garrisons of varying sizes had to be maintained. Such garrisons helped to prevent raids on the cities and towns and also would keep aborigines from acting in the Northern Wei's interest along the borders. Where such military force was maintained, the tax revenues there almost all went toward sustaining those garrisons, as well as to fund the staff, military and civil, of the prefecture to which they were administratively attached, leaving very little to be sent on to the capital.

In the final analysis, the basic problem for the Eastern Jin and the Southern Dynasties was the weakening of imperial power and the erosion of administrative authority. This relates to the émigrés and native Wu elites being able to withstand the power of the state so that the administrators were unable to carry out a thorough residence determination and censuses to increase tax revenues. This was exacerbated by the inability of the state to impose its control over the wide areas occupied by aboriginal peoples and thus to collect revenues from them. For these reasons, the state came increasingly to rely on taxes on commerce, resulting in a change in the policy current in the Han and later of disparaging commerce, so that trade, domestic and foreign, reached an appreciable level of development. Growing mercantile activity required the circulation of a large amount of coinage: there were twelve mintings in the Southern Dynasties. But because of the regimes' lack of credibility, and the governments' inability to promulgate an adequate monetary policy, the resulting shortage of official coinage and the private minting of substandard coins, along with other economic problems, led to a deteriorating economic state of affairs that had a direct bearing on the failure of the South to maintain its independence. In the end, the last of these southern regimes fell to the armies of the Sui, and the capital at Jiankang was razed.

AGRICULTURE

Francesca Bray

Almost everything we know about agriculture during the Six Dynasties comes from one landmark work, the *Qimin yaoshu* (*Essential Techniques* [or *Arts*] *for the Common People*), completed sometime between 533 and 544. The author, Jia Sixie, was an estate owner and practicing farmer who had served the Northern Wei government as a middle-level official.

It may seem an exaggeration to claim that an agricultural treatise should be classed among the written masterpieces of the Six Dynasties. The author of the *Qimin yaoshu* does not dazzle his readers with poetic ingenuity, nor does he expound subtle aesthetic or philosophical theories, nor offer esoteric instruction in the arts of transcendence. Instead, in clear, terse, and sober language, Jia Sixie offers his readers comprehensive technical instructions for an utterly mundane activity: farming.

Despite its lack of glamour, however, like the *Wenxuan* (Selections of Refined Literature) or *Wenxin diaolun* (The Literary Mind and the Carving of Dragons) the *Qimin yaoshu* was a pathbreaking work that set standards for the discipline of farming for centuries to come. Circulating widely in manuscript and then in printed editions, freely copied and extensively quoted from the Tang through to the Qing, the *Qimin yaoshu* was an obligatory point of reference for anyone writing on agriculture or attempting to raise local farming standards, whether in a private or an official capacity. As such, the *Qimin yaoshu* has come down to us almost intact—unlike all the earlier agricultural treatises to which it refers.¹ The *Qimin yaoshu*'s systematic organization, and

¹ Miao Qiyu, the foremost contemporary scholar of the *Qimin yaoshu*, provides a detailed analysis of the transmission of the text and a critical evaluation of its principal editions through imperial times in his *Qimin yaoshu jiaoshi* (Beijing, 1982), pp. 733–858, with a convenient summary in table form at pp. 4–6. The *Qimin yaoshu* has been intensively studied and debated by postwar scholars in China and Japan, who have established critical, annotated editions of the work. In addition to that by Miao, there are Shi Shenghan, *Qimin yaoshu jinsbi*, 4 vols. (Beijing, 1957); Nishiyama Buichi and Kumashiro Yukio, *Saimin yōjutsu*, 2 vols. (Tokyo, 1957, 1959); and Li Changnian, *Qimin yaoshu yanjiu* (Beijing, 1959). Published readers' guides or excerpts include Shi Shenghan, *Qimin yaoshu xuanduben* (Beijing, 1961); and Miao, *Qimin yaoshu daodu* (Chengdu, 1988); all these studies are usually accompanied by translations into

the clarity and precision of its technical language, set the pattern for later agronomic treatises and shaped the conceptualization of many farming issues. As for its technical advice, many later agronomists writing on farming in north China believed that the sophistication and efficacy of the techniques recommended in the *Qimin yaoshu* had never been surpassed.

The *Qimin yaoshu* offers a vivid, detailed picture of how a well-managed estate in northeastern China might be run in the last decades of the Northern Wei. As the author puts it in his preface, "I have gleaned material from traditional texts and from folk songs. I have enquired for information from old men and learned myself from practical experience. From plowing to pickles there is no domestic or farming activity that I have not described exhaustively."² The ninety-two chapters (*pian*), divided into ten books (*juan*) each headed by a table of contents, describe every technical aspect of cultivation techniques, crop plants, animal husbandry, and food processing typical of north China at the time of its composition. It seems that every imaginable topic is covered in this immense and erudite treatise, including bringing waste land under the plow, rotating crops, grafting fruit trees, using safflower to tint rouge, treating scabies in sheep and making different kinds of yogurt or cheese from their milk, brewing wine, or scrambling eggs with onions. Half of the content consists of original text, and the other half of quotations drawn from around 160 works that span the seven centuries preceding the *Qimin yaoshu*'s composition.³

With such a rich resource as the *Qimin yaoshu* in hand, it is tempting to imagine that we could write a rather full account of agriculture in the Six Dynasties. Yet even where the farming systems of its native region are concerned the *Qimin yaoshu* leaves crucial questions unanswered. We can

modern Chinese or Japanese. There are also numerous historical evaluations of the work, most influentially Amano Motonosuke, *Chūgoku nōgyōshi kenkyū* (Tokyo, 1962, reprint 1979), and *idem*, "Kōgi no Ka Shikyō Seimin yōjutsu no kenkyū," in *Chūgoku no kagaku to kagakushi*, ed. Yamada Keiji (Kyoto, 1978), pp. 369–570. The *Qimin yaoshu* also figures prominently in Francesca Bray, *Science and civilisation in China*, Volume 6, *Biology and biological technology*, Part 2, *Agriculture* (Cambridge, 1984); H. T. Huang, *Science and civilisation in China*, Volume 6, *Biology and biological technology*, Part 4, *Food processing technologies* (Cambridge, 2000); and Françoise Sabban, "Un savoir-faire oublié: Le travail du lait en Chine ancienne," *Zinbun* (Memoirs of the Research Institute for Humanistic Studies, Kyoto University) 21 (1986), pp. 31–65; *idem*, "De la main à la pâte: Réflexion sur l'origine des pâtes alimentaires et les transformations du blé en Chine ancienne (IIIE siècle av. J.-C.–VIIe siècle ap. J.-C.)," *L'homme: Revue française d'anthropologie* 30.113 (1990), pp. 102–137; and *idem*, "Suivre le temps du ciel': Économie ménagère et gestion du temps dans la Chine du VIIe siècle," in *Le temps de manger: Alimentation, emploi du temps et rythmes sociaux*, ed. Maurice Aymard, Claude Grignon, and Françoise Sabban (Paris, 1993), pp. 81–108. There is even a short English-language survey by Shi Shenghan, *A preliminary survey of the book Ch'i Min Yao Shu, an agricultural encyclopaedia of the 6th century* (Beijing, 1958, reprint 1982). The edition referred to in the following footnotes as *QMYs* is Miao Qiyu, *Qimin yaoshu jiaoshi*, 1982.

² *QMYs*, p. 5. All translations, unless otherwise stated, are by the author.

³ The different categories into which these works fall are discussed by Shi, *A preliminary survey*, pp. 7–29.

only speculate, for example, as to how land and labor were managed on the kinds of estates that Jia Sixie took as his model, or how likely it was that all or any of the techniques he advocates were practiced by peasant farmers in the same region. Furthermore, apart from this one beacon work, sources that deal in any detail with agricultural matters are scanty and often obscure. It thus proves very difficult to trace any clear overall picture of how the different regions or classes of China were clothed and fed through the four centuries of the Six Dynasties. How representative was the *Qimin yaoshu* even of farming in north China? And what, if anything, can we infer about the farming landscapes of southern China from the surprisingly sparse materials available to us?

THE *QIMIN YAOSHU*: THE AUTHOR AND HIS ART

Our only direct information about the author of the *Qimin yaoshu*, Jia Sixie, comes from ten characters at the beginning of the preface which refer to him as “Governor (*taishou*) of Gaoyang during the Later [Northern] Wei.”⁴ There were in fact two Northern Wei prefectures called Gaoyang, one in modern Hebei and one in Yidu district in the commandery of Qijun, in modern Shandong. Scholars since the Qing have used internal evidence to argue for each location, but it is difficult to draw conclusions on internal evidence alone. Jia Sixie makes it clear that he had served in different regions of the Northern Wei state. Wherever he found himself, he made it his business to observe, experiment with and compare local farming practices and to consult colleagues on their personal experience, all the better to distil general principles of good husbandry.

More recently, historians have noted that the court officials listed in the *Weishu* (*History of the Northern Wei*) include a Jia Sibao (d. 525) and a Jia Sitong (d. 540), both from Yidu. Internal evidence puts the completion of the *Qimin yaoshu* at some time between 533 and 544 and it is now generally agreed that Jia Sixie was probably a member the Yidu Jia family, of the same generation as Sibao and Sitong. If Jia Sixie’s family estate was indeed in Yidu, this raises the possibility (supported by repeated allusions in the text to ‘Qi customs’ and to ‘Qi people’) that the term *qimin* in the title of the work is used punningly to refer not simply to the ‘common people’ in general, but also to the farmers of Qi in particular.⁵

⁴ *QMYs*, p. 1.

⁵ Miao, *Qimin yaoshu daodu*, pp. 2–4. *Qimin* was an alternative to *pingmin*, glossed by Han scholars as meaning neither rich nor poor, and often used during the later Han and the Six Dynasties to refer not to the poor peasantry but to landowning families who did not belong to the privileged bureaucracy. Since *Qi* 齊 could also be read as the name of the area derived from the state located there in the Warring States period, the ambiguities of the title *Qimin yaoshu* have provided ample food for debate over the centuries.

Table 16.1 *Table of contents of the Qimin yaoshu*

<i>juan</i> 卷	<i>pian</i> 篇	
		<i>xu</i> 序 preface
		<i>za shuo</i> 雜說 miscellaneous remarks (a later addition)
I	I	<i>geng tian</i> 耕田 clearing and tilling land
	2	<i>shou zhong</i> 收種 collection and treatment of seed grain
	3	<i>zhong gu</i> 種穀 cultivation of setaria millet
II	4–16	cultivation of field crops (cereals, beans, etc.)
III	17–29	cultivation of vegetables
	30	<i>za shuo</i> 雜說 miscellaneous remarks (organized around Cui Shi's calendar of monthly tasks, the <i>Simin yueling</i>)
IV	31	<i>yuan li</i> 園籬 planting hedges
	32	<i>zai shu</i> 栽樹 transplanting trees (general rules)
	33–44	fruit trees and Chinese pepper
V	45	<i>zhong sang zhe</i> 種桑柘 mulberry trees (<i>yang can fu</i> 養蠶附 appendix on sericulture)
	46–51	timber trees and bamboo
	52–54	dye plants
	55	<i>fa mu</i> 伐木 cutting timber
VI	56–61	animal husbandry (including poultry and fish)
VII	62	<i>huozhi</i> 貨殖 the profits of trade
	63–67	brewing
VIII	68–79	culinary preparations (soy sauces, vinegars, preserved meats, etc.)
IX	80–89	culinary preparations (meats, cereal dishes, candies, etc.)
	90–91	glue making, preparation of ink, brushes, etc.
X	92	grains, fruits and vegetables not indigenous to north China

The conventional literary style of the period was elaborate, flowery and allusive. Jia Sixie ends his preface with an apology: “My intention in writing this work was to instruct the youngsters of my family (*jiaotong*),⁶ and I did not intend it for educated readers. I repeat myself often, trying to drum in instructions on every task, and have not bothered with fine phrases. I hope that no reader will laugh at this.”⁷ For each farming operation he describes, Jia offers general principles followed by specific advice matched to variations in climate, soil type or weather. Procedures are outlined step by step, and Jia’s commentary (shown here in brackets) provides explanations of how they work or under which conditions they are necessary. Here is a typical passage:⁸

Spring sowing [of setaria millet] should always be deep, so draw a *ta* [a bush weighted down with stones] over the seed. Summer sowing should be shallow, so just sow the seed

⁶ There has been some controversy about how to translate this term; see below. ⁷ *QMYS*, p. 5.

⁸ *QMYS*, pp. 43–44.

directly and leave it to sprout on its own. (In spring the soil is cold and germination slow. If you do not use the *ta* the roots will spread into empty cracks [in the soil] and even though the plant germinates it will soon die. In summer the air is hot and germination rapid. If you use the *ta* and then it rains the soil will become compacted.)

Here Jia expresses himself in a style that is indeed rigorously plain and technical, yet he was writing not for the instruction of illiterate peasants but for members of the educated elite. Despite his apologies, the range of texts that he quotes demonstrates that he was a man of considerable learning.

Though no specialist agronomic works earlier than the *Qimin yaoshu* are extant today, it is clear that Jia Sixie drew on a long and rich agronomic tradition. The bibliographical chapter of the *Hanshu* contains a list of nine specialist agricultural works (*nongjia*) totaling 114 chapters (*pian*); some are attributed to Warring States authors, others to writers of the Western Han. All are now lost except for scattered quotations but most of them appear to have been familiar to Jia Sixie; in fact, quotations in the *Qimin yaoshu* are our main or only source for several of these works, most notably the Western Han *Fan Shengzhi shu* (*Book of Fan Shengzhi*), originally eighteen *pian* in length,⁹ and the *Simin yueling* (*Monthly Ordinances for the Four Classes of People*), composed c. 160 CE by Cui Shi.¹⁰

Jia Sixie does not restrict his references to agronomic works, but also cites etymological works and encyclopedias, while quoting liberally from histories and treatises on natural philosophy, cosmology and divination. Jia also uses quotes from collections of natural knowledge, like the *Nanfang caowu zhuang* (*A Prospectus of the Plants and Products of the Southern Regions*) attributed to the Jin scholar Xu Zhong, and now known only through quotations,¹¹ and works on the divine and curious like the *Shenxian zhuan* (*Biographies of Divine Transcendents*) attributed to the fourth-century Daoist alchemist Ge Hong (284–363).

Jia cannot have had direct access to all the works included in his text. Quotes from quotes notwithstanding, we may marvel that a rather obscure early sixth-century official had access to, took notes on (whether his own or somebody else's handmade copy), or even perhaps owned quite so many texts, which in those days circulated only in manuscript. Yet in this Jia was a typical rather than an unusual author for his time, and this prompts some interesting

⁹ Wan Guoding, *Fan Shengzhi shu jishi* (Beijing, 1957; reprint 1980); Shi Shenghan, *On the Fan Sheng-chih Shu, an agricultural book written by Fan Sheng-chih in 1st-century China* (Beijing, 1959).

¹⁰ Shi Shenghan, *Simin yueling jiaozhu* (Beijing, 1965); Patricia Ebrey, "Estate and family management in the Later Han as seen in the *Monthly instructions for the four classes of people*," *JESHO* 17.2 (May 1974), pp. 173–205.

¹¹ Shi Shenghan, *Ji Xu Zhong Nanfang caowu zhuang* (Xi'an, 1973).

reflections on intellectual networks, libraries and the circulation of knowledge in China before the development of printing.¹²

To give a flavor of how Jia Sixie interweaves and enriches his own practical instructions and judgments with quotations, here is a passage from Chapter 36, on Japanese apricots (*mei*, *Prunus mume*) and apricots (*xing*, *Prunus armeniaca*):¹³

To plant and transplant seedlings, proceed exactly as for peaches and plums.¹⁴ When the [fruit] are ripe, make a deep wide pit in a warm spot on the sunny side of a southern wall. Pick out several dozen of the most delicious [fruit], pull out the pits and put them in cow dung, top upwards. Then take well-rotted manure, mix with soil and cover [the pits] thickly, to a depth of over a foot. In the spring, when they have started to sprout, slowly remove the manure and soil and they will all respond by leafing; you will not lose one in ten thousand of the selected pits. If you then continue to apply treated manure, the flavor of the [fruit] will be improved . . .

The *Shijing* (*Culinary Canon*) says,

The Shu [Sichuan] method of preserving Japanese apricots: pick the apricots when they are as large as possible, skin and dry them in the shade, making sure they are not exposed to drafts. [Soak in brine and] after two nights take them out of the brine and put them in honey. After a month or so, change the honey. After a whole year they will still be just as fresh.

Method for apricot or plum parched grain (*zhao*):¹⁵

when the fruits are ripe, pick large numbers of the overripe ones and pound them in a dish. Squeeze out the thick liquid through a cloth and spread [the paste] into a bowl. Put it out in the sun to dry, then rub it off and crumble it between your fingers. [The crumbs] can be mixed with water or salty sauces (*jiang*) or added to parched grain according to taste . . .

The *Shenxian zhuan* says,

Dong Feng dwelt on Mount Lushan [in southeastern China]. He would not engage in commerce. If he cured someone of an illness he would take no money, but if it had been a grave illness he would tell the patient to grow five apricot trees from pits, and if he healed a mild disease he would tell them to plant one cutting. Within the space of a few years there were several hundreds of thousands of apricot trees that had flourished and grown into a forest. When the apricots were ripe [Feng] made stores of them throughout the wood. He explained to those who came to buy apricots, "There is no need to come and tell me—just help yourselves. If you bring a jar of grain you can have a jar of apricots." One

¹² Jean-Pierre Drège, *Les bibliothèques en Chine au temps des manuscrits: Jusqu'au Xe siècle* (Paris, 1991).

¹³ *QMYs*, pp. 200–201.

¹⁴ This is one of several methods given in the previous chapter on peaches, *QMYs*, p. 190.

¹⁵ The equivalent of Tibetan *tsampa*, *zhao* was wheat or barley that had been first roasted, then pounded or milled to flour. Unlike untreated wheat or barley, *zhao* was insect-resistant and long-lasting—very convenient for travelers or soldiers. It could be mixed just with water or with a variety of sauces, dried fruits, or dairy products. Jia Sixie gives instructions for making parched grain in Chapter 10 on wheat and barley, *QMYs*, p. 93.

man brought less grain than he took apricots, and five tigers chased after him. The man took to his heels in terror and the apricots he was carrying started to fall to the ground. As soon as he had the same amount of apricots left in his jar as there had been grain before, the tigers turned round and went away. After this occurrence all those who came to buy apricots weighed them themselves in the wood lest they should leave with too many. Feng used all the grain he had acquired to help the poor and succor the needy . . .

The *Songgaoshan ji* (*Records of Lofty Mountains*) (probably Northern Dynasties) says,

In the Northeast is Mount Niushan; on this mountain grow many apricots. In the fifth month they glisten in golden profusion. Since the central states have fallen into disorder and the common people have been starving they have considered these trees a heaven-sent gift and all have eaten their fill [of apricots].

In Shi You's *Jijiu pian* (急就篇 *Handy Primer*) (c.48–33 BCE) it says,

Vegetables and fruits from the garden supplement cereal foods. In my [Jia Sixie's] opinion, if one single species, the apricot, can help the poor and save the starving, then all the five fruits and the different vegetables together must be even more efficacious in preventing starvation: they do not merely supplement cereal foods! The proverb says, "With a thousand wooden slaves there is never a bad year," and this means that fruits of all kinds can be traded for grain . . .

Apricot kernels can be made into gruel. (If you harvest and sell them in large quantities, you will be able to keep yourself in paper and ink.)

Typically, this chapter is both technically detailed and highly readable. It embeds Jia's terse, precise technical instructions in a much richer social and cultural context, conveyed by aptly chosen quotations and by Jia's own reflections. It supplements instructions for cultivation with methods for processing and consuming the fruit. It highlights the value of foodstuffs not only for home consumption but also for the relief of hunger when times are bad, or—in times of stability like the Northern Wei—as marketable commodities, a source of disposable income for purchasing essential goods that could not always be produced on the estate, including such staples of a gentry household as paper and ink.

BEST FARMING PRACTICE IN NORTH CHINA

While the scholarship and literary charms of Jia's work were doubtless an integral part of its appeal to his contemporaries, what later agronomists most valued in the *Qimin yaoshu* was its technical core, in particular the sophisticated system of cereal cultivation that it laid out.

Northern China is not an easy place to farm productively. It has cold winters and hot summers; the low rainfall is concentrated in a couple of months in spring or summer and often falls as violent thunderstorms. The loess soils of the inland regions are fertile but fragile; the soils of the Yellow River plains are

often heavy, stiff and prone to waterlogging. Hardy and drought-resistant millets, sown immediately after the spring rains, were the main cereal crops, as they still are in many northern villages today. The chief staple was setaria or foxtail millet (*Setaria italica*), a drought-resistant summer crop sown immediately after the first spring rains; this is the crop around which the instructions in the *Qimin yaoshu* are organized.

Jia Sixie emphasizes that a good farmer must know his land and pay careful heed both to seasons and to weather: "If you follow Heaven's seasons and accurately gauge the land's potential (*shun tianshi liang dili* 順天時量地利), then you will reap large rewards for little labor, but if you are willful and oppose Heaven's way then however hard you work you will get no harvest."¹⁶ "As a general principle, sowing should be early, for early-sown crops yield much better than late. (Early crops are clean and easy to tend but late crops are weedy and difficult to look after.)"¹⁷ The final choice, however, always depends on the weather:

Grain is always best sown just after rain. If the rainfall is slight you should sow immediately while the soil is still damp; if it is heavy wait for the weeds to sprout first. (. . . If the rainfall is slight and you do not sow immediately there will be no moisture to make the seed sprout, but if you do not wait for the soil to turn pale after heavy rain then the dampness will be trapped in the soil and will make the roots sickly.)¹⁸

The cultivation techniques that Jia Sixie advocates for field crops build upon principles first expressed in the *Houji shu* (*Book of Prince Millet*), a late Zhou work quoted in the farming chapters of the *Liushi chunqiu* (*Master Lü's Spring and Autumn Annals*) (c. 239 BCE):¹⁹

Are you able to make low, wet land fruitful? Are you able to conserve dry soils and temper them with damp? . . . Can you ensure that your millet heads will be rounded and the husks thin, that the grains will be numerous and plump so that food is plentiful? How may you do all this? By these fundamental principles of tillage: The strong [soils] must be weakened, the weak strengthened. The rested must be set to work, the hard-worked rested. The lean must be fattened, the fatter made leaner. The compact must be loosened, the loose compacted. The damp must be dried out, and the dry dampened . . . Till five times and use the weeding hoe five times. Observe all these rules closely.

The *Qimin yaoshu* elaborates an intensive system of tillage designed to ensure that, from the moment of sowing until the harvest, whatever the type of soil, it was kept moist but not wet, its surface finely crumbled into what modern agronomists call a dust-mulch in order to reduce the evaporation of moisture and the erosion of soil. In autumn, after the harvest, deep plowing followed by the use of a tined harrow broke up the clods before the winter frosts, which

¹⁶ QMYS, p. 43. ¹⁷ QMYS, p. 44. ¹⁸ QMYS, p. 44.

¹⁹ Xia Weiying, *Liushi chunqiu Shangnong deng sipian jiaoshi* (Beijing, 1956), p. 27.

crumbled the soil and killed insects. At the end of winter cartloads of manure from the stables were emptied onto the fields and turned in. Any snowfall was rolled into the fields. From the first lunar month onward (late January or February in modern reckoning) a series of shallow plowings with narrow furrows took place, each followed by several cross-harrowings where a bush-harrow was dragged across the field first along the rows and then at right angles to them. Then the field was plowed into ridges and the seed was not broadcast but sown in rows using a drill. The drill saved seed and economized on soil moisture and fertilizer; it also facilitated hoeing:²⁰

You should not mind how many times you hoe [setaria]; once you have been right round the field start again, and do not stop even for a short time simply because there are no weeds. (Hoeing does not just get rid of weeds, it keeps the soil at a good tilth (*shu*) and will give full ears, with thin husks, that do not shatter. If you hoe your field ten times you will get “eight-tenths grain” [the weight of the milled grain will be eight tenths that of the grain in the ear].)

The farming methods Jia describes required the following equipment, all of which had been current since the Han dynasty:²¹ turnplows (*li*) with an iron share and adjustable iron moldboard (*bi*) for turning the furrow, drawn by a team of two or three oxen or mules; scratch-plows for light soils, which made only a shallow furrow; harrows, also ox-drawn, including an iron-tined harrow for breaking up clods and a bush-harrow (*lao*), which is a flat hurdle woven from flexible twigs of willow or elm, for producing a fine tilth or for covering seed; ox-drawn rollers used to roll snow or frost into the ground, and also to roll down sprouts of wheat to encourage the growth of numerous stems from each plant; ox-drawn seed-drills (*lou*) for sowing in rows; and a range of hoes, mattocks, and grubbers for weeding, thinning, and keeping a fine tilth. As well as plenty of farm hands, a good stock of animals was needed for draft and to supply manure.

In addition to careful tillage and manuring, Jia Sixie also lays out a system of crop rotations that helped to keep the land in good heart. The alternation of cereals with leguminous crops like “lesser beans” (*xiao dou*, adzuki beans) or “greater beans” (*da dou*, soybeans) largely eliminated the need for fallow. Since the *Fan Shengzhi shu* describes fallowing as a last resort, we may infer that continuous cropping was frequent in densely populated regions of north China by early Han times; Jia, however, is the first author to treat rotations systematically.²² He proposes a full and complex set of rotations for field crops, expressed in terms of the best “base,” *di*, namely a preceding crop which provided the right kind of enrichment of the soil.

²⁰ QMYS, p. 44. ²¹ Bray, *Science and civilisation in China*, Section (d), pp. 130–422.

²² Bray, *Science and civilisation in China*, pp. 429, 523.

Table 16.2 *Crop rotations in the Qimin yaoshu*

<i>Crop to be sown</i>	<i>Recommended preceding crop, di (in order of excellence)</i>
Foxtail millet <i>Setaria italica</i> (gu)	Green gram <i>Phaseolus aureus</i> (li dou) Adzuki beans <i>Phaseolus angularis</i> (xiao dou) Cucurbits (gua or luo) Hemp <i>Cannabis sativa</i> (ma) Broomcorn millet <i>Panicum miliaceum</i> (shu) Sesame <i>Sesamum indicum</i> (buma) Rape turnip <i>Brassica rapa</i> (wujing) Soybean <i>Glycine max</i> (da dou)
Broomcorn millet <i>Panicum miliaceum</i> (shu)	Soybean Foxtail millet Newly opened land
Adzuki beans <i>Phaseolus angularis</i> (xiao dou)	Wheat or barley (mai) Foxtail millet
Hemp <i>Cannabis sativa</i> (ma)	Adzuki beans
Cucurbits (gua)	Adzuki beans Late foxtail millet Broomcorn millet
Wheat or barley (mai) [winter crop]	Broomcorn millet
Rape turnip <i>Brassica rapa</i> (wujing)	Wheat or barley
Coriander <i>Coriandrum sativum</i> (busui)	Wheat or barley
<i>Lithospermum officinale</i> (zicao) [dye plant]	Wheat or barley Non-glutinous broomcorn millet (ji) Newly opened land

As Table 16.2 suggests, while setaria millet was the main crop in the farming system described in the *Qimin yaoshu*, many other crops were grown too. Broomcorn millet (*Panicum miliaceum*) was needed to brew wines. Well-off families like Jia's enjoyed noodles and breads made from wheat.²³ Other common field crops included beans, peas and soybeans; melons, squash and other cucurbits; oil plants like rape and sesame; hemp for oil or fibre; and dye plants. Common vegetables included mallow, onions, chives, shallots and garlic, turnips and other brassicas, aubergines, coriander, basil, and peppery plants like perilla. The northern fruits included jujubes, plums, peaches and apricots, grapes, pears, crab apples, persimmons, pomegranates, quinces, and various nuts. Jia Sixie also discusses several species of timber trees, mulberries for feeding silkworms, lacquer trees, and tung-oil trees. The choice of crops depends, Jia says, not only on household needs but also on the kinds of land available and on proximity to markets.

²³ Sabban, "De la main," pp. 115–117.

A BOOK OF ITS TIME

In its layout, technical style and focus on cereal cultivation, the *Qimin yaoshu* set the pattern for later agronomic works;²⁴ however, comparison shows that farming treatises evolved significantly over time. As was typical of works written before printing, the *Qimin yaoshu* contained no graphics beyond the tables of contents, whereas print-era treatises like Wang Zhen's *Nongshu* (*Agricultural Treatise*) of 1313 were able to complement written explanations with woodblock illustrations. This encouraged other authors as well to add long illustrated sections on topics that Jia Sixie left aside, like irrigation; the construction of various field types; and the making and use of tools and machinery for farming, processing crops, and making textiles.²⁵

How textile production was conceptualized changed markedly too. The *Qimin yaoshu* includes a brief section on rotting down hemp for yarn at the end of its chapter on hemp, and a rather longer section on raising silkworms as a supplement to the chapter on mulberries; otherwise it contains incidental advice on caring for fabrics, but nothing specific on spinning and weaving. During the Northern Wei, as through most of Chinese history, taxpaying households were assessed in equivalent quantities of grain and home-woven cloth. In the *Qimin yaoshu*, however, textiles are treated as just one of a spectrum of income-generating domestic manufactures, along with brewing or preserving. Probably the main workforce consisted of household slaves, male and female, and probably women were preferentially assigned to textiles. A common saying of the time went, "For plowing consult a [male] field slave, for silk consult a [female] weaving slave" (*geng ze wen tiannu, xun ze wen zhibi* 耕則問田奴絹則問織婢).²⁶ By Song times the expression "men plow, women weave" (*nan geng nü zhi* 男耕女織) denoted a division of labor not between slaves but between free men and women, the "people" (*min*) of whom the emperor and his officials were the guardians. To the late imperial ruling elite, that free women were expected to weave signified not just an economic complementarity of the sexes, but a cosmic harmony that underpinned the imperial order. Reflecting both the real economic importance of weaving for farming families and the sacred importance attributed to the proper performance of gender roles, unlike the *Qimin yaoshu* Song and

²⁴ See e.g. Miao, *Qimin yaoshu daodu*, pp. 37–38.

²⁵ Francesca Bray, "Agricultural illustrations: Blueprint or icon?", in *Graphics and text in the production of technical knowledge in China*, ed. Francesca Bray, Vera Dorofeeva-Lichtmann, and Georges Métailié (Leiden, 2007), pp. 526–574.

²⁶ Miao, *Qimin yaoshu daodu*, p. 91.

post-Song works on agriculture pay just as much attention to textiles as to crops.²⁷

Another striking difference with later works is that a very substantial portion of the *Qimin yaoshu*—all of Books 7 to 9 (Chapters 62 to 79), most entries in the elaborate monthly calendar of Chapter 30, and various short entries in the chapters on crops and livestock—is devoted to household manufactures. These include the preparation of foodstuffs such as brewing, soy products, wheat breads, pastries and noodles, sauces, dried and preserved meats and fish, pickles, and candies, and of other household necessities, among them ink, glue, and cosmetics, with miscellaneous instructions on such tasks as dry-cleaning silk robes, airing and repairing books and papers, or killing bookworms.

In later times recipes and the details of food processing and household manufactures no longer figured prominently in agricultural treatises but found their place, along with discussions of dietetics, in the domestic sections of popular encyclopedias. The *Qimin yaoshu* is unique among agricultural treatises in this respect, because it provides unparalleled documentation of the many contemporary, complex forms of food processing and cooking. It abounds in recipes, some elaborate, some very simple:

To stir-fry (*chao*) hens' eggs: break into a copper bowl and stir till white and yolk are mixed together. Finely shred the white bulb of an onion, add a pinch of salt and stir-fry in a mixture of soy sauce and hemp [sesame?] oil. It smells and tastes delicious.²⁸

As well as his own favorites, Jia quotes 160 recipes from the *Shijing* (*Culinary Canon*) and *Shici* (*Culinary Procedures*), post-Han works that were probably compiled in the South and that may contain some recipes of great antiquity.²⁹ Unusually, Jia Sixie pays no attention to the therapeutic qualities of food. Instead, he guides us through the sophisticated gastronomic culture of the contemporary elite. Some recipes, like one from the *Shijing* for carp stew, were part of a ritual tradition, carefully prepared “according to the standard model,”³⁰ and only consumed after they had been offered to the ancestors. Others were appreciated purely for their savor. Donald Harper suggests that reading a recipe may often have given as much pleasure as consuming the dish. Ritual enthusiasts enjoyed mulling over exact specifications for the size of

²⁷ Francesca Bray, *Technology and gender: Fabrics of power in late Imperial China* (Berkeley, 1997), Chapter 6; *idem*, *Technology, gender and history in Imperial China: Great transformations reconsidered* (London, 2013), Chapter 3.

²⁸ *QMY*, p. 333.

²⁹ Donald Harper, “The cookbook in ancient and medieval China,” paper prepared for the conference on Discourses and Practices of Everyday Life in Imperial China (Columbia University, 2002), at www.ihp.sinica.edu.tw/~wensi/active/download/active03/Harper.doc.

³⁰ *QMY*, pp. 466, 475–476, n. 36.

a fish, poets' imaginations were titillated by the names of exotic ingredients,³¹ and émigrés pining for their homeland were comforted by recipes for familiar dishes even when the ingredients were not attainable. In a time of movement and uncertainty, it is perhaps not surprising that cookbooks were apparently as popular among the elite as works on divination or medicine.³²

A further particularity of the *Qimin yaoshu* is the prominence of animal husbandry (chapters on equines, sheep and cattle, pigs, hens, ducks, geese, and fish make up Book 6) and of milk products (covered in the chapter on sheep and cattle). From very early times, perhaps because of high population densities, typical Chinese peasant farms devoted almost all their land to crops. Pigs and poultry were raised inside the farmyard; sometimes there was a fish pond; the few indispensable draft animals were tethered on marginal land to graze. The relative unimportance of livestock compared to crops is reflected in the majority of Chinese *nongshu* (agricultural treatises). Although the early Han *Fan Shengzhi shu* also describes northern farming, unlike the *Qimin yaoshu* it contains no sections on animals.³³ Chen Fu's terse *Nongshu* (*Agricultural Treatise*) of 1149 includes an affectionate discussion of how to care for water buffalo, the indispensable partners of southern rice farmers; otherwise it omits all animals but silkworms. Wang Zhen's compendious *Nongshu* of 1313 likewise includes a lengthy discussion of water buffalo but otherwise restricts its treatment of husbandry mainly to short quotations from *Qimin yaoshu*. Wang's entry on horses, for instance, is a mere three columns long: even though horses were still essential for military use, they were rarely seen on farms.³⁴

The manorial enterprises of the later Han to Tang, however, often raised large numbers of livestock, for both profit and pleasure. Through the Six Dynasties successive waves of pastoral peoples surged into the farming regions of northern China, some as invading armies, some as refugees. Many eventually settled and intermarriage was quite common—we know this was true of the elites, and likely it also applied lower down the social scale. Jia Sixie was writing at a time when the Tuoba Wei had ruled northern China for over a century, and foodstuffs derived from the milk of sheep, mares, and cows were very popular. Jia describes the preparation of many dairy products that totally disappeared from the Chinese diet in later dynasties, including some forms of smoked yogurt, cheese, and clarified butter which were eaten fresh, and others

³¹ Hundreds of southern or Central Asian grains, fruits, vegetables, and spices are listed in Book 10.

³² Donald Harper, "The cookbook in ancient and medieval China"; Françoise Sabban, "Recipes, medicine and gastronomy in ancient China," *GSFT* 1 (2007), pp. 76–83.

³³ Wan, *Fan Shengzhi shu*; on the scattered references to animals in the *Simin yueling*, and the challenge of interpreting them, see Ebrey, "Estate and family management," pp. 195–197.

³⁴ Miao, *Chen Fu*, pp. 22–29; Wang Yuhu, *Wang Zhen Nongshu* (Beijing, 1981), pp. 58–63.

that kept for months and could be enjoyed through the winter or on long journeys. Milk products retained their popularity among northern Chinese through the Tang dynasty but by Song times were apparently no longer appreciated at all.³⁵

The sections on herding sheep in the *Qimin yaoshu* suggest that shepherds drove their flocks through large swathes of woodland or heath, continually on the move to avoid overgrazing or contaminating streams. In winter the flocks were penned on the estate, and a wise manager laid in plenty of fodder. Jia Sixie confesses that he once had a flock of 200 sheep that all gradually starved or fell sick before he understood how to take care of them; he later realized this was for want of sufficient beans to feed them over the winter. Indicative of the scale that he envisages as manageable, Jia advocates sowing one *qing* (roughly six hectares) of soybeans for every thousand head of sheep.³⁶

As well as raising animals for milk, wool, and meat, an estate like Jia's also relied heavily on draft animals—mules and donkeys as well as oxen. Horses figure prominently in the *Qimin yaoshu* too: it was a time when the elite liked to ride horses for pleasure or everyday travel, as well as needing them for military purposes. Most of the long chapter on horses, donkeys, and mules consists of advice for judging a horse by its teeth, its proportions, its markings, or the color of the inside of its mouth, and of prescriptions for curing the many ills to which horses are prey. Delicate and unreliable, horses were likely as much an indulgence for the northern elite in times of peace as they were for devotees of fox hunting in Victorian England. For farmwork, Jia notes, being larger and stronger, mules are much better than horses.³⁷

ESTATE AND PEASANT IN NORTHERN CHINA

It used to be debated whether the *Qimin yaoshu* was written with small peasant farmers in mind, as the use of the term *qimin*, “common people,” in the title seems to imply, or intended as a handbook for the owners of large estates—in other words, whether Jia Sixie was writing primarily as an official with a public responsibility for promoting agriculture, or as a private landowner.³⁸ Certainly the *Qimin yaoshu*'s organization into thematic chapters set the pattern for most later agricultural treatises written for official purposes. At the same time, the *Qimin yaoshu* condenses into a single chapter (Chapter 30) the layout by monthly tasks, *yueling*, which is typical of many

³⁵ Sabban, “Un savoir-faire oublié,” pp. 49, 54.

³⁶ *QMY*, pp. 314, 313.

³⁷ *QMY*, p. 285.

³⁸ E.g. Yukio Kumashiro, “Recent developments in scholarship on the *Ch'i-min yao-shu* in China and Japan,” *DE* 9.4 (1971), pp. 422–448.

later works written for private use.³⁹ Moreover, Jia refers often to his agricultural experiences as an official: these included efforts to improve local farming practice or to prevent hunger, along with experiments that he carried out in different regions on the lands allocated to him as part of his official emoluments. Jia never plays down the place of farming as the basis of the state economy and the social order. He quotes often from the sections on farming methods in works of political economy like the *Guanzi*; one of his key sources for technical advice, the *Fan Shengzhi shu*, is attributed to a Western Han administrator in charge of farming in the capital region. It is not surprising that the *Qimin yaoshu* was often adopted as an official handbook in later dynasties, and copiously quoted in later official treatises. However, although much in the *Qimin yaoshu* could usefully be applied by officials, there can be no doubt that it was intended primarily for private use on the family estate in Shandong, and that is the scholarly consensus today.⁴⁰

Jia Sixie envisages a farm disposing of large amounts of human labor and animal equipment, with enough land for rotating food crops and extra for growing fodder or commercial crops like vegetables, oilseed or timber, many of which were far more profitable than grain. Jia's recipe for the brewing of "spring wine," *chunjiu*, uses 180 bushels of grain; one for the popular condiment called *chi* requires a thousand bushels of grain and was certainly intended for sale as well as domestic use.⁴¹ How did an enterprise like Jia's estate fit into the social landscape?

After long years of turmoil in northern China when most peasant families abandoned their land to seek shelter as dependents or serfs on fortified farming estates, starting in 477 the Northern Wei regime successfully introduced the "equal-fields" (*juntian*) system. Land was allocated to peasant farmers at the notional rate of eighty *mu* of land for grain and twenty *mu* for hemp per person (one *mu* was approximately 0.06 hectare), enough to provide for basic subsistence and the payment of taxes in grain and cloth.⁴² As well as securing a free peasantry as the tax and labor base for the state, the reforms were also designed to reduce the power of big landowners. Estates did not disappear, but their numbers shrank and they operated rather differently.

³⁹ Francesca Bray, "Science, technique, technology: Passages between matter and knowledge in imperial Chinese agriculture," *BJHS* 41.3 (September 2008), pp. 319–344, compares private and public styles of agricultural writing.

⁴⁰ See e.g. Miao Qiyu, *Qimin yaoshu daodu*, pp. 7–8; Sabban, "Suivre le temps du ciel," p. 42; Bray, "Chinese literati and the transmission of technological knowledge: The case of agriculture," in *Cultures of knowledge: Technology in Chinese history*, ed. Dagmar Schäfer (Leiden, 2011), p. 303.

⁴¹ *QMYS*, pp. 387–388, 441–444; Sabban, "Suivre le temps du ciel," pp. 98, 92.

⁴² Tang Changru, "Clients and bound retainers in the Six Dynasties period," in *State and society in early medieval China*, ed. Albert E. Dien (Stanford, 1990), p. 125.

On the fortress estates of the early Six Dynasties some workers were refugees from villages near or far, others were war captives or slaves; all had some degree of servile status. The estates maintained fighters as well as farmworkers; sometimes only old men, women, and children were left to work the fields. But the 150 years of Northern Wei rule were a time of stability: private armies were disbanded and young men returned to farmwork. In what capacity did they find work? As a *taishou* (governor), a fourth-rank official, Jia Sixie was entitled to hold at least eighty slaves,⁴³ and he often reckons the value of crops in terms of slaves: “A *qing* of turnips yields thirty cartloads of leaves. If sold in the first or second month to make pickles, three cartloads will get you a male slave (*nu*) . . . Twenty cartloads of roots will get you a female slave (*bi*).”⁴⁴

While slaves were certainly employed inside the house for tasks like brewing, we have no way of telling whether the main workforce in the fields consisted of slaves, serfs, or tenant farmers, although we do know that the lands were centrally managed. Hired labor was also an option, it seems: “At the beginning of the harvest in the eighth month often there are no workers with free time [for other tasks], so one should sell some sheep to hire some men.”⁴⁵

Miao Qiyu argues that Jia Sixie “intended the book for the use of my slaves, *jiatong*.”⁴⁶ I prefer to translate the term *jiatong* as “youngsters of the family,” because I see strong parallels between the ethos of estate management in *Qimin yaoshu* and in the late Han *Simin yueling*. In his calendar of ritual, social, and practical activities, Cui Shi shows family members, male and female, working side by side with low-status servants and laborers; the master personally runs the estate, planning and supervising activities; sons go to school only in the farming off-season.⁴⁷ Cui Shi assumes that farming expertise is not just acceptable but desirable in an educated landowner—and while Jia Sixie does not specifically discuss how work is organized or supervised, his instructions suggest a similar degree of personal engagement to that described by Cui Shi.

Likewise, both authors describe estates that are fully engaged in commercial production. The fortress estate was aimed at self-sufficiency. For Jia Sixie as for Cui Shi, “although he produced a considerable amount of food and clothing, self-sufficiency was not his highest priority. There clearly was ample access to local markets . . . The same item was often bought and sold at different times of the year.”⁴⁸ Unlike in late imperial times, when Jia Sixie was writing it appears that most produce and foodstuffs sold in markets, and livestock sold at fairs, were produced on manorial estates.

⁴³ Miao, *Qimin yaoshu daodu*, p. 91. ⁴⁴ QMYS, p. 133. ⁴⁵ QMYS, p. 314.

⁴⁶ QMYS, p. 14, arguing that *tong* 童 should be written 僮 with the “man” radical.

⁴⁷ Ebrey, “Estate and family management,” pp. 197, 199.

⁴⁸ Ebrey, “Estate and family management,” pp. 197–198.

To sum up what we know about northern farming through the Six Dynasties: we can surmise that the perfected methods described in the *Qimin yaoshu* were restricted to times of peace and to estates with sufficient land, labor, draft animals, and equipment. On fortress estates it may often have been difficult to spare the labor for such meticulous methods, production for markets would have been minimal, and staple cereals would doubtless have occupied most land. When peasant farms were restored to viability under the *juntian* system, they lacked the scale and resources to apply the intensive but productive methods advised by Jia Sixie. Perhaps some peasants close to cities or on poor land specialized in commercial crops like vegetables or timber while others earned a living as herders or brewers—tales abounded of men who started out as sheep herders or melon farmers and then made good. But even in times of peace most peasant families lived on a knife edge between sufficiency and hunger, happy when they had some salt or greens to add to their millet gruel. Jia's tempting recipes for barley-sugar sweetmeats or even for scrambled eggs were not for the likes of them.

AGRICULTURE IN THE SOUTH

The farming landscapes of southern China through the Six Dynasties are even more shadowy. The territories had long been known to envious northerners as “lands of fish and rice” (*yumi zhi xiang* 魚米之鄉), regions of natural bounty where it seemed that food could be grown and gathered without effort. Wet rice grown in paddy fields by Dai and other indigenous peoples had been the staple crop in the Yangzi region and in southern China for millennia.⁴⁹ The powerful southern states that vied with northern rivals for supremacy until the unification of the empire in 221 BCE—Chu and Wu along the middle and lower Yangzi, Yue on the eastern coast, the kingdoms of the Guangdong region (Lingnan) and Shu in what is now Sichuan—all depended on rice for their wealth and power. So too did the succession of Southern Dynasties that governed from the capital of Jiankang (modern Nanjing) following the fall of the Han.

Very early on within these regions, polders, irrigation tanks, banded fields, and probably transplanting had all been developed.⁵⁰ Although the most sophisticated rice-farming techniques such as transplanting were probably

⁴⁹ Zhang Chi and Hsiao-chun Hung, “The emergence of agriculture in southern China,” *Antiquity* 84 (2010), pp. 11–25.

⁵⁰ Francesca Bray, *The rice economies: Technology and development in Asian societies* (Oxford, 1986; reprint Berkeley, 1994), pp. 77–90; Chen Gang, “Shilun liuchao shiqi Ningzhen Qiuling beidang guangai nongyequ de xingcheng,” in “*Liuchao lisbi wenhua yu Zhenjiang diyu fazhan xueshu yantaobui*” lunwen huibian, 2010, pp. 199–207.

still confined to just a few areas, by the fall of the Han the southern wet-rice landscapes were sufficiently productive to accommodate not only the needs of local populations and governments, but also huge influxes of northern refugees. But to northern eyes the local farming techniques, pithily described as “plowing with fire and weeding with water” (*huo geng er shui nou* 火耕而水耨), appeared strange, crude, and unproductive, and the lands were described as thinly populated and lacking irrigation works. In fact, these techniques of burning the stubble before tilling fertilize the soil and kill insects, while filling the fields with water is an essential step in growing wet rice. Both techniques save labor, an important consideration where population is sparse.⁵¹ A complex assortment of rice-growing systems would have mirrored the ethnic mosaic of the South, and doubtless many were more sophisticated than the rather basic methods for wet and dry rice outlined in the *Qimin yaoshu*. Jia Sixie clearly felt unsure in advising on rice, which he saw as unsuitable for most types of land in the North and as requiring laborious (and to modern eyes clumsy) methods in return for low yields; his instructions were later scornfully dismissed by Chen Fu as “empty words.”⁵² Indeed, the essentials of northern dryland and southern wet-rice farming were so completely different that it was difficult for the northern newcomers to understand or appreciate what they saw.

The governments of the Southern Dynasties adopted two strategies for increasing agricultural output. First, they built additional irrigation works, many quite large-scale. This undoubtedly increased rice production, but if any further technical improvements to cultivation methods were promoted, we know nothing about them. Second, they encouraged the cultivation of wheat and barley, *mai*. As winter crops, *mai* were intended to compensate for poor rice harvests; furthermore, they could be made into the noodles and breads for which elite northerners hankered in their exile. An edict of 318 by the Jin Emperor Yuan launched *mai* cultivation in Jiangnan, but we know little about how far or fast its cultivation spread. Although some historians believe that the Jin initiative marked the beginning of the distinctive and highly productive southern system of double-cropping, where rice fields were drained after harvest and sown with *mai*, a more general view is that *mai* cultivation prior to the Song dynasty was confined to higher, drier land where wet rice would not grow.⁵³

One reason why we know so little is that southern literati did not care to write about farming. Just a few decades after Jia Sixie completed his

⁵¹ Chen, “Shilun liuchao,” pp. 199–200.

⁵² *QMY*S, Chapters 11 and 12, pp. 99–107; Chen Fu, in his work completed in 1149, *Chen Fu Nongshu* (Beijing, 1956), p. 1.

⁵³ Chen, “Shilun liuchao.”

masterwork, Yan Zhitui famously accused the southern literati of caring nothing for practical matters, of being “ashamed to associate with farmers or merchants” and indifferent to “knowing that panicked millet ripens early and glutinous millet late.”⁵⁴ It was a period when “rural life, the countryside, and the mountainscape became elements of elite literary culture,” but the masters of manorial estates in the South were more interested in garden design than in running a farm.⁵⁵ Perhaps, given their stubborn refusal to acknowledge the southern lands where they lived as home,⁵⁶ they could not bring themselves to feel the same material attachment to the soil as northern intellectuals like Cui Shi or Jia Sixie. While the *Qimin yaoshu* and *Simin yueling* were re-edited, quoted, and elaborated in a stream of new works on northern farming that appeared through the Tang, Song, and Yuan and into the Ming and Qing, it was not until the fall of the Northern Song that the first proper technical accounts of southern agriculture appeared. Lou Shu’s beautiful set of paintings and poems depicting rice farming and sericulture from about 1145, entitled *Gengzhi tu* (*Pictures of Tilling and Weaving*), and Chen Fu’s *Nongshu* (*Agricultural Treatise*) of 1149, a detailed technical study of both occupations, at last gave intellectual and cultural recognition to a concrete reality, namely that the farming systems of Jiangnan had long ago surpassed the agriculture of the North in technical sophistication and productivity.⁵⁷

⁵⁴ Mark Edward Lewis, “Writing the world in the *Family instructions of the Yan clan*,” *EMC* 13–14.1 (2007), pp. 44, 50; not that Yan himself had anything concrete to say about the skills of farmers or craftsmen, or even the practical running of an estate.

⁵⁵ Lewis, “Writing the world,” p. 73.

⁵⁶ William G. Crowell, “Northern émigrés and the problems of census registration under the Eastern Jin and Southern Dynasties,” in *State and society in early medieval China*, ed. Dien, pp. 171–210; Hu Axiang, “The population migration and its influence in the period of the Eastern Jin, the Sixteen States, and the Northern and Southern Dynasties,” *FHC* 5.4 (2010), pp. 576–615.

⁵⁷ Roslyn L. Hammers, *Pictures of tilling and weaving: Art, labor and technology in Song and Yuan China* (Hong Kong, 2011); Bray, *Technology, gender and history*, Chapter 2; Miao Qiyu, *Chen Fu Nongshu xuandu* (Beijing, 1981).

THE HISTORY OF SOGDIANS IN CHINA

Rong Xinjiang*

Sogdians (*Suteren*) were an ancient Central Asian Iranian people; their language was an Eastern Iranian dialect within the Indo-European language family.¹ Their basic homeland was along the Zarafshan river, between the Central Asian Amu Darya (Oxus) and Syr Darya (Jaxartes) rivers, an area known anciently as Sogdiana, located primarily in modern Uzbekistan, with parts also falling within modern Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. There were a number of city-states of varying sizes in the large and small oases of this region. The largest was Samarkand (Kangguo), which often served in a leadership role for the various Sogdian city-states. In addition, there was Bukhārā (Anguo), which was also relatively large; Sutrūshana or Ustrūshana (East Caoguo); Kabudhan or Kapūtānā (Caoguo); Ishitīkhan (West Caoguo); Māymurgh (Miguoguo); Kushānīka (Heguo); Kish or Shahr-i-Sabz (Shi³guo); and Čāč (Shi²guo). At times these oasis-states entered into alliances, and were referred to in the Chinese sources as the Nine Zhaowu Lineages (*Zhaowu jiu xing*), but in fact there were often more than nine.²

From the fourth to the eighth centuries, largely contemporary with China's Six Dynasties period, the Sogdians, following a traditional pursuit as traders but also because of unsettled conditions and warfare in their own homeland, traveled in caravans of varying size east over the Silk Road to carry on trade in Central Asia and China. Many of these Sogdian merchants subsequently settled in China, in the oases of the Tarim Basin, or out on the steppes, often following other pursuits rather than returning to their own land.

* Translated by Albert E. Dien.

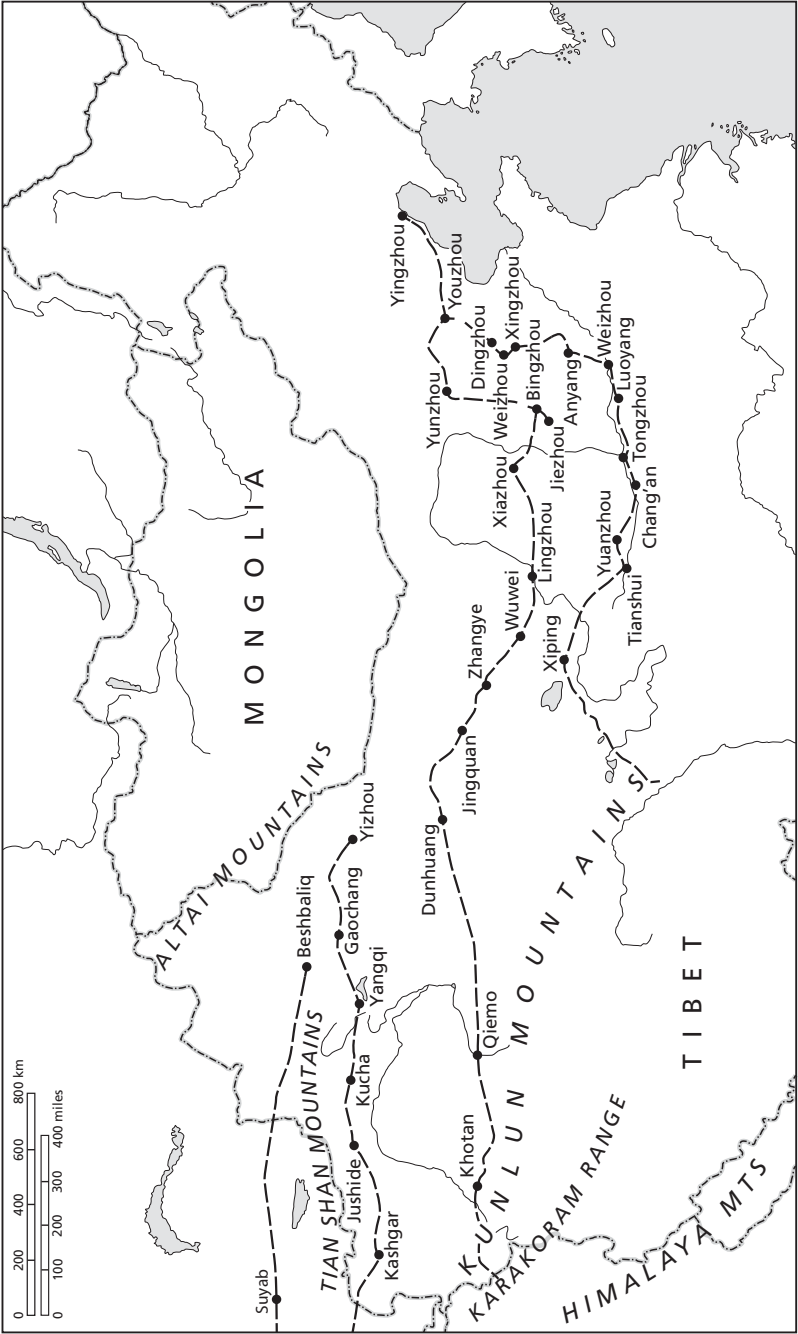
¹ On the history of Sogdiana, see also B. I. Marshak, "Sogdiana," Part One: "Sughd and adjacent regions," in *History of civilizations of Central Asia*, ed. B. A. Litvinsky, Zhang Guangda, and R. Shabani Samghabadi, Volume 3 (Paris, 1996), pp. 233–258. The Sogdian script was derived from the Aramaic.

² On Sogdian place names and their Chinese equivalents, see Zhang Guangda, *Da Tang xiyu ji jiaozhu* (Beijing, 1985), *passim*. For the adoption of the Chinese names of these states as the surnames of Sogdians in China, see Jonathan Karam Skaff, "The Sogdian trade diaspora in East Turkestan during the seventh and eighth centuries," *JESHO* 46 (2003), p. 480.

Their contributions to China's society during this period ranged widely from participation in commerce to service in the military, but they also made important cultural contributions as well. They introduced to China new products from the West; their music became extremely popular, and while predominantly Zoroastrian in belief, they served as important transmitters of Buddhism. It is possible to trace the history of this people in China through a variety of sources, written and archaeological, and it is no exaggeration to say that the Sogdians made a deep impression on China's history and culture.³

On the basis of a number of materials, such as the so-called Sogdian Ancient Letters (discussed below), documents found at Dunhuang and Turfan, and tomb epitaphs recovered in China itself, researchers have been able to sketch out the routes taken by the Sogdian merchants over this period of time. Starting from their homeland they would pass through Talas (Daluosi) and Suyab (Suiye), finally reaching Beshbaliq (Beiting), or following the Northern Silk Road route to Jushide, east of today's Bachu (or Maralbexi), then on to Kucha (Qiuci, modern Kuche), Yangqi (or Qarasahr), Gaochang (modern Turfan [Tulufan]), and Yizhou (modern Hami); or from (ancient) Bruzha (Bolu) and Khabandha (Kebantuo), following the Southern Silk Road to Khotan (Yudian, modern Hetian) and Qiemo (Shichengzhen/Shanshan (modern Ruoqiang)), thus entering the Northwest Corridor, passing through Dunhuang, Jingquan, Zhangye, and Wuwei. At that point they could then turn southeastward, passing Tianshui and Yuanzhou (modern Guyuan), and on to Chang'an (Xi'an), Tongzhou, and Luoyang, or turn to the northeast toward Lingzhou (southwest of modern Lingwu), Xiazhou (modern Tongwancheng), Bingzhou (modern Taiyuan), and Yunzhou (east of modern Datong), thus coming to Youzhou (Beijing) and finally Yingzhou (modern Chaoyang); or from Luoyang pass through Weizhou (modern Jixian, south of Anyang on Map 17.1), Xiangzhou (modern Anyang), Weizhou (north of modern Daming, north of Anyang on Map 17.1), Xingzhou (Xingtai), and Dingzhou (modern Dingxian). Alternatively there was a route through Xiping (Shanzhou, present day Xining) and southward to Tibet (Tufan). There was also a north-south route from Bingzhou to Jiezhou. At almost every important city along these routes there were footprints left by the Sogdians, some even emerging as a settlement. Such colonies were widely distributed in the Tarim

³ For an overall history of the Sogdians in China and elsewhere, see Étienne de la Vaissière, *Histoire des marchands sogdiens* (Paris, 2002); *idem*, *Sogdian traders: A history*, trans. James Ward (Leiden, 2005). Citations will be made to the English version. By this period the term *Hu* generally referred to peoples to the west of China.



Map 17.1 Sogdian trade routes

Basin, along the Hexi Corridor, in northern China, and on the Mongolian highlands (Mapt 17.1).⁴

In the places along the Silk Road where the Sogdians put down roots, there gradually emerged autonomous communities with their own leadership, primarily engaged in trade, but there were some who either gradually took up agriculture or joined the local military forces. These settlements, which also included other non-Han elements, were located where goods were exchanged, forming the transfer stations of that east–west commerce, and the interconnections between these settlements then formed a commercial network connecting the East and West.

The sources that enable one to trace the history of Sogdian commercial activities and their diaspora in China are few and quite scattered, requiring much effort on the part of specialists to assemble them into a meaningful whole. Among the earliest such materials were the so-called Ancient Sogdian Letters, found in 1907 by Sir Aurel Stein, the British explorer, at a beacon tower of the Great Wall northwest of Dunhuang. These were letters abandoned en route for some unknown reason, written by Sogdian merchants and others as business reports to Samarkand or on family matters more close at hand. The letters date to the early fourth century, and the contents give voice to difficulties faced by the Sogdians during the wars that raged during the fall of the Western Jin to the invading non-Han forces.⁵

A series of tax receipts in the Chinese language found at Turfan from the Gaochang period (pre-640) is further evidence of Sogdian commercial activity. According to these documents, both buyers and sellers in the merchandising

⁴ Rong Xinjiang, "Sogdians around the ancient Tarim Basin," *Ērān ud Anērān: Studies presented to Boris Il'ič Maršak on the occasion of his 70th birthday*, ed. M. Compareti, P. Raffetta, and G. Scarcia (Venice, 2006), pp. 513–524; *idem*, "Beichao Sui Tang Suteran zhi qiantu ji qi juluo," *Guoxue yanjiu* 6 (1999), pp. 27–86; Bruce Doar, trans., "The migrations and settlements of the Sogdians in the Northern Dynasties, Sui and Tang," *CAAD*, 4.1, *Zoroastrianism in China* (2000), pp. 117–163; Rong Xinjiang, "Further remarks on Sogdians in the Western Regions," in *Exegisti monumenta: Festschrift in honour of Nicholas Sims-Williams* (Iranica 17), ed. Werner Sundermann, Almut Hintze, and François de Blois (Wiesbaden, 2009), pp. 399–416; *idem*, "Further remarks on the migrations and settlements of the Sogdians in the Northern Dynasties, Sui and Tang," *Eurasia Studies*, ed. Yu Taishan and Li Jinxiu, Volume 1, no. 2 (Beijing, 2011), pp. 120–141. In the Chinese historical sources the Sogdians are also designated as the Nine Lineages Hu (*Jiuxing hu*), the "mixed-ethnicity Hu" (*Zachong hu*), the Sogdian Hu (*Sute hu*), and many others. For the *zhaowu jiuqing*, see Yutaka Yoshida, "On the origin of the Sogdian surname Zhaowu and related problems," *JA* 291 (2003), pp. 35–67. According to Yoshida, Zhaowu is the Chinese transcription of the Sogdian **čamūk*, which was either a Sogdian title or the name of a legendary hero. In his opinion, the traditional Chinese account that the Sogdians originated from a Han city named Zhaowu in the Gansu Corridor has no basis.

⁵ N. Sims-Williams, "The Sogdian Ancient Letter II," in *Philologica et linguistica: historia, pluralitas, universitas: Festschrift für Helmut Humbach zum 80. Geburtstag am 4. Dezember 2001*, ed. Maria G. Schmidt and Walter Bisang, with Marion Grein and Bernhard Hiegl (Trier, 2001), pp. 267–280; F. Grenet, N. Sims-Williams, and É. de la Vaissière, "The Sogdian Ancient Letter V," *BAI*, new series 12 (1998), pp. 91–104.

of a variety of goods such as precious metals and spices in the Gaochang area basically were Sogdians.⁶ That is to say that Sogdian merchants brought such goods in bulk to Gaochang, where they would sell the goods to local Sogdians who in turn would either divide the material into smaller lots or transport the original shipment further east toward China. N. Sims-Williams has found Sogdian inscriptions on the walls of a pass along an ancient trading route through the upper Indus river area, now in Pakistan, which shows that not only were the Sogdians engaged in trade between Sogdia and China, but that they also undertook trade between China and India.⁷ A contract written in Sogdian for the sale of a woman from among the Türks, discovered in a tomb at Astana, Turfan, indicates that the Sogdians also took on trade between China and the northern nomadic peoples.⁸ In general, during the Six Dynasties period, and even extending into the Sui and Tang—that is, from the fourth to the eighth centuries—trade on the overland Silk Road would appear to be almost completely in the hands of the Sogdians.⁹

The term for the leaders of the Sogdian caravans was *s'rtp'w*, “leader”; the Chinese transcriptions were *sabao* and *safu*. The Japanese scholar Yoshida Yutaka discovered the Sogdian root word in one of the Sogdian Ancient Letters.¹⁰ More recently, it has also been found in the bilingual Sogdian–Chinese epitaph at the 579 tomb of the Sogdian Master Shi (Shi Jun), aka Wirkak, who held it as his title.¹¹ From the many occurrences of the Han term in Chinese documents, we know that the *sabao* was not just the leader of

⁶ Tang Changru, ed., *Tulufan chutu wenshu*, Volume 1 (Beijing, 1992), pp. 450–453; Guojia wenwu ju guwenxian yanjiushi et al., *Tulufan chutu wenshu*, Volume 3 (Beijing, 1981), pp. 317–325. See also Zhu Lei, “Qushi Gaochang wangguo de ‘Cheng jiaqian’: Quchao shuizhi lingshi,” *Wei Jin Nanbeichao Sui Tang shi ziliao* 4 (1982), pp. 17–24; Jonathan Karam Skaff, “Sasanian and Arab-Sasanian silver coins from Turfan: Their relationship to international trade and the local economy,” *AM*, 3rd series 11.2 (1998), p. 91, Table 5; Valerie Hansen, “The impact of the Silk Road trade on a local community: The Turfan oasis, 500–800,” in *Les sogdiens en Chine*, ed. Étienne de la Vaissière and Éric Trombert (Paris, 2005), p. 291.

⁷ N. Sims-Williams, “The Sogdian merchants in China and India,” in *Cina e Iran: da Alessandro Magno alla dinastia Tang*, ed. A. Cadonna and L. Lanciotti (Florence, 1996), pp. 45–67; *idem*, “The Sogdian inscriptions of the Upper Indus: A preliminary report,” in *Antiquities of Northern Pakistan: Reports and Studies*, Volume 1, *Rock inscriptions in the Indus valley*, ed. K. Jettmar (Mainz, 1989), pp. 131–137; *idem*, *The Sogdian and other Iranian inscriptions of the Upper Indus*, Volume 1 (London, 1989); Volume 2 (London, 1992).

⁸ Yoshida Yutaka, Moriyasu Takao, and Shinkyō hakubutsukan, “Kikushi Kōshōkoku jidai Sogudobun onna dorei baibai monjo,” *Nariku Ajia gengo no kenkyū* 4 (1988), pp. 1–50; Y. Yoshida, “Translation of the contract for the purchase of a slave girl found at Turfan and dated 639,” *TP* 89.1–3 (2003), pp. 159–161.

⁹ Jiang Boqin, *Dunhuang Tulufan wenshu yu Sichou zhi lu* (Beijing, 1994), pp. 150–226.

¹⁰ Yoshida Yutaka, “Sogudo-go zatsuroku (ni),” *Ōriente* 31.2 (1988), pp. 165–176, especially 169–170.

¹¹ Xi'an shi wenwu baohu kaogusuo, “Xi'an Bei Zhou Liangzhou sabao Shijun mu fajue jianbao,” *Wenwu* 2005.3, pp. 31–32; Yoshida, “The Sogdian version of the new Xi'an inscription,” in *Les sogdiens en Chine*, ed. Étienne de la Vaissière and Éric Trombert, p. 59.

a caravan but also of the head of a Sogdian community, and since most of the Sogdians who originally came to China were Zoroastrians (Chinese *xianjiao*), the *sabao* thus was the religious leader as well.¹²

The Sogdian settlements were originally established by Sogdian traders or émigrés and had no connection with local officialdom. In the Northern Dynasties and Sui period the central and local regimes (such as the Gaochang kingdom), in order to regulate these foreign settlements, brought the *sabao* into their traditional governing system, granting the *sabao* a grade in the central and local official system that was a nominal one (*shi liuwai guan*). On the basis of historical records and epitaphs, the use of *sabao* as an official title appears to have been initiated in the Northern Wei when a *sabao* was appointed at Luoyang and one in each prefecture where there was a Sogdian community. There are references, for example, to *sabao* in Yongzhou, Liangzhou, and Ganzhou. Later, the Western Wei and Northern Zhou, on the one hand, and the Eastern Wei and Northern Qi, on the other, continued this system. Thus, in the Northern Qi there is mention of the office of *safu* in the capital as well as at Bingzhou and Dingzhou; a junior post of “recorder” (*silu*) attached to the office is also mentioned. The Northern Zhou likewise had a capital *sabao*, and epitaphs record *sabao* at Liangzhou, Jiuquan, Tongzhou, Daizhou, and Jiezhou. In the newly discovered tomb of Wirkak we find that he had been *sabao* of Liangzhou, and in that of An Jia that he was *sabao* at Tongzhou. On the basis of the terminology we may see that the Sui followed the Northern Zhou system, for they had a Yongzhou (capital) *sabao* and *sabao* in the various prefectures; one example is that of a *sabao* at Dingzhou. These *sabao* each headed a staff, which included such positions as aide (*zhangshi*), adjutant (*sima*), garrison commander (*guoyi*), bureau commandant (*fushuai*), and bureau scribe (*fushi*). Since most of the Sogdians were Zoroastrians (see below), there was also an office of Zoroastrian steward (*xianzheng*); the *sabao* bureau thus had the task of managing the administrative and religious affairs of the various Sogdian communities.¹³ Perhaps related to the *xianzheng* is the title *da tianzhu* (senior Zoroastrian leader) of the Northern Zhou, or *xianzhu*

¹² A. E. Dien, “The Sa-pao problem re-examined,” *JAOS* 82.3 (1962), pp. 336–346; Jiang Boqin, “Lun Gaochang Hutian yu Dunhuang Xiansi: jianlun qi yu wangchao jili de guanxi,” *Shijie zongjiao yanjiu* 1 (1993), pp. 2–5 (see also Jiang, *Dunhuang Tulufan wenshu*, pp. 227–235); Arakawa Masaharu, “Hokuchō Zui Tōdai ni okeru ‘satsuhō’ no sekaku o megure,” *Tōyō shien* 50–51 (1998), pp. 164–186; Rong Xinjiang, “*Sabao* and *sabo*: On the problem of the leader of Sogdian colonies during the Northern Dynasties, Sui and Tang period,” in *Collection of papers on Iranian studies in China*, ed. Ye Yiliang (Beijing, 2009), pp. 148–162; *idem*, “*Sabao* or *Sabo*: Sogdian caravan leaders in the wall-paintings in Buddhist caves,” in *Les sogdiens en Chine*, ed. Étienne de la Vaissière and Éric Trombert, pp. 207–230.

¹³ Jiang Boqin, “*Sabao* zhidu yuanli lunlue,” *Huaxue* 3 (1998), pp. 290–308; English summary: “A concise discussion of the origins of the system associated with the office of *sabao*: A study of Chinese tomb epitaphs of Sogdians (1),” *CAAD* 4.1, *Zoroastrianism in China* (2000), pp. 207–208.

(senior Zoroastrian leader) of the Tang.¹⁴ That some *sabao* bureaus were located in Zoroastrian shrines or temples would indicate that these foreign settlements maintained their native Central Asian system of combining politics and religion.¹⁵ The central government also sent acting *sabao* officials to control some foreign settlements; this is known from the recently discovered tomb of Yu Hong, who was “concurrently” (*jianjiao*) *sabao* of the three prefectures of Bing, Dai, and Jie.¹⁶

The Sogdians had a reputation for being excellent warriors, no doubt well deserved, and during these years of turmoil and warfare, the central government made use of the military potential of these Sogdian settlements. Consequently, from the end of the Northern Dynasties to the early years of the Tang the *sabao* heads concurrently held such titles as commander (*dudu*), brigadier commander (*shuai dudu*), senior commander (*da dudu*), captain (*yitong*), and colonel (*kaifu*) in the garrison militias (*fubing*). Combining the roles of settlement heads with those of military appointments, they either led the militia into battle or were stationed at garrisons. The local militia (*xiangbing*) or local military companies (*xiangtuan*) originally had been local private armed forces organized by local strongmen, but the Northern Zhou gradually brought these local militias into the structure of the central military forces.¹⁷ The Sui and Tang also used this pattern, and so the Sogdian local armed forces became a part of the state’s military resources.¹⁸

The following are a number of examples.

- 1 An Jia, during the Northern Zhou, was the *sabao* of Tongzhou, a strategic place on the border with the Northern Qi, and was also area commander in chief (*da dudu*), “supervising that martial command, solemn was his military bearing.”¹⁹ The soldiers whom he led with

¹⁴ Cheng Linquan, Zhang Xiangyu, and Yamashita Shōji, “Bei Zhou Kang Ye muzhi kaolue,” *Wenwu* 2008.6, p. 83. It is suggested there that the office had to do with the financial administration of the temples. On *tian* as Zoroastrianism, see Albert E. Dien, “A note on *hsien* ‘Zoroastrianism,’” *Oriens* 10 (1957), pp. 284–288.

¹⁵ Rong Xinjiang, “Beichao Sui Tang Huren juluo de zongjiao xinyang yu Xianside shehui gongneng,” in *idem*, *Tangdai zongjiao xinyang yu shehui* (Shanghai, 2003), pp. 385–412.

¹⁶ Zhang Qingjie, “Yu Hong muzhi kaoshi,” *Tang yanjiu* 7 (2001), pp. 162–165.

¹⁷ Gu Jiguang, *Fubing zhidu kaoshi* (Shanghai, 1962); reprinted in *Gu Jiguang shixue wenji*, ed. Zhou Luanshu, Volume 1 (Nanchang, 1996), pp. 1–287.

¹⁸ Yamashita Shōji, “Shin shutsudo shiryō yori mita Hokochōmatsu Tōshokan Sogudojin no sonzai keitai: Kohara shutsudo Shishi boshi o chūshin ni,” *Tōdaishi kenkyū* 77.8 (2004), pp. 60–77; *idem*, “Sui Tōsho no Kasai Sogudojin gundan: Tenri toshokan zō ‘Bunkanshirin [An Shūjin boshimei],’ zanken o megutte,” *Tōbogaku* 110 (2005), pp. 65–78, English summary at 6; Su Hang, “Beichao moqi zhi Suimo Tangchu Sute juluo xiangtuan wuzhuang shulun,” *Wenshi* 2005.4, pp. 173–185. See also the discussion of the *fubing* in the Chapters 12, “The Art of War,” and 10, “The Western Wei–Northern Zhou,” in this volume.

¹⁹ Shaanxisheng kaogu yanjiusuo, *Xi’an Bei Zhou An Jia mu* (Beijing, 2003), pp. 61–62.

that military title quite possibly would have been the local militia drawn from that Sogdian settlement.

- 2 Di Caoming, who had been the head of a settlement of Sogdians during the collapse of the Northern Wei, served during the Northern Zhou as Xiazhou *tianzhu* (see above) and also held the military rank of captain (*yitong*); he led troops on campaigns as leader of a local militia.²⁰
- 3 After the conquest of the Northern Qi by the Northern Zhou, Yu Hong, who oversaw the *sabao* bureaus of the three prefectures of Bing, Dai, and Jie, also led their militias.²¹ The militias and the Sogdian settlements were closely linked, all were under the same non-Han leadership, so the militias of those three prefectures could well have been made up of the Sogdians there.²²
- 4 An Xiuren, during the Sui, became an area commander in chief leading the troops of his native-place militia (*benxiang bing*).²³ The so-called “native-place militia” would have been the military force of the Sogdian settlement controlled by the Liangzhou *sabao* An family.

The armed forces of the Sogdian settlements gradually became the local militias or they became a part of the state military forces; this was without doubt an important phase in the shift of the Sogdian settlements to becoming standard villages. With this, the leaders of the Sogdian settlements became government officials in the Northern Dynasties and the Sui, and the ordinary Sogdians became soldier-farmers within the *fubing* system which combined the military and civilians. By the end of the Northern Dynasties and the Sui, there were some Sogdians who, through military merit and special skills, became high-ranking officers of the capital guard units or imperial guardsmen at the court.²⁴ There are a fair number of epitaphs of Sogdians who moved up the social ladder as they pursued military careers during the Tang. While some scholars see in these epitaphs evidence of the loss of Sogdian identity, one needs to remember that Sogdians long remained a significant factor in Chinese

²⁰ Epitaph of Di Caoming (d. 579), unearthed in Jingbian, Shaanxi; see Rong Xinjiang, “Zhonggu shiqi lai Hua Huren muzhi yanjiu de xinjinzhan,” *Beijing daxue Zhongguo gu wenxian yanjiu zhongxin jikan* 11 (2011), pp. 205–207. On the military organization of that period, citing the *yitong*, see BS 50.2155.

²¹ Zhang Qingjie, “Yu Hong muzhi’ zhong de jige wenti,” *Wenwu* 2001.1, pp. 102–108.

²² Zhang Qingjie, “Yu Hong muzhi kaoshi,” p. 162; Yang Xiaochun, “Sui ‘Yu Hong muzhi’ suojian shishi xinian kaozheng,” *Wenwu* 2004.9, pp. 78–79.

²³ Luo Guowei, ed., *Ri zang Hongren ben Wenguan cilin jiaozheng* (Beijing, 2001), pp. 173–174. The *Wenguan cilin* was compiled by Xu Jingzong 許敬宗 (592–672). For the epitaph which lacks a heading being that of An Xiuren, see Rong, “Beichao Sui Tang Huren juluo,” p. 397; Yamashita Shōji, “Shin shutsudo,” pp. 65–77.

²⁴ For a detailed discussion of this, see Bi Bo, *Zhonggu Zhongguo de Sute Huren: yi Chang’an wei zhongxin* (Beijing, 2011), pp. 81–123.

history, well beyond the rebellion led by the half-Sogdian An Lushan, and lasting perhaps as late as the Yuan dynasty (1279–1368).²⁵

The coming of Sogdians to China provided a stimulus to the east–west exchange of culture both material and nonmaterial. The geographical concentrations of the Sogdian immigrants closely mirror the sites of archaeological discoveries of Persian- and Sogdian-style silver-gilt vessels, Sassanian Persian coins, and evidence of Zoroastrianism, as well as the later Manichaeism and Nestorianism. All of this fits together because it was the Sogdians who not only were the ones who brought these objects of material culture to China, but also were the primary bearers of these religions to other parts of Asia. In recent years the tomb of Yu Hong at Taiyuan,²⁶ and those of An Jia,²⁷ Master Shi,²⁸ and Kang Ye at Xi'an,²⁹ as well as the burials of many other Sogdians and their descendants in other places, reveal the daily lives and beliefs of the Sogdian people, giving us a plethora of research material and information.

As merchants on the Silk Road, the Sogdians transported high-quality goods to places where there was demand. Many of the imports of medieval China, extending from the cheetahs used in the royal hunts³⁰ and Hu barmaids in Chang'an³¹ down to Persian dogs cosseted in the palace harem³² and so-called Hu powder (lead-based material) used in painting murals,³³ all in

²⁵ Edwin G. Pulleyblank, "A Sogdian colony in Inner Mongolia," *TP* 41 (1952), pp. 344–347. For a general but useful overview see Iwami Kiyohiro, "Turks and Sogdians in China during the T'ang period," in the special issue *Japanese studies in the history of pre-Islamic Central Asia*, ed. Takao Moriyasu, *Acta Asiatica: Bulletin of the Institute of Eastern Culture* 94 (2008), pp. 41–65.

²⁶ Shanxisheng kaogu yanjiusuo, Taiyuanshi wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo, and Taiyuanshi Jinyuan wenwu liuyouju, *Taiyuan Sui Yu Hong mu* (Beijing, 2005).

²⁷ Shaanxisheng kaogu yanjiusuo, *Xi'an Bei Zhou An Jia mu*. See also Rong Xinjiang, "The illustrative sequence on An Jia's screen: A depiction of the daily life of a sabao," *Orientalia*, February 2003, pp. 32–35 and Figures 1–7.

²⁸ Xi'an shi wenwu baohu kaogusuo, "Xi'an shi Bei Zhou Shijun shiguo mu," *Kaogu* 2004.7, pp. 38–49; Xi'an shi wenwu baohu kaogusuo, "Xi'an Bei Zhou Liangzhou sabao Shijun mu fajue jianbao: fulu," *Wenwu* 2005.3, pp. 4–33. Cf. A. E. Dien, "Observations concerning the tomb of Master Shi," *BAI*, new series 17 (2003), pp. 105–115; F. Grenet and Pénélope Riboud, "A reflection of the Hephthalite empire: The biographical narrative in the reliefs of the tomb of the *Sabao* Wirkak (494–579)," *BAI*, new series 17 (2003), pp. 133–143.

²⁹ Xi'an shi wenwu baohu kaogusuo, "Xi'an Bei Zhou Kang Ye mu fajue jianbao," *Wenwu* 2008.6, pp. 14–35.

³⁰ Zhang Guangda, "Tangdai de baolie: wenhua chuanbo de yige shili," *Tang yanjiu* 7 (2001), pp. 177–204.

³¹ Rui Chuanming, "Tangdai 'jiujiahu' shukao," *Shanghai shehui kexueyuan xueshu jikan* 1993.2, pp. 159–166; Lin Meicun, "Sutewen mai bei qie yu Sichou zhi lushang de nünu maoyi," *Wenwu* 1992.9, pp. 49–54, reprinted in Lin, *Xiyu wenming: kao gu, minzu, yuyan he zongjiao xinlun* (Beijing, 1995), pp. 68–79.

³² Cai Hongsheng, *Tangdai jiuixinghu yu Tujue wenhua* (Beijing, 1998), pp. 211–220.

³³ Zheng Binglin, "'Kangxiuhua xiejing shiru shu' yu 'Xuan heshang huomai Hufen li' yanjiu," *Dunhuang Tulufan yanjiu* 3 (1998), pp. 191–208.

fact were brought by Sogdians from various western states to China. Edward Schafer used as the title of his book *Golden peaches of Samarkand*, a reference to the term applied to the fruit sent as a gift to the court, to represent all the foreign objects brought to China during the Tang, which is an extremely insightful generalization.³⁴ Further, the Sogdians utilized their linguistic skills in promulgating a wide variety of religious traditions along the Silk Road routes. These included their original folk belief in Zoroastrianism and later the Buddhism to which they converted. These are demonstrated, on the one hand, by the depictions of Zoroastrian rites in the tombs of An Jia, Master Shi (Wirkak), and Yu Hong, and by the Sogdian translations of Buddhist sutras found at Dunhuang and Turfan. Further, there were some Sogdians who later came from Persia to China to propagate Manichaeism. Manichaean texts, as well as some Nestorian ones written in Sogdian, have been found at Turfan, no doubt the work of Sogdians.³⁵ Song- and dance-loving Sogdians, in their tight sleeved tunics with turned-back collars, very deeply influenced the society of the Northern Dynasties and Tang period, contributed much to the vogues of the time, and became one of the standard images of the flourishing and prosperous Tang.

³⁴ Edward H. Schafer, *The golden peaches of Samarkand: A study of Tang exotics* (Berkeley, 1963); for the title, see p. 1 of his book.

³⁵ In reference to evidence of the Sogdian adherence to Zoroastrianism, see Pénélope Riboud, "Réflexions sur les pratiques religieuses désignées sous le nom de *xian*," in *Les sogdiens en Chine*, ed. Étienne de la Vaissière and Éric Trombert, pp. 73–91; Frantz Grenet, Pénélope Riboud, and Yang Junkai, "Zoroastrian scenes on a newly discovered Sogdian tomb in Xi'an, northern China," *Studia Iranica* 33.2 (2004), pp. 273–284; J. A. Lerner, *Aspects of assimilation: The funerary practices and furnishings of Central Asians in China* (Philadelphia, 2005), pp. 1–51. For Sogdian adherents of Buddhism in China, see D. N. MacKenzie, *The Buddhist Sogdian texts of the British Library*, *Acta Iranica* 10 (Leiden, 1976); Rong Xinjiang, "Huren dui Wu Zhou zhengquan zhi taidu: Tulufan chutu 'Wu Zhou Kang jushi xiejing gongdeji bei' jiaokao" in *idem, Zhongguo Zhongguo yu wailai wenming* (Beijing, 2001), pp. 204–221.

NORTHERN MATERIAL CULTURE

Shing Müller

Although gradually setting up their own cultural identity, the Cao-Wei and the Western Jin were still strongholds of the Han dynasty legacy.¹ In contrast, the cultural changes after the fall of the Western Jin capital, Luoyang, in 312 and Chang'an in 316 were abrupt and obvious. The major reason was the massive influx of heterogeneous non-Han peoples into the greatly depopulated Yellow River region, who brought with them their own preferences for materials and styles. These non-Han peoples remained the rulers of north China for more than the next two centuries, creating a new civilization by blending their own with the Jin spiritual and technical elements.

This chapter deals with developments and changes in northern material culture. The data were retrieved mainly from mortuary practices and supplemented with information from architectural remains and art. The political center was moved by the Tuoba from Luoyang, which had served as the capital of the Wei and Jin, to Pingcheng (modern Datong) in 398. After the capital was returned to Luoyang in 494, other local traditional Chinese centers re-emerged. Ye (modern Anyang) and Chang'an served as capitals in subsequent periods until the Sui. Jinyang (modern Taiyuan) and Yuanzhou (modern Guyuan) grew to be centers of great wealth due to their strategic positions militarily and in trade.

FROM GRAY POTTERY TO PORCELANEOUS STONEWARE

The Wei and Western Jin imperial kinsmen and great families highly valued the green-glazed stoneware (*qingci*) which was solely supplied by southern

¹ For the "Cao-Wei style" and the "Jin style" in the mortuary practices, see Ni Run'an, "Beijing Shijingshan Bajiaocun Wei Jin mu de niandai ji muzhu wenti," *Gugong bowuyuan yuankan* 2012.3, pp. 37–61; for the Luoyang region, see Liu Bin, "Luoyang diqu Xi Jin muzang yanjiu: Jiantan Jinzhi ji qi yingxiang," *Kaogu* 2012.4, pp. 70–83.

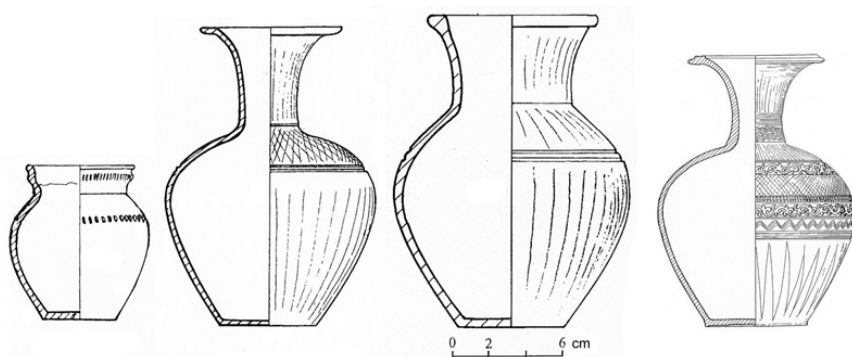


Figure 18.1 Typical grayware jars found in fifth-century Datong. The one on the far left is a sand-mixed jar with fingernail impressions on the shoulder. It occurs throughout the whole fifth century. The far-right jar with roll-on palmette scrolls is dated to the later second half of the fifth century. Note that much gray pottery is embellished with scraped vertical stripes. Adapted after *Shanxi daxue lishi wenhua xueyuan et al.*, *Datong nanjiao Bei Wei muqun* (Beijing, 2006), pp. 37, 137, 120, 196

kilns.² After 316, greenware was replaced by simple jars of gray pottery (Figures 18.1, 18.2) of the northern steppe inhabitants. The fourth-century grayware was crudely hand-coiled, sometimes refinished on slow wheels, and decorated with scraped or polished vertical stripes and fingernail pressings, already attested in Xiongnu settlements in Transbaikalia in the first century BCE.³ The cooking jugs were sand-tempered for greater tolerance of temperature fluctuations; the high-fired long-necked jars were containers for liquids. Gray crocks reaching a height of one meter occasionally occur in settlements, indicating certain advanced firing techniques.⁴

The long-necked jars in particular persisted until the end of the Northern Dynasties. Findings at the Buddhist sites at Fangshan and Yungang, as well as at nearly all fifth-century burials in and near the capital, Pingcheng, affirm that gray jars were used in both funerary rites and Buddhist rituals. The large quantity of shards indicates high demand. However, only a few kiln sites have been located, and none adjacent to Pingcheng. One was found at Xicetian on the Sanggan river, roughly fifty-eight kilometers southeast of the capital,

² Much southern greenware has been found in Western Jin tombs in Shandong; see Shandongsheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo and Linyishi wenhua ju, "Shandong Linyi Xiyanchi Jin mu," *Wenwu* 2005.7, pp. 4–37; Wei Zheng, *Liuchao muzang de kaoguxue yanjiu* (Beijing, 2011), pp. 310–311.

³ Such as at Boroo Gol, Selenge Aimag, Mongolia; see Denis Ramseyer, Nicole Pousay, and Tsagaan Törbat, "The Xiongnu settlement of Boroo Gol, Selenge Aimag, Mongolia," in *Current archaeological research in Mongolia: Papers from the First International Conference on "Archaeological research in Mongolia" held in Ulaanbaatar, August 19th–23rd, 2007*, ed. Jan Bemmman et al. (Bonn, 2009), p. 237.

⁴ Personal communication with Professor Zhang Qingjie, former director, Shanxi Archaeological Institute.

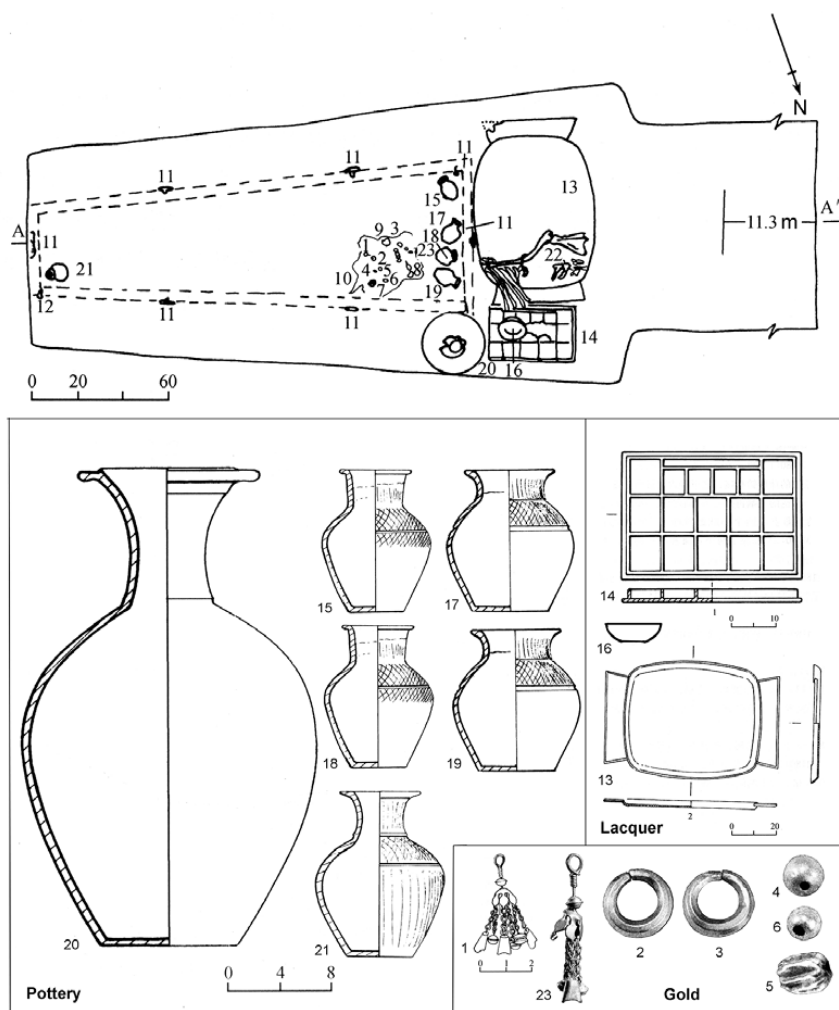


Figure 18.2 Grave goods with gray pottery, lacquerware, and gold jewelry in a non-Han tomb (nos. 13, 14, 16). Floor plan and grave goods assemblage of the tomb of a Tuoba confederation member in the Dianbanchang cemetery (tomb 180), Datong; c. first half of the fifth century. Note that animal bones (no. 22) were placed on the oblong lacquer tray on the head side of the coffin. After *Shanxi daxue lishi wenhua xueyuan et al.*, *Datong nanjiao*, pp. 276–279

where predominately tiles for palace halls and royal sponsored Buddhist constructions of the later fifth century were fired.⁵ The products of the kilns could be easily transported through waterways to the required sites.

⁵ Wang Yintian, Song Jianzhong, and Yin Xian, "Shanxi Datong Bei Wei Xicetian zhitao yizhi diaocha jianbao," *Wenwu* 2010.5, p. 35. According to this report, the stratum is large but thin, indicating a short span of manufacture.

Only a few pieces of greenware, mostly in shards, have been found in the nearly 1,000 fifth-century tombs at Datong.⁶ They can be regarded as harking back to the previous period. The dominance of grayware in the fourth and the fifth centuries illustrates an obvious difference in taste and in funerary rites between the non-Han and the Han Chinese. In the 510s stoneware of round bowls, cups and “chicken-headed ewers” (*jishou hu*) suddenly appeared in the tombs of members of the imperial Tuoba clan and of the descendants of great Chinese families. This was in response to the cultural policies of the emperor Tuoba Hong (r. 471–499, posthumously Emperor Xiaowen) and a sign of the increasing importance of Chinese influence in the administration of the state.⁷ Their forms were taken from the South; based on the clay used, however, the ewers are believed to have been fired in the North.⁸ The Zhaili kiln in Zichuan, Shandong, probably started to fire greenware from the Eastern Wei, supplying great families in the region, including the Cui located but thirty kilometers away. The olive-green ritual vases as tall as seventy centimeters with appliquéd lotus petals and Buddhist jewels, the “lotus-flower jar” (*lianhua zun*), from the tombs of the Zu and Feng families in Shandong and Hebei, are also considered northern products by some scholars.⁹ The same type did not generally occur in the realm of the Western Wei–Northern Zhou,¹⁰ but the members of the upper social strata in their capital, Chang’an, also valued such high-fired greenware. These were most likely supplied by the kilns in Anyang,¹¹ where the lotus jars were probably also produced. The selective imports signal not only a fairly long-distance trade between two hostile states, but also their differences in mortuary rituals. From the second half of the sixth century on, chicken-headed ewers and spittoons, as in the South, were regarded as standard for funerary rites. However no greenware has been found beyond Xi’an, for example at Guyuan.¹²

⁶ These include the spittoon in the tomb of Sima Jinlong (d. 484) and several fragments in tombs near Datong; see Li Shuyun, “Datong Bei Wei mu chutu de ciqi,” in *Bei Wei Pingcheng yanjiu wenji*, ed. Dong Ruishan (Taiyuan, 2008), pp. 328–334.

⁷ Shing Müller, “Die Gräber der Nördlichen Wei-Zeit (386–534)” (PhD dissertation, Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München, 2000), pp. 225–227.

⁸ The shards contain high Al_2O_3 and high TiO_2 ; Mori Tatsuya, “Nanbokuchō jidai no kahoku ni okeru tōshi no kakushin,” in *Chūgoku: bi no jūjiroten*, ed. Sofukawa Hiroshi and Degawa Tetsuro (Tokyo, 2005), p. 261; S. J. Vainker, *Chinese pottery and porcelain: From prehistory to the present* (London, 1991, reprint, 1997), p. 55.

⁹ Albert E. Dien, *Six Dynasties civilization* (New Haven, 2007), p. 246 and n. 46; Xie Zhixiu, *Huibuang sanshi nian: Shandong kaogu chengjiu xunli* (Beijing, 2008), p. 219.

¹⁰ Vainker, *Chinese pottery*, p. 55, thinks that stoneware with high reliefs of Buddhist motifs was confined to the Northern Qi.

¹¹ Yun Anzhi, *Zhongguo Bei Zhou zhengui wenwu: Bei Zhou muzang fajue baogao* (Xi’an, 1992), p. 168.

¹² Only gray pottery was found in the tombs of Li Xian (d. 569) and Tian Hong (d. 575); see Ningxia Huizhi zizhiqu bowuguan and Ningxia Guyuan bowuguan, “Ningxia Guyuan Bei Zhou Li Xian fufu mu fajue jianbao,” *Wenwu* 1985.11, pp. 1–20; and Yuanzhou lianhe kaogudui, ed., *Bei Zhou Tian Hong mu* (Beijing, 2009) (Chinese edition of *Hoku Shū Den Kō bo* (Tokyo, 2000)).

The northern greenware was utilitarian, robust, and massive.¹³ The surface was often appliquéed with high-relief lotus petals or other Buddhist or Persian-style ornamentation. Not confined to greenware, the northern potters, probably at Gongxian, Henan, but possibly also in Shandong, simultaneously developed in the early sixth century the first whiteware with low-iron kaolin.¹⁴ The ability to produce such ware spread rapidly to Anyang, where the famous white porcelaneous vessels in the tomb of Fan Cui (d. 575) were produced. Hebei became the major center for whiteware production.¹⁵ The new ware was welcomed immediately, as suggested by the imitations through white-slipped earthenware in Shanxi.¹⁶

Lead-glazed earthenware was produced in great numbers in the North during the Cao-Wei and Jin, but could not compete with the high-fired stoneware from the South once Wu was annexed by Jin. After the fall of Western Jin in 316 the production became limited to Chang'an and southern Manchuria.¹⁷ There, lead glazes in straw yellow or green hues are found in tombs mainly on figurines of warriors and horses and small perfume jars. The use of such lead glazes was integrated into ceramic production under the Tuoba after they unified the North. Lead-glazed earthenware was also used in ritual services for the dead and by Buddhists (Figure 18.3).¹⁸ Unique for the

¹³ Dien, *Six Dynasties civilization*, p. 247; see also his analysis of the differences in techniques and chemical components.

¹⁴ Zhao Xiangqing and Liao Yongmin, "Gongxianyao zaoqi baici zongshu," *Zhongyuan wenwu* 2011.4, pp. 73–79. For the Shandong finds, see Xie Zhixiu, *Huibuang sanshi nian*, p. 223. Rose Kerr and Nigel Wood, *Science and civilisation in China*, Volume 5, *Chemistry and chemical technology*, Part 12, *Ceramic technology* (Cambridge, 2004), p. 146, believe that the northern potters, while trying to achieve whiter materials and increasing the firing temperature for better results, discovered the large natural deposits of the secondary kaolin.

¹⁵ The excavation of the kiln site at Xiguan village in Neiqiu, Hebei Province, in 2012 demonstrates for the first time unambiguously that the kilns were active as early as Northern Qi times. Mainly greenware or green-glazed earthenware were fired at this initial stage; however, shards were not white-slipped; see Hebeisheng wenwu yanjiusuo and Xingyao kaogudui, "2012 nian Xingyao yizhi fajue you zhongyao shouhuo," *Zhongguo wenwubao*, March 1, 2013, p. 8.

¹⁶ Shanxisheng kaogu yanjiusuo, "Taiyuan xi'nanjiao Bei Qi dongshimu," *Wenwu* 2004.6, pp. 35–46; William Watson, *Pre-Tang ceramics of China: Chinese pottery from 4000 BC to 600 AD* (London, 1991), p. 36.

¹⁷ For Chang'an, see Xianyangshi wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo, *Xianyang Shibinguo mu* (Beijing, 2006), p. 129. For southern Manchuria, see Peng Shanguo, "3–6 shiji Zhongguo Dongbei diqu chutu de youtao," *Bianjiang kaogu yanjiu* 7 (2008), pp. 235–248; for the use of lead-glazed vessels, see Yi Li, "Wei Jin Shiliuguo muzang zhong 'jiangyou xiaoguan' chutan," *Zhongyuan wenwu* 2008.1, pp. 63–67.

¹⁸ See, for example, M36 at Qilicun, Datong; Datongshi kaogu yanjiusuo, "Shanxi Datong Qilicun Bei Wei muqun fajue jianbao," *Wenwu* 2006.10, p. 38, Figure 36. The same kinds of shards with decorations of appliquéed lotus petals similar to those excavated in the Qilicun tomb were also found scattered around the foundation of the Siyuan pagoda built by Empress Dowager Wenming at the southern foothill of Fangshan. The shards indicate that such glazed vessels were used for certain Buddhist activities around this pagoda.



Figure 18.3 *Lead-glazed wares. Left: jar, earthenware with brownish lead glaze and appliquéd lotus petals on the shoulder; H. c.20 cm; from Tomb 36 of the Qilicun cemetery, Datong, second half of the fifth century. Photo: Müller. Right: bowl, white ware with alternating greenish and yellowish glaze stripes; H. 6.2 cm; from the Northern Qi tomb of Lou Rui (d. 570). Courtesy of Professor Zhang Qingjie*

North were the pilgrim flasks. Usually decorated with exotic motifs in relief, such as Central Asian dancers and lions,¹⁹ they were always coated with lead glaze and never made of greenware, indicating a specialization of workshops and certain conventions for products in the North. Daily utilitarian vessels such as bowls and round cups showed great diversity in decoration. Some were painted with disc patterns and then coated with transparent dark glaze to imitate Sassanian glass;²⁰ others were applied with two-color glazes (Figure 18.3), probably the forerunner of the later *sancai*, or three-color glazes.²¹ Green, black, brown, and yellow lead-glazed earthenware or stoneware were all traded

¹⁹ Dien, *Six Dynasties civilization*, p. 248.

²⁰ Jiayao An, "The art of glass along the Silk Road," in *China: Dawn of a golden age, 200–750 AD*, ed. James C. Y. Watt (New York, 2004), p. 61.

²¹ Mori, "Nanbokuchō jidai," pp. 260–261; Henansheng wenwu guanlijū nanshui beidiao wenwu baohu guanli bangongshi and Anyangshi wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo, "Henan Anyangxian Bei Qi Jia Jin mu," *Kaogu* 2011.4, p. 44, Color Plate 13.5. For the toxicity of lead glazes, see Kerr and Wood, *Ceramic technology*, p. 484.

at the Grand Market (*da shi*) of Northern Wei Luoyang, as the shards at that site indicate.²² The northern ware gained great vitality and was partially used to imitate vessels of glass and precious metals.²³

LACQUER: AN INHERITED FASCINATION

Few lacquerware objects have been found dating to the post-Han period.²⁴ Nevertheless, new types, such as rectangular fruit boxes with compartments (*guoge*) and oblong trays with handles (*shuang'er tuopan*), appeared in Cao-Wei times. These forms were mainly preserved in the Guanlong area, modern Shaanxi and Gansu, after the fall of Western Jin, and were taken up by the Tuoba, who shared the same fascination for lacquerware with their steppe forerunners, the Xiongnu. Saddles of the elite among the horse riders in fourth- and fifth-century southern Manchuria were also painted with lacquer.²⁵ As in the Cao-Wei and Western Jin periods, according to excavation finds and tomb murals, lacquer was applied preferably on personal toilet articles (combs, hairpins) and their containers, table services (drinking cups, serving plates, trays), and pieces of furniture (low tables, canopies, screens, couches) in the Tuoba and subsequent societies. Archaic-style lacquered eared cups (*erbei*), compartmentalized fruit boxes, or large trays on which the steppe people typically placed the parts of oxen or sheep used in the tombs as sacrificial offerings (Figure 18.2) were particularly favored in fifth-century burials. In addition, coffins with lacquer paintings were highly valued.²⁶

Since lacquer trees do not grow in northern Shanxi,²⁷ products were either imported,²⁸ or it is plausible that the lacquer sap itself was transported to Datong for local manufacture of exotic vessels (Figure 18.4) or for large pieces

²² Zhongguo shehui kexueyuan kaogu yanjiusuo Luoyang Han Wei dui, "Bei Wei Luoyang chengnei chutu de ciqi yu youtaoqi," *Kaogu* 1991.12, pp. 1091–1095.

²³ William Watson, "Precious metal: Its influence on T'ang earthenware," in *Pots & pans: A colloquium on precious metals and ceramics in the Muslim, Chinese and Graeco-Roman worlds*, ed. Michael Vickers (Oxford, 1985), p. 164.

²⁴ For the single significant find for the Western Jin North see Shandongsheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo and Linyishi wenhua ju, "Shandong Linyi: Xiyanchi Jin mu," *Wenwu* 2005.7, pp. 4–37. The vessels were produced in state-controlled and private workshops of unknown provenance.

²⁵ Tian Likun, "Lun Lamadong mudi chutu de maju," *Wenwu* 2010.2, p. 71.

²⁶ For the findings from the cemeteries in Datong, see, for example, Shanxi daxue lishi wenhua xueyuan, Shanxisheng kaogu yanjiusuo, and Datongshi bowuguan, *Datong nanjiao Bei Wei muqun* (Beijing, 2006); and Liu Junxi and Gao Feng, "Datong Zhijiabao Bei Wei mu guanbanhua," *Wenwu* 2004.12, pp. 35–47.

²⁷ Personal communication with Wang Yanqing, research staff of the Yungang Grottoes Academy. For the distribution of lacquer trees, see Shao Chunxian, "Zhongguo shengqi chandi yu pinzhi de yanjiu baogao," *Zhongguo shengqi* 1997.11, pp. 42–47.

²⁸ Sichuan was traditionally the center of lacquer production in Han times. But Hongnong was also mentioned in *WS* 24.625 as a producer of lacquer; see Albert E. Dien, "Lighting in the Six Dynasties period: 'To make a light to seek clarity,'" *EMC* 13–14.1 (2007), p. 21.



Figure 18.4 *Lacquerware with exotic forms or motifs. Left: wooden pitcher in steppe style, without measure, from M72 in the Dianhanchang cemetery, Datong. Right: front plate of the lacquer-painted coffin in black, red, and white; the iconography combined an age-old Han motif ("a person in a half-opened door") with non-Chinese human figures and pearl roundels. From Tomb 1 at Hudong, Datong. Both objects are dated from tombs to the second half of the fifth century. Adapted after Shanxi daxue lishi wenhua xueyuan et al., Datong nanjiao, Color Plate 10.1; and Shanxisibeng Datongshi kaogu yanjiusuo. "Datong Hudong," p. 31, Figure 10. Line-drawing: Müller*

of furniture and coffins.²⁹ The very few surviving large fragments of lacquered coffins or other objects of the fifth century, all decorated with non-Chinese figures (Figure 18.4),³⁰ were obviously commissioned by members of the Xianbei confederation.

Written sources have it that lead oxide (litharge) was first used in the Cao-Wei period for painting with oil.³¹ Litharge can be used as a desiccant for oil-based pigments such as white, thus enlarging the color spectrum and making pastel colors possible for lacquer paintings.³² The screen of Sima Jinlong (484 CE) and the painted coffins at Guyuan (489 CE) seem to have applied this agent.³³ While the color hues of both were similar to those of the Eastern

²⁹ As suggested by Wang Yanqing.

³⁰ For the coffins at Hudong, Datong: Shanxisheng Datongshi kaogu yanjiusuo, "Datong Hudong Bei Wei yihao mu," *Wenwu* 2004.12, pp. 26–34; at Guyuan: Ningxia Guyuan bowuguan, ed., *Guyuan Bei Wei mu qiguanhua* (Yinchuan, 1988); and fragments from the tomb of Poduoluo at Shaling, Datong: Datongshi kaogu yanjiusuo, "Shanxi Datong Shaling Bei Wei bihuamu faju jianbao," *Wenwu* 2006.10, pp. 4–24.

³¹ PbO (*yanhuang*, *huangan* or *mituoseng*). The last term was derived from the Persian *mirdasang*; see Bertold Laufer, *Sino-Iranica: Chinese contributions to the history of civilization in ancient Iran* (Chicago, 1919), p. 508. PbO was widely applied as a flux for glaze already in Han times, later on also as a pharmaceutical product. Wang Jinyu, "Mituoseng de zaoqi faxian he yunyong," in *Wang yuan ji: Shaanxi sheng kaogu yanjiusuo huadan sishi zhounian jinian wenji*, ed. Han Wei (Xi'an, 1998), p. 844, believes that the term *mituoseng* was known already in Eastern Han.

³² Kurt Herberts, *Das Buch der ostasiatischen Lackkunst* (Düsseldorf, 1959), pp. 347–348.

³³ Dien, *Six Dynasties civilization*, p. 295.

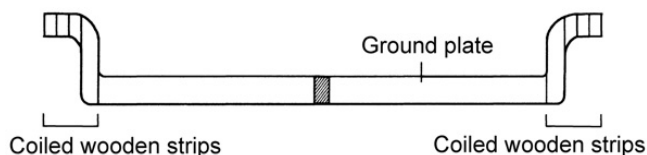


Figure 18.5 *Schematic depiction of the coiled-core technique applied to the lacquered vessel found in Tian Hong's tomb. Adapted after Yuanzhou lianhe kaogudui, ed., Bei Zhou Tian Hong mu, p. 152*

Jin,³⁴ the Guyuan painting was furnished additionally with gold. Lacquer paintings with such narrative details disappeared from tombs in the sixth century.

Even less lacquerware was found in the second half of the sixth century. Nevertheless, tomb murals, particularly in the Northern Qi, suggest that lacquered footed trays, cups, serving plates, and large platters were indispensable for feasts, even though the imported gold and silver vessels and native greenware were also valued.³⁵ Technical innovations in this period can be elucidated by the fragment of a lacquer vessel from the Northern Zhou tomb of Tian Hong (511–575) in Guyuan (Figure 18.5). The rim with the thin coiled wooden strips bears the earliest evidence of a *juan tai* (“coiled-core”) technique, which pre-dates the famous and much more sophisticated lacquer ewer (*shikkobei*) in the Shōsō-in repository by some 200 years.³⁶

JADE, GLASS, AND EVERYTHING COLORFUL AND GLITTERING

Jade, highly valued by the Cao-Wei and Jin imperial kinsmen and great families, disappeared abruptly from the North after the fall of the Western

³⁴ Red, yellow, black, grayish-green, and grayish-blue; see Chen Jing, ed., *Zhongguo qiqi quanji*, Volume 4, *Sanguo–Yuan* (Fuzhou, 1998), pp. 6–7.

³⁵ See the murals of Xu Xianxiu's tomb and of the tomb in Shuozhou; Taiyuanshi wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo, ed., *Bei Qi Xu Xianxiu mu* (Beijing, 2005), Plate 18; Shanxisheng kaogu yanjiusuo et al., “Shanxi Shuozhou Shuiquanliang Bei Qi bihuamu fajue jianbao,” *Wenwu* 2010.12, p. 32, Figure 13.

³⁶ Naruse Masakazu, “Shikki,” in *Bei Zhou Tian Hong mu*, ed. Yuanzhou lianhe kaogudui, pp. 151–152; Nakagawa Masato, “Kentai shikki no zaishitsu to gihō: Hokushū Den Kō bo shutsudo shikki no chōsa,” *Kiryō* 2007.3, pp. 73–79. Feng Yi, “Linyi Xiyanchi Jin mu chutu qiqi,” claims that the coiled core lacquerware occurred in the Jin tomb at Xiyanchi, Shandong (see n. 24 above). However, no technical analysis of the objects was available.

Jin.³⁷ While Khotan, the traditional supplier of jade, remained in contact during the Northern Dynasties,³⁸ the new rulers, who had not shown much interest in jade while still on the northern steppes, were behind its disappearance. The small amount of Northern Zhou jade objects, as the result of the revitalization of the *Zhouli* ideals (see Chapter 10, “Western Wei–Northern Zhou”) signaled the first significant recurrence after a long interruption of almost 250 years. Of the greatest symbolic importance were the *bi*-discs.³⁹ In addition there were jade hairpins for high officials or their spouses and “jade” pendants for ceremonial costumes in both Northern Zhou and Qi.⁴⁰ But some of the jade pendants also carried Buddhist motifs.⁴¹ The belt-plaque set of the best Khotan nephrite from the tomb of Ruogan Yun (d. 578) at Xianyang holds the place of honor for jade finds of this period.⁴²

³⁷ Dien, *Six Dynasties civilization*, p. 273, points out that jade comprised only 3.05 percent of the found objects in the North. The percentage is even lower, when the new findings since 2007 are taken into account: almost none contained jade objects. James C. Y. Watt, “Jade studies: Reappraisal and review,” *Transactions of the Ceramic Society* 71 (2006–2007), p. 26, believes that “the nomadic way of life is not conducive to the practice of this [i.e. jade carving] art form.”

³⁸ Khotan was controlled by the Hepthalites in 498. However, the routes to and from Khotan were not blocked, as indicated by at least twelve Khotanese missions to the northern courts between 457 and 587 recorded in the dynastic chronicles, and the travel of the Northern Wei monks Song Yun and Huisheng in 516. The West Türks took over the control in the latter second half of the sixth century. International traders thereafter sought sea routes as an alternative; Christoph Baumer, *Southern Silk Road: In the footsteps of Sir Aurel Stein and Sven Hedin* (Bangkok, 2000), pp. 18, 38; and Carol Michaelson, “Jade and the Silk Road: Trade and tribute in the first millennium,” in *The Silk Road: Trade, travel, war and faith*, ed. Susan Whitfield and Ursula Sims-Williams (London, 2004), p. 46.

³⁹ See the discussion of the *bi*-discs found only in Xiaoling of the Emperor Wu (d. 578) in Jui-Man Wu, “Mortuary art in the Northern Zhou China (557–581 CE): Visualization of class, role, and cultural identity” (PhD dissertation, University of Pittsburgh, 2010), pp. 35, 53.

⁴⁰ See the excellent research on jade pendants by Zuo Jun, “Wei Jin Nanbeichao yupei yanjiu,” *Gugong bowu yuan yuankan* 2007.6, pp. 52–67. Not all “jade” pendants were of nephrite: from the Xiaoling tomb of the Northern Zhou Emperor Wu and his consort, Lady Ashina, *bi*-discs, pendants and half discs (*huang*) were made of marble (Shaanshisheng kaogu yanjiusuo and Xianyangshi kaogu yanjiusuo, “Bei Zhou Wudi Xiaoling fajue jianbao,” *Kaogu yu wenwu* 1997.2, p. 22); the “jade” in the tombs of Shedi Huiluo (d. 562) and Lou Rui (d. 570) are undefined stones (Wang Kelin, “Bei Qi Shedi Huiluo mu,” *Kaogu xuebao* 1979.3, p. 393; Shaanshisheng kaogu yanjiusuo and Taiyuanshi wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo, *Bei Qi Dong'an wang Lou Rui mu* (Beijing, 2006), pp. 146–150). Few jade objects were sighted in the Northern Qi tombs, most likely due to extensive tomb robberies, as indicated by Christine U. Karg, “Die Grabkultur der Nördlichen Qi-Zeit (550–577): Blüte einer neuen Epoche in der chinesischen Grabkunst, dargestellt am archäologischen Material neuerer Ausgrabungen” (PhD dissertation, Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München, 2001), p. 430.

⁴¹ Zuo Jun, “Wei Jin Nanbeichao yupei,” pp. 60–62. Zuo Jun points out (p. 60) that the crouching monster figure of amber serving as the centerpiece of the jade pendant set of Shedi Huiluo, in place of a traditional *bi*-disc, could have been derived from Buddhist art or eventually have been borrowed from that of Zoroastrianism.

⁴² Carol Michaelson, *Gilded dragons: Buried treasures from China's golden ages* (London, 1999), pp. 74–75. Yun Anzhi, *Bei Zhou zhengui wenwu*, pp. 157–160. For the identification of the nephrite, see Liu Yunhui, *Zhongguo chutu yuqi quanji*, Volume 14, *Shaanxi* (Beijing, 2005), p. 176. Since the handicraft had not been practiced in the North for generations, the craftsmen for this belt set probably came from the South.

Plentiful tomb finds of colorful beads of carnelian, crystal, amber,⁴³ turquoise, pearl, and coral would seem to indicate that from Jin times on shiny and glittering objects were increasingly favored as personal adornments and interior decorations.⁴⁴ Mica was desired for its translucency and soft luster. There are increasing reports of mica used for the windowpanes of sedans and buildings, as well as panels set in screens, and for fans.⁴⁵ Lapis lazuli from Bactria was desired as jewelry and the coloring agent in pigment, especially in Buddhist art.⁴⁶

Among the most treasured imports during the Northern Dynasties were glass beads and vessels from the Roman world, Persia, and India. Almost as many imported glass vessels have been unearthed in the North as in the South.⁴⁷ The northerners, however, used a newly arrived glassblowing technique in their own glass production. *Beishi (History of the Northern Dynasties)* says that early in the fifth century glass was made by the Yuezhi in Pingcheng with locally mined minerals.⁴⁸ Several excavated blue glass jars in blown

According to BS 90.2985, He Tong, a native of Jiangling, was skillful in jade carving. After Jiangling was taken over by the Western Wei, he went with his famous son, He Chou, to Chang'an. For the importance of family traditions in this handicraft see Watt, "Jade studies," p. 26.

⁴³ Most examples of amber in this period have been found in the North. Xu Xiaodong, "Qidan hupo yishu yanjiu" (PhD dissertation, Chinese University, Hong Kong, 2005), pp. 53–55, suggests that amber was imported via the Silk Routes from the West, ultimately coming from the Baltic (p. 161), pre-dating the imported amber from the same area during the Qidan period. See also Emma C. Bunker, "Liao amber," in *Adornment for the body and soul: Ancient Chinese ornaments from the Mengdiexuan Collection*, ed. Emma C. Bunker and Julia M. White (Hong Kong, 1999), p. 154.

⁴⁴ Sugaya Fuminori, "Yunmu [Unmo]," in *Bei Zhou Tian Hong mu*, ed. Yuanzhou lianhe kaogudui, p. 207.

⁴⁵ For a general survey in literary sources, see Edward H. Schafer, "Notes on mica in medieval China," *TP* 43 (1955), pp. 265–286. The finds of sumptuously gold-painted mica flakes backed with gauze from the tomb of Tian Hong (571) lead researchers to presume that mica was sewn onto textiles or clothing, probably because of the *paillettes*-like effects; see Yuanzhou lianhe kaogudui, *Bei Zhou Tian Hong mu*, pp. 97–101, 205–209. A recent report on a newly restored jacket (dated fifth–sixth centuries; inv. no. 5582) in the collection of the renowned Abegg-Stiftung in Switzerland substantiates the technique of using mica flakes to adorn garments. Julia Escher and Caroline Vogt, "The embroidered Chinese garment at the Abegg-Stiftung: A new insight into the material and visual culture of Early China," paper presented at the 2nd Conference of East Asian Art and Archaeology, Zurich, August 24–27, 2017.

⁴⁶ The inlaid stone of the imported golden ring found in the tomb of Li Xian is lapis lazuli. Albert E. Dien, "Western exotica in China during the Six Dynasties period," in *New perspectives on China's past: Chinese archaeology in the twentieth century*, Volume 1, *Cultures and civilizations reconsidered*, ed. Xiaoneng Yang (New Haven, 2004), p. 374. The earliest evidence for lapis lazuli as a pigment is on the mural paintings of the cloister B (N62) in Karadong, third century CE; see Dai Koulin and Yidilisi Abuduresule, "Zai Takelamagan de shamo li," in *Faguo Hanxue Sinologie Française* (Beijing) 11 (2006), p. 53. Cave 6 at Yungang was painted with ultramarine. Francesca Piqué, "Scientific examination of the sculptural polychromy of Cave 6 at Yungang," in *Conservation of ancient sites on the Silk Road*, ed. N. Agnew (Los Angeles, 1997), pp. 348–361.

⁴⁷ The findings in Xinjiang are not counted here; see An Jiayao, "Wei Jin Nanbeichao shiqi de boli jishu," in *Zhongguo gudai boli jishu de fazhan*, ed. Gan Fuxi (Shanghai, 2005), pp. 113–127; Dien, *Six Dynasties civilization*, pp. 287–293.

⁴⁸ BS 97.3226–3227.

techniques without the use of a mold and in the shape of Xianbei grayware seem to support this claim.⁴⁹ Another example is a violet glass ring, unique of its kind.⁵⁰ The craftsmen must have been Central Asians working under the Tuoba regime. They alone mastered this technique with the requisite knowledge of lime-soda silicate, unknown earlier in China. The scarcity of locally made blown glass indicates small-scale production. No glass workshops have been located thus far.⁵¹ After the Northern Wei no blown glass of local manufacture has been identified until the Sui.⁵² It would seem that the technique was carried later from Sui Chang'an to Korea,⁵³ where blown-glass bottles were preferably used for *śarīra* (Buddhist relics) containers. A great amount of glass beads has also been unearthed from this period in the North but only a few have been analyzed in terms of techniques or provenance. The imitations of imported Sassanian facet glass by color-glazed earthenware in Northern Wei Luoyang suggest that these fancy glass bowls were desired, but not affordable for all. Imported glasswares were generally more treasured than homemade cast ones of high-lead silicate. However, lead silicate glass, and not Western glasswares, also occurred in the tomb of Tian Hong, a high military officer of the Northern Zhou who, together with his

⁴⁹ See An Jiayao and Liu Junxi, "Datong diqu de Bei Wei boli," in 4–6 *shiji de bei Zhongguo yu Onya dalu*, ed. Zhang Qingjie, Li Shuji, and Li Gang (Beijing, 2006), pp. 37–41; Jiayao An, "The art of glass," pp. 62–65, 157–158, cat. nos. 67, 68. Cobalt and copper were the most common colorants for early Korean glass vessels and beads. No chemical analysis has been made to identify the blue colorant of the Datong vessels. It is possible that cobalt was used. Cobalt was mined and applied as dye for glass and ceramics in China already from the Warring States period. Peter J. Golas, *Science and civilisation in China*, Volume 5, *Chemistry and chemical technology*, Part 13, *Mining* (Cambridge, 1999), p. 173.

⁵⁰ The ring was found in the tomb of Empress Dowager Wenming (d. 490); see An Jiayao, "Wei Jin Nanbeichao shiqi de boli," p. 125.

⁵¹ Indications would be glass-production residues, glass-melting crucibles, and glass fragments. No international network for raw glass trade such as those for Europe in the first millennium CE can be attested; see Sophie Wolf and Cordula Kessler, "Early mediaeval window glass from Switzerland and a brief history of glass production in Europe in the first millennium AD," in *Glass along the Silk Road from 200 BC to AD 1000*, ed. Bettina Zorn and Alexandra Hilgner (Mainz, 2010), pp. 35–36.

⁵² This seems to be in accord with the passage in *BS* 90.2985 that in Sui times "glass manufacture in China had long ceased." The free-blown glass ball from the tomb of Shedi Huiluo (Wang Kelin, "Bei Qi Shedi Huiluo," Plate 11.3) is of unknown provenance; the blown faceted glass from the tomb of Li Xian (Ningxia Huizu zizhiqu bowuguan and Ningxia Guyuan bowuguan, "Ningxia Guyuan Bei Zhou Li Xian," Plate 3.1) was imported from Sassanian Iran (Jiayao An, "Bowl," in *China: Dawn*, ed. Watt, 258, cat. no. 158; Judith A. Lerner, "Bowl," in *Nomads, traders and holy men along China's Silk Road*, ed. Annette L. Juliano and Judith Lerner (New York, 2001), pp. 97, cat. no. 30). In Sui times the blown-glass vessels first reappeared in tombs of imperial kinsmen and in repositories of cloisters. Even in Tang times, blown glass was still regarded as foreign; see Edward H. Schafer, *The golden peaches of Samarkand: A study of T'ang exotics* (Berkeley, 1963), pp. 235–237.

⁵³ Songran Lee, "The glass sarira bottle of the Mireuksa Temple and glass manufacturing of East Asian countries," *Misuljaryo* (Seoul, National Museum Journal of Arts) 80 (2011), pp. 17–43.

wife, was buried with five Byzantine solidi, thus actually having had access to foreign imports.⁵⁴

BRONZE, IRON, AND OTHER METALS

In the North after the Cao-Wei, bronze objects were limited to small personal items, small vessels and utensils such as wine warmers (*jiaodou*). Few new coins or new types of mirrors were cast.⁵⁵ As part of the funerary rites of non-Han peoples in fifth-century Datong, small iron discs (diameter below five centimeters) with minimal decoration were laid close to the heads of the dead. This custom was adopted by some high-ranking Chinese in the Northern Zhou period, although Chinese bronze mirrors also reappeared in burials.⁵⁶

A shortage of copper in the North after the Han could be responsible for the decrease in traditional bronze objects; people had probably also developed new habits.⁵⁷ Furthermore, the casting of bronze Buddha statues that emerged in the fourth-century North may have competed for available copper.⁵⁸ This drain can be overemphasized because the copper consumed in these statues by private contractors was on a small scale. Further, the statues could be remelted and the raw material reused, particularly at a time of copper shortage. Starting in the sixth century, the manufacture of Buddhist paraphernalia, preferably of bronze or other copper alloys such as *toushi*, a copper–zinc alloy,⁵⁹ gained

⁵⁴ Yuanzhou lianhe kaogudui, *Bei Zhou Tian Hong mu*, pp. 153–162. While most of the PbO–SiO₂ glass shards found in this tomb are green or yellowish-green, some are thick and opaque and were probably meant to imitate jade; Song Yan and Ma Qinglin, “Ningxia Guyuan Bei Zhou Tian Hong mu chutu boli canpian yanjiu,” *Boli yu tangci* 36.2 (2008), p. 36. In addition to fragments of unidentified glass objects, around 900 small glass beads were excavated from this tomb. At least parts of these glass shards and beads were components of the set of jade pendants of Tian Hong; some others could have belonged to the headdress of Tian Hong’s wife, indicating certain specializations of the glass-makers in North China.

⁵⁵ For the coinage, see Helen Wang, *Money on the Silk Road: The evidence from eastern Central Asia to c. AD 800. Including a catalogue of the coins collected by Sir Aurel Stein* (London, 2004), pp. 28–29. See Wang Zhongshu, “Zai lun Riben chutu de Jingchu si nian ming sanjiao yuan panlong jing,” *Kaogu* 2012.6, pp. 75–81, on the allegedly “exported mirrors” to Yamato for Queen Himiko. According to him the “triangular-rimmed” (*sanjiao yuan*) bronze mirrors were local Japanese products, eventually cast by emigrant craftsmen from the Sun Wu. For detailed research on bronze mirrors after Han, see Morishita Shōji, “Kanmatsu sangoku seishin kagami no tenkai,” *Tōbō gakubō* 86 (2011), pp. 91–138.

⁵⁶ See Yun Anzhi, *Bei Zhou zhengui wenwu*, pp. 39, 62, and 111.

⁵⁷ Dien, *Six Dynasties civilization*, pp. 252, 265–266.

⁵⁸ I.e. in the Sixteen States and the early Northern Wei periods; see *China: Dawn*, ed. Watt, pp. 134–135.

⁵⁹ According to SS 83.1857, brass was introduced from Sassanian Persia and was beloved because of its gold-like color. It is, however, poorly documented in archaeological finds due to the general lack of archaeometrical analyses. For *toushi* or brass, see Laufer, *Sino-Iranica*, pp. 511–515; Joseph Needham and Lu Gwei-Djen, *Science and civilisation in China*, Volume 5, *Chemistry and chemical technology*, Part 2, *Spagyric discovery and invention: Magisteries of gold and immortality* (Cambridge, 1974), pp. 195–203; Rao Zongyi, “Shuo toushi: Tulufan wenshu zhaji,” in *Dunhuang Tulufan xue yanjiu lunwenji*, Volume 2, ed. Beijing daxue Zhongguo zhonggushi yanjiu zhongxin (Beijing, 1983), pp. 627–630. Needham

importance. Such objects included incense burners (*shoulu*), candleholders, and bottles, which sometimes were used in burials.⁶⁰ Copper alloys were also used for architectural fittings such as door handles and padlocks.⁶¹ Iron was preferred for weaponry and agricultural implements, but iron was also cast into lamps, sometimes as tall as seventy centimeters.⁶² One great loss of the steppe heritage was the gradual disappearance of footed bronze or iron cauldrons. In the sixth century, only miniatures were deposited symbolically in the tombs of some high-ranking Xianbei; even these vestiges vanished eventually in Tang times.⁶³

Rings,⁶⁴ earrings, bracelets, and necklaces of bronze, silver, and gold were common. Imported gold rings with intaglios, found almost exclusively in this period, were much *en vogue* among the ruling elite.⁶⁵ The traditional “keyhole-shaped” belt plaques with auspicious creatures (Figure 18.6a), called by the

(p. 200) postulates that *tou* came from the Indian word *tāmra*, thus suggesting an origin of the alloy other than Persia.

⁶⁰ The form of the bottles emerged eventually from the Xianbei gray jars. Han Zhao, “Nanbeichao Sui Tang shidai tongping ‘tongchi’ yongtu bianxi,” in *Wang yuan ji*, ed. Han Wei (Xi’an, 1989), pp. 768–781, suggests that these bottles were used for the preparation of tea in Buddhist ceremonies.

⁶¹ Beginning with the Northern Qi and Zhou, padlocks were used to lock tomb doors, a practice unseen in previous times. In Tang times padlocks were also used to lock caskets.

⁶² Altogether there were more iron items found in the North than in the South during this period. Liaoning has the highest rate of iron objects; see Albert E. Dien, “Liaoning in the Six Dynasties period: Aspects of its cultural heritage,” unpublished paper. For a tall excavated iron lamp, see Datongshi kaogu yanjiusuo, “Shanxi Datong Yingbin dadao Bei Wei muqun.” *Wenwu* 2006.10, p. 59. Although such lamps recall similar ones found in Herculaneum at the end of the first century BCE, now in the Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Napoli, the immediate forerunners came probably from the steppe. For similarly constructed ones see those found in Gansu (Albert E. Dien, “Lamp with three camels,” in *Monks and merchants*, ed. Annette L. Juliano and Judith A. Lerner (New York, 2001), p. 72) and in Lamadong M266 (Liaoningsheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo, Chaoyangshi bowuguan, and Beipiaoshi wenwu guanlisuo, “Liaoning Beipiao Lamadong mudi 1998 nian fajue baogao,” *Kaogu xuebao* 2004.2, pp. 227–228), both of the fourth century. For a broad survey of the lamps during this period see Dien, “Lighting in the Six Dynasties,” pp. 1–32.

⁶³ Jui-Man Wu, “Mortuary art in Northern Zhou,” p. 108, believes that the small cauldron in the tomb of the Chinese Wang Deheng is to be interpreted as an acknowledgment of his high warrior status in the Northern Zhou military culture. For a comprehensive study of cauldrons in North China after the Han dynasty, see Pan Ling, *Zhongguo beifang wanqi fu yanjiu* (Beijing, 2015), esp. pp. 92–109.

⁶⁴ In some tombs in Datong, the deceased wore one ring on each finger. A similarity can be observed in the tomb of the “heavenly horse” in Silla (Roger Goepper and Jeong-hee Lee-Kalisch, eds., *Korea: Die alten Königreiche* (Munich, 1999), p. 180). From this period on, golden rings were associated with marital partnerships as a result of contact with Central and West Asia; see, for example, a fragment of the *Waiguo zasu* (dating from between Han and Tang times) cited in *Taiping yulan* 718.7b, p. 3315a.

⁶⁵ Judith A. Lerner, “Ring set with a carved stone seal,” in *Monks and merchants*, ed. Juliano and Lerner, p. 101; Dien, “Western exotica,” p. 374; see also Zhang Qingjie, *Minzu huiju yu wenming hudong: Beichao shehui de kaoguxue guan* (Beijing, 2010), pp. 419–426, for other finds of the period.

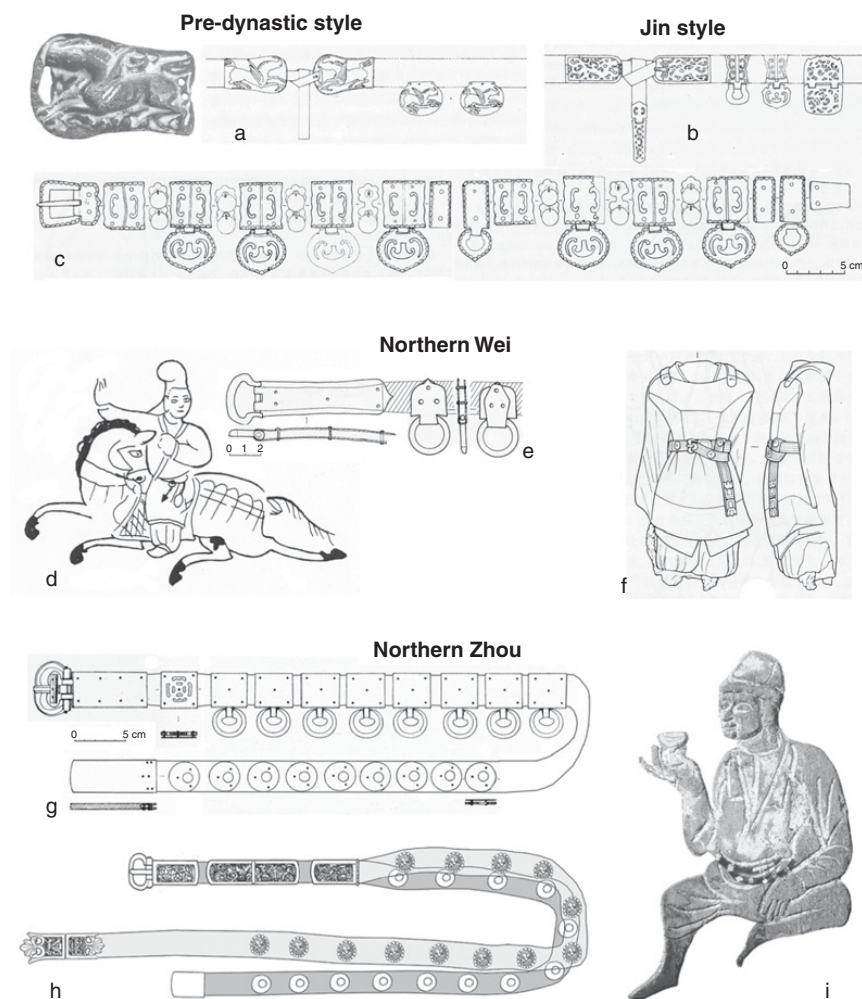


Figure 18.6 *Belt sets of the Northern Dynasties.* (a) Traditional Xianbei belt plaque and a reconstruction of its usage; (b) the “Jin-style” belt set from the tomb of Zhou Chu (d. 299) in Yixing, Jiangsu; (c) the “Jin-style” belt set but with a buckle with movable tongue, from Lamadong Tomb 196, Liaoning (the end of the third to the middle of the fourth centuries); (d) Tuoba belt sets as depicted on the Guyuan painted coffin (489); (e) a belt set found in Tomb 49 of the Dianhanchang cemetery, Datong (second half of the fifth century); (f) belt set depicted on a clay guardian figurine shows a new development of using metal-reinforced holes, from Yongningsi, Luoyang, 520s; (g) jade belt set of Ruogan Yun (d. 578), Xi’an; (h) bronze belt set of Emperor Wu of the Northern Zhou (d. 578)—its conjectured reconstruction might give a clue to belts such as the one in (i) which is a depiction of a belt set on the screen of the funerary couch of An Jia (d. 579), Xi’an. (a) and (b) after Sun Ji, *Zhongguo shenghuo*, p. 82; (c) after *Liaoningsheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo et al.*, “Liaoning Beipiao Lamadong mudi,”

Han Chinese *xipi* or *xianbei* after their wearers,⁶⁶ were refined by the Cao-Wei and Jin Chinese into versions decorated with granulated gold and jade and used to adorn the members of the imperial families or to be bestowed on foreign leaders.⁶⁷ New types of prestigious belt sets with buckles and gilded bronze openwork fittings were cast in Western Jin times (the “Jin style”) and were sent to and henceforth imitated by the Murong and the Puyō (300–400 CE) in the Northeast (Figure 18.6b, c).⁶⁸ These evolved in Koguryō (400–500 CE) and Silla (500–600 CE) into golden parade belts with hanging metal straps. Together with the horse-riding gear (bits, saddles, and stirrups) the gilded or gold belt sets signaled a newly emerged military aristocracy in southern Manchuria.⁶⁹ The early Türks and the Eurasian Avars shared this token of prestige and transmitted the parade belt sets, stirrups, and lamellae armor to the Sassanians, and further west

Caption for Figure 18.6 (cont.)

p. 232; (d) after *Ningxia Guyuan bowuguan*, Guyuan Bei Wei mu, color plate “right sideboard of the coffin” (without pagination), illustration Müller; (e) after *Shanxi daxue lishi wenhua xueyuan et al.*, Datong nanjiao, p. 46; (f) after *Zhongguo shehui kexueyuan kaogu yanjiusuo*, Bei Wei Luoyang Yongningsi 1979–1994 nian kaogu fajue (Beijing, 1996), p. 86; (g) adapted from *Yun Anzhi*, Bei Zhou zhengui wenwu, p. 69; (h) adapted from *Shaanxibeng kaogu yanjiusuo*, “Bei Zhou Wudi Xiaoling,” Figure 17, reconstructed by the author after the proposal of Elke Dedden, “Ein tangzeitlicher Männergürtel, pp. 3–18; (i) adapted from *Shaanxibeng kaogu yanjiusuo*, Xi’an Bei Zhou An Jia mu (Beijing, 2003), Plate 64

⁶⁶ Similar belt plaque sets were widely distributed between the first century BCE, or earlier, and the first century CE from the Black Sea (Porogi) to Central (Orlat) and North Asia (Dyrestui), and were thus clearly of steppe origin; see Shing Müller, “The Nomads of the fifth century: The Tuoba Xianbei,” in *Nomads, traders and holy men*, ed. Juliano and Lerner, p. 36, n. 6.

⁶⁷ Sun Ji, *Zhongguo shenghuo: Zhongguo gu wenwu yu dong xi wenhua jiaoliu zhong de ruogan wenti* (Shenyang, 1996), pp. 72–83; Emma C. Bunker, *Nomadic art of the eastern Eurasian steppes: The Eugene V. Thaw collection* (New Haven, 2002), p. 114; Dien, *Six Dynasties civilization*, pp. 327–328.

⁶⁸ Sun Ji, *Zhongguo gu yufu luncong* (Beijing, 1993), pp. 214–215. Machida Akira, “Xianbei de jinshu daiju,” in *Dongbeiyi kaoguxue luncong*, ed. Liaoningsheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo and Riben Nailiang wenhuacai yanjiusuo (Beijing, 2009), pp. 155–168. Machida points out that the Jin-styled belt sets were fastened on textile, instead of on leather.

⁶⁹ See also Goepfer and Lee-Kalisch, *Korea: Die alten Königreiche*, pp. 180–184.

to the Mediterranean regions in the late sixth century, finally reaching the Germanic tribes in Central Europe.⁷⁰

The Tuoba of both genders wore simple traditional steppe belts with buckles and mounts for fastening utensils in the fifth century (Figure 18.6d).⁷¹ In sixth-century Luoyang new decorative forms for warriors or guardians emerged.⁷² Several bronze or gilded bronze belt sets of these diverse traditions have been found in Northern Zhou sites (Figures 18.6g–i).⁷³ None appear in the Northern Qi tombs, although belt sets were frequently depicted in tomb murals there as part of non-Chinese costumes, i.e., of the Xianbei, Sogdians, and other foreigners.⁷⁴ The Tang inherited all belt set forms and prescribed them for both military and civil official costumes.

Tuoba burial rituals did not observe the intimate bond between the deceased and horse gear, as seen in tombs of the Murong and the Puyō elite warriors,⁷⁵ in which the harness, saddle, and stirrups are found in the coffin as part of personal belongings. The Murong and Puyō are also distinctive in having had gold ornaments with dangling leaves Figure 18.7b, e, for both males and females, from the middle of the third century on. These golden-leaved and tree-like ornaments for textile headgear differ from the Chinese *buyao* (“[dangling pearls that] sway as one walks”),⁷⁶ worn only by women

⁷⁰ Albert E. Dien, “A study of early Chinese armor,” *AA* 43 (1981–1982), pp. 5–56; *idem*, “The stirrup and its effect on Chinese military history,” *AO* 16 (1986), pp. 33–56; Michael Schmauder, “Vielteilige Gürtelgarnituren des 6.–7. Jh.s: Herkunft, Aufkommen und Trägerkreis,” in *Die Awaren am Rand der byzantinischen Welt: Studien zu Diplomatie, Handel und Technologietransfer im Frühmittelalter*, ed. Falko Daim (Innsbruck, 2000), pp. 15–44; Joachim Werner, “Nomadische Gürtel bei Persern, Byzantinern und Langobarden,” in *Atti del Convegno Internazionale sul Tema: La civiltà dei Longobardi in Europa* (Rome, 1974), pp. 109–139.

⁷¹ I.e., without decorative hanging metal straps. See the finds at Dianhanchang (Shanxi daxue lishi wenhua xueyuan et al., *Datong nanjiao*, p. 46) and a votive gift in the repository underneath the pagoda in Dingxian (Liu Laicheng, “Hebei Dingxian chutu Bei Wei shihan,” *Kaogu* 1966.5, pp. 252–259).

⁷² The belt set of the Northern Zhou Emperor Wu is similar to those Luoyang decorative types and has only round buckles which cannot fasten objects. For a description see *China: Dawn*, ed. Watt, p. 260. For a reconstruction of a Tang belt set similar to that of the Emperor Wu see Elke Dedden, “Ein Tangzeitlicher Männergürtel mit vergoldeten Bronzebeschlägen als dem Gräberfeld Gaoyangyuan bei Xi’an (Provinz Shaanxi, China): Restaurierung und Rekonstruktion,” *Restaurierung und Archäologie* 1 (2008), p. 16.

⁷³ Jui-Man Wu, “Mortuary art in Northern Zhou,” pp. 46–47. She also suggests that belt sets were a sign of the Xianbei warrior status in the Northern Zhou (*ibid.*, p. 122).

⁷⁴ There is no comprehensive work on the belt sets of this period concerning typology, technical construction, and usage. Thus it is impossible to derive what symbolic meanings they might represent at this stage.

⁷⁵ However, stirrups remained tokens of esteem for a military career also among the Tuoba members. They have been found in the tombs of officials with the highest military ranks until the end of the Northern Dynasties.

⁷⁶ For headgear ornaments with dangling leaves and the Chinese *buyao* see Dien, *Six Dynasties civilization*, p. 267; Jiang Nan, “Zhongguo dongbei diqu jin buyao shipin de faxian yu yanjiu” (master’s thesis, University of Jilin, 2007); Sarah Laursen, “Leaves that sway: Gold Xianbei cap ornaments from northeast

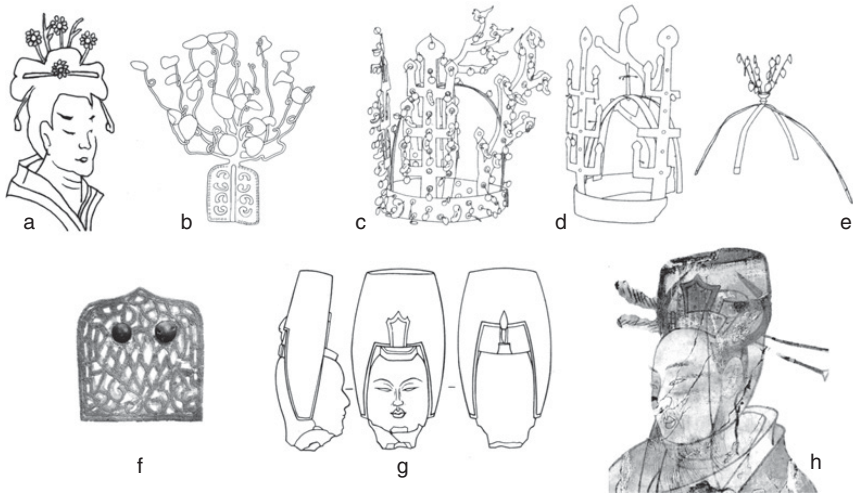


Figure 18.7 *Gold cap ornaments.* (a) The buyao of a Chinese lady (after the depiction of the wife of Yu on the lacquer screen of Sima Jinlong, d. 484); (b) a gold cap ornament with dangling leaves found in Beipiao, Liaoning; (c–d) the “crowns” of Silla and Kaya (middle and right after Sun Ji, *Zhongguo shenghuo*, pp. 89, 91; (e) cap ornament of Feng Sufu (d. 415), Beipiao, Liaoning; (f) a golden dang of Feng Sufu; (g) depiction of a dang on a “basket cap” of a Northern Wei clay figurine of an official, Yongningsi (520s), Luoyang, modified after *Zhongguo shehui kexueyuan*, Bei Wei Luoyang Yongningsi, Figure 43.2; (h) painted guardian figure with a dang plaque and two sable tail hair pins, on the right wall of the corridor to the Northern Qi tomb of Lou Rui (d. 570), after *Shanxisheng kaogu yanjiusuo* and *Taiyuanshi wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo*, Bei Qi Dong’an wang, Plate 58

(Figure 18.7a). Nor were they equivalent to the golden headgear found in the royal tombs of Koguryō, Silla, Kaya, and Paekche (Figure 18.7c–d).⁷⁷ These dangling emblems of the ruling elite largely disappeared after the Tuoba

China” (PhD dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 2011); Wan Xin, “Xianbei muzang, Sanyan shiji yu jin buyaoshi de faxian yu yanjiu,” in *Liaoning kaogu wenji*, ed. Liaoningsheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo (Shenyang, 2003), pp. 268–281. Both Laursen (pp. 100–105) and Wan Xin point out that the Xianbei golden-leaved cap ornaments and the Chinese *buyao* were not of the same origin.

⁷⁷ Sun Ji, *Zhongguo shenghuo*, pp. 88–98. The wing-like components of the Korean crowns had forerunners in Wan’gong (c. second century BCE; Müller, “Gräber der Nördlichen Wei,” pp. 71–78) and Jumbulak Kum on the upper reaches of the Keriya river (middle of the first millennium BCE; see Corinne Debaine-Francfort and Abduressul Idriss, eds., *Keriya, mémoires d’un fleuve: Archéologie et civilisation des oasis du Taklamakan* (Paris, 2001), p. 205, no. 92). The direct impulse for dangling leaves and crowns of the Murong and Koguryō came eventually from Central Asia, e.g. Tillya-tepe (Pierre Cambon, “Tillya-tepe, the link with the East,” in *Hidden Afghanistan*, ed. Pierre Cambon and Jean-François Jarrige (Amsterdam, 2007), pp. 280–281). The leaf-like ornaments of the Murong, like the *dang* (see below) plates of the Jin Chinese, were to be sewn onto a cap, hence only decorations, and possibly much similar to those later ones depicted in Penjikent (Room 24) of the seventh century, while the Korean crowns, even though lined with textiles, formed an independent headdress.

conquered the North.⁷⁸ The golden *dang* “front plaque” that had been placed on the caps of Jin dignitaries continued to ornament the headgear of high officials (Figure 18.7f–h), and survived into the Tang dynasty.⁷⁹

Gold became the ultimate precious metal such that every prestigious treasure was made of gold.⁸⁰ Silver also became widely exploited after the Han.⁸¹ Although certain goldsmithing techniques were mastered by Chinese craftsmen, imported gold and silver vessels from Central and West Asia were still desired for their more sophisticated shapes and workmanship as well as their exotic appeal.⁸² As suggested by the tomb reliefs on the tympanum in the tomb of An Jia, some of these precious vessels were possibly used in rituals.⁸³ It was the potter, not the goldsmith, who imitated these vessels locally.⁸⁴ However, some metalwork not found outside North China includes chin straps of gold, silver, copper alloys, and lead for sepulchral use (Figure 18.8a–b).⁸⁵ Some thin-walled silver bowls and chin straps decorated with

⁷⁸ Thus far only two diadems of bronze and gold from Datong M109 (Shanxi daxue lishi wenhua xueyuan et al., *Datong nanjiao Bei Wei muqun*, p. 242) and from Guyuan, Ningxia (exhibited in the Guyuan Museum; no publication available) were found in fifth-century northern tombs. They have no dangling leaves.

⁷⁹ Morimitsu Toshihiko, “Zhongguo gudai beifang minzu de guan,” trans. Li Xianshu, in *Dongbeiyi kaoguxue luncong*, ed. Liaoningsheng and Riben Nailiang, pp. 135–154; Wu Hong, “Gansu Gaotai Digengpo Wei Jin mu,” in 2007 *Zhongguo zhongyao kaogu faxian*, ed. Guojia wenwuju (Beijing, 2008), p. 91; Karg, “Die Grabkultur der Nördlichen Qi-Zeit,” pp. 281–283; and Laursen, “Leaves that sway,” pp. 77–87, 111–120.

⁸⁰ Wang, *Money on the Silk Road*, p. 14, suggests that large amounts of gold were consumed for illuminating manuscripts and for gilding Buddhist statues.

⁸¹ For the distribution of silver mines, the exploitation of gold and silver ores, and traditions of gold- and silversmiths in the Chinese medieval period, see François Louis, *Die Goldschmiede der Tang- und Song-Zeit: Archäologische, sozial- und wirtschaftsgeschichtliche Materialien zur Goldschmiedekunst Chinas vor 1279* (Bern, 1999), pp. 23–37, 70–95; and Golas, *Mining*, pp. 123–136.

⁸² For the vessels found in the Northern Wei, see Boris I. Marshak, “Central Asian metalwork in China,” in *China: Dawn*, ed. Watt, pp. 47–55 and diverse entries at 148–155, 184–188. The account in the *Luoyang qielan ji* 4.33; William John Francis Jenner, *Memories of Loyang: Yang Hsüan-chih and the lost capital* (493–534) (Oxford, 1981), p. 243) about the curiosity collection of Prince Yuan Chen is one of the rare literary sources that tell of the western provenances of the gold and silver vessels in medieval China.

⁸³ See Shaanxisheng kaogu yanjiusuo, *Xi'an Bei Zhou An Jia mu* (Beijing, 2003), Plates 20, 21. In particular the golden ewer with handle has a form similar to the one from the tomb of Li Xian. For this ewer, see Boris I. Marshak, “Ewer showing Greek mythological scenes,” in *Monks and merchants*, ed. Juliano and Lerner, pp. 99–100; and Prudence O. Harper, “Iranian luxury vessels in China: From the late first millennium B.C.E. to the second half of the first millennium C.E.,” in *Nomads, traders and holy men*, ed. Juliano and Lerner, pp. 102–105.

⁸⁴ Louis, *Goldschmiede*, pp. 89–90, believes the Chinese craftsmen lacked the hammering skills, but that in addition the members of imperial families and high officials prevented the manufacture of local copies to keep the imported goods prestigious. Dien, “Western exotica,” argues that demand for the Chinese products of gold and silver works of the Six Dynasties period did not exist; thus there was no incentive for indigenous production of gold and silver ware. For an imitation, see a stoneware saucer of Dugong Zang (d. 578) in Xianyang. Yun Anzhi, *Bei Zhou zhengui wenwu*, p. 87.

⁸⁵ Shing Müller, “Chin-straps of the early Northern Wei: New perspectives on the trans-Asiatic diffusion of funerary practices,” *JEA* 5, 1–4 (2003) [2006], pp. 27–71. For a recent find of a golden chin-strap see



Figure 18.8 Chin straps and jewel elements. (a) Bronze chin strap from Tomb 107 in Dianbanchang cemetery, Datong; (b) a golden chin strap with inlaid stones and glass paste, lateral view; (c) jewel fragments from the Eastern Wei tomb of Princess Ruru (d. 550), H. 10 cm, W. 5.8 cm; (d) jewel fragments from the Northern Qi tomb of Lou Rui (570), H. 15 cm. (a) After *Shanxi daxue lishi wenhua xueyuan et al.*, *Datong nanjiao*, Figure 105G; (b) Shing Müller, "Chin-straps of the early Northern Wei," Figure 5; (c) adapted after Sofukawa Hiroshi and Degawa Tetsuro, eds., *Chūgoku: bi no jūjirotten*, Figure 97; (d) adapted after *Shanxisheng kaogu yanjiusuo and Taiyuanshi wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo*, Beiqi Dong'an wang, Color Plate 157. Line drawings (b, c, d): Müller

Zhongguo renmin daxue lishi xueyuan kaogu wenboxi, Xilin Guole meng wenwu bao hu guanlizhan, Zhengxiangbaiqi wenwu guanlisuo, "Neimenggu zhengxiangbaiqi Yihenuoer M1 fajue jianbao," *Wenwu* 2017.1, pp. 23, 27. Some of the silver bowls were mended, suggesting they were used during the lifetime; see for example the one from M109 at Datong (Shanxi daxue lishi wenhua xueyuan et al., *Datong nanjiao*, p. 235).

repoussé ornaments, seen otherwise only in Yungang, suggest that certain goldsmiths,⁸⁶ presumably those relocated from western regions, actively worked as private entrepreneurs in Pingcheng.⁸⁷ The mention in the *Luoyang qielan ji* of a ward for gold shops (*jinsi*) in the district of the rich and noble hints at the existence of such craftsmen.⁸⁸ The silver bowl of Li Xizong (d. 540) is believed to be of imperial craftsmanship.⁸⁹ The outstanding jewel fragments from the tomb of Lou Rui and of the Ruru princess (d. 550) are, because of their iconography, very likely also of northern China manufacture (Figure 18.8c–d).⁹⁰

PAPER AND STONE: NEW MEDIA FOR WRITING AND ARTWORK

Paper as the medium for secular and religious writing and painting replaced wooden tablets and bamboo strips in the early years of the Six Dynasties period. Brushes were continuously used by the Han for writing Chinese. Other writing instruments for western texts must have existed among foreign inhabitants. Sogdian traders also took advantage of paper and wrote letters from Jincheng to their headquarters as far as Samarkand.⁹¹

Since the end of the Han, the use of stone steles incised with the texts of governmental regulations, memorials of special events, and standardized

⁸⁶ François Louis, "Gold and silver from ancient China: The Pierre Uldry collection on show at the Museum Rietberg Zürich," *ArA*, September/October 1994, pp. 91–93.

⁸⁷ Although Louis (*Goldschmiede*, p. 89) states that the workshops for precious metals in the North were state-run, it is hardly imaginable that the chin-straps were ordered from the imperial gold and silver workshops. For newly excavated extraordinary body adornments and vessels in foreign-style in the Pingcheng period, see Datongshi kaogu yanjiusuo, "Shanxi Datong Heng'anjie Bei Wei mu (11 DHAM13) fajue jianbao," *Wenwu* 2015.1, pp. 13–21; Zhongguo renmin daxue lishixueyuan kaogu wenboxi et al., "Neimenggu Zhengxiangbaiqi," pp. 20–22; and a brief discussion of the western origin of the craftsmanship in Thomas O. Höllmann, Shing Müller and Sonja Filip, "Steppenkreiger am Gelben Fluss: Nordchina unter fremder Herrschaft (4. bis 6. Jh.)," *Antike Welt* 3 (2016), pp. 73–74.

⁸⁸ *Luoyang qielan ji jiaozhu* 4.208; Jenner, *Memories of Loyang*, p. 240. Jenner also suggests that the *jinsi* were money lenders (*ibid.*, p. 112). Since gold did not serve as capital at that time, it is very likely that goldsmiths were indeed at work there.

⁸⁹ Marshak, "Central Asian metalwork," nos. 152, 253.

⁹⁰ For the one of Princess Ruru (d. 550), see Sofukawa and Degawa, *Chūgoku: bi no jūjiroten*, p. 109; and *China: Dawn*, ed. Watt, p. 240. For the one of (the wife of?) Lou Rui see Shanxisheng kaogu yanjiusuo and Taiyuanshi wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo, *Bei Qi Dong'an wang*, p. 152; and Annette L. Juliano, *Unearthed: Recent archaeological discoveries from northern China* (New Haven, 2012), p. 63. Both were of gold with inlay of pearl, amber, and stone (Princess Ruru), or with inlay of pearl, glass, turquoise, agate, sapphire, and freshwater shells (Lou Rui), and were presumably of imperial manufacture, but the craftsmen were probably non-Chinese because of the unusual techniques in mounting the gems and pearls.

⁹¹ Nicholas Sims-Williams, "Sogdian Ancient Letter II," in *Monks and merchants*, ed. Juliano and Lerner, p. 47. For a general survey of paper between Han and Tang times, see Pan Xingji, *Zhongguo kexue jishu shi: Zaozhi yu yinshua jian* (Beijing, 1998), pp. 102–112.

classical texts became significant.⁹² Inspired by sepulchral steles, Buddhist (and later Daoist) steles with images (*zaoxiang bei*) emerged in the fourth century and remained a major craft in the North until the seventh century.⁹³ From the sixth century on, stone was lavishly used for funerary articles such as lamps, epitaphs, sarcophagi, and figurines of animal and human guardians. Oversized guardian figures of stone in human and realistic animal shapes are found also flanking the spirit ways of imperial tombs and the tombs of high officials. Such stone statues in human form do not occur in the South.⁹⁴ Stone coffins in the traditional Xianbei trapezoidal form,⁹⁵ and stone tomb doors, were reserved for members of the imperial Tuoba family, and, intriguingly, later were also used by Central Asians.⁹⁶ In the fifth century, quarries at the Wuzhou mountains delivered sandstone blocks for construction of palaces and imperial ritual buildings such as the Mingtang ritual hall in Pingcheng and for Buddhist steles. From the sixth century on, dark blue limestone (*qingshi*) became the dominant material. Marble, especially the flawless white stone known today as the “white jade of Han” (*Han baiyu*) was preferably used for Buddhist sculptures. The marble sarcophagus of the Central Asian Yu Hong (d. 592) is an exception, as not even the tomb furniture of emperors was made of marble.⁹⁷ The use of marble for Buddhist sculptures began in the Northern Wei period and was widely

⁹² An example of a memorial of special events is the stele “Eulogia of the Southern Inspection [of the Emperor Wencheng]” (*Huangdi nanxun zhi songbei*), dated 461. It commemorated a trip of the Emperor Wencheng (r. 452–465) to the territory east of the Taihang range, as well as a concurrent archery contest held at the place where the stele was afterwards erected; see Zhang Qingjie, “Bei Wei Wenchengdi ‘Huangdi nanxun bei’ de neihan yu jiazhi,” in *idem*, *Minzu huiji yu wenming budong*, pp. 3–48. Zhang (*ibid.*, p. 26) points out that there were quite a few similar memorial steles commemorating the imperial inspection trips, as well as such feasts with archery contests, during the Northern Wei period. The earliest two sets of stone tablets with classical texts were the one erected in the Xiping period (172–178; *Xiping shijing*), and the set in the Zhengshi period (240–249; *Zhengshi shijing*) in the Cao-Wei period. Both were in Luoyang. Zhao Chao, *Zhongguo gudai shike gailun* (Beijing, 1997), pp. 22–23.

⁹³ Dorothy C. Wong, *Chinese steles: Pre-Buddhist and Buddhist use of a symbolic form* (Honolulu, 2004); Zhao Chao, *Zhongguo gudai shike*, p. 25. Zhao (*ibid.*, p. 13) goes even further to make a daring proposal that the Eastern Han sepulchral steles emerged through stimulus from the West.

⁹⁴ Unlike the contemporary South, over-dimensional stone guardians in human and realistic animal figures were found lining the spirit roads of imperial tombs and tombs of high officials from the Northern Wei.

⁹⁵ The traditional Xianbei coffins were higher and broader in the front than in the back.

⁹⁶ The stone coffins have been found thus far only in the tombs of the royal Yuan family of the Tuoba Dynasty; see Shing Müller, “Sogdier in China um 600 n. Chr.,” *Nachrichten der Gesellschaft für Natur- und Völkerkunde Ostasiens* (Hamburg) 183–184 (2008), p. 137; and later in a tomb of a Brahmin from Jibin (Kashmir) in Xi’an; for the stone doors see Ni Run’an, “Bei Zhou muzang de dixia kongjian yu sheshi,” *Gugong bowuyuan yuankan* 2008.1, pp. 63–64.

⁹⁷ Shanxisheng kaogu yanjiusuo, Taiyuanshi wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo, and Taiyuanshi Jinyuanqu wenwu liuyouju, eds., *Taiyuan Sui Yu Hong mu* (Beijing, 2005). For a synopsis of the research articles of the Central Asian sarcophagi and funerary beds found in China, see Judith A. Lerner, *Aspects of assimilation: The funerary practices and furnishings of Central Asians in China* (Philadelphia, 2005), 168.

practiced during the Northern Qi period. Finds of large numbers of “buried” marble Buddhist figures, dated predominately between the Northern Wei and Qi, have been found in caches in Dingzhou, Linzhang, and the Xiude Temple in Quyang, all in Hebei.⁹⁸

NEW WEAVES, GOLD WEAVES, AND THE “XIANBEI” GARB

The Han dynasty *jin* silk was technically the most complicated weave in the world in its time.⁹⁹ The extreme prestige epitomized by the *jin* silk greatly impressed the non-Han peoples, but it could only be obtained by steppe leaders through bestowals from the Chinese court and not through commerce. Excavations reveal that bolts of such weaves were tailored in the local-styled costumes for the deceased kings and elites in Niya.¹⁰⁰ After the non-Han entered North China, they enabled production to continue; in the case of the Jie of the Later Zhao, the work was done in the imperial workshops of the capital at Ye.¹⁰¹ Meanwhile, new styles, patterns, and technologies are seen in the Tarim oases.¹⁰² A late fourth-century Koguryō tomb mural at Huanren, Liaoning, obviously imitating wall hangings, shows the new styles of the abstract and schematically depicted patterns of clouds and dragons similar to those found in Turfan.¹⁰³ It seems the new trends prevailed “internationally.”

⁹⁸ Ann Paludan, *Chinese sculptures: A great tradition* (Chicago, 2006), p. 229; Lauren Hilgers, “The 3,000 Buddhas: The surprises of China’s largest sculpture cache,” *Archaeology*, September–October 2012, pp. 35–38.

⁹⁹ I.e. the “warp-faced compound weaves.” For a comprehensive definition see Donald King, “Some notes on warp-faced compound weaves,” *Bulletin de centre international d’étude des textiles anciens* 28 (1968), pp. 9–19.

¹⁰⁰ Song Xin, “Han Tang sichou de waixiao: cong Zhongguo dao Ouzhou,” in *Sichou zhi lu shang de kaogu, zongjiao yu lisbi*, ed. Ningxia wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo (Beijing, 2011), pp. 22–23. Nowhere else in the Tarim Basin was the Chinese *jin* silk so generously used as here in Niya.

¹⁰¹ See the record in the *Yezhong ji*, no. 55; Edward H. Schafer, “The *Yeh Chung Chi*,” *TP* 76 (1990), pp. 192–193; and Shing Müller, *Yezhongji: Eine Quelle zur materiellen Kultur in der Stadt Ye im 4. Jahrhundert* (Stuttgart, 1993), p. 126. This is the only written source concerning high-end silk production in the Sixteen States period. The *jie* were of Central Asian origin, according to Edwin G. Pulleyblank, “The nomads in China and Central Asia in the post-Han period,” in *History of the Turkic peoples in the pre-Islamic period*, ed. Hans Robert Roemer (Berlin, 2000), p. 78.

¹⁰² See Feng Zhao, “The evolution of textiles along the Silk Road,” in *China: Dawn*, ed. Watt, pp. 69–72; and Krishna Riboud, “Further indication of changing techniques in figured silks of the post-Han period (A.D. 4th to 6th century),” *Bulletin de Centre international d’étude des textiles anciens* 41–42 (1975), pp. 13–40.

¹⁰³ For the Liaoning find, see Wu Jiachang, Liang Zhilong, and Wang Junhui, “Huanren Micanggou Gaogouli bihuamu,” in *Liaoning kaogu wenji*, ed. Liaoning sheng, pp. 58–74. For the corresponding Turfan find, see Feng Zhao, “Evolution of textiles,” p. 69, Figure 62.

From the fifth century on the northerners found large patterned Central Asiatic designs with palmettes and pearl roundels to their liking (Figure 18.9b, f, g).¹⁰⁴ The new polychrome weft-faced compound *jin* silk, as a technical takeover from western woolen weaves, made possible large pattern repeats (twelve centimeters or larger in the sixth century).¹⁰⁵ Unlike in previous ages, the Northern Wei *jin* silk was traded in the Tarim oases and probably also in India.¹⁰⁶ Meanwhile, as a response to the great demand in North China for western patterned silks, Gaochang (modern Turfan) launched its own production of *jin* silk varieties with commercial names like Qiuci (i.e. Kucha), Shule (Kashgar), or Bosi (Persia). Little information is available about the organization of workshops, their specialties, markets, or prices for different sorts of fabric in China's interior during this period.¹⁰⁷ Production centers of the luxurious silk were presumably the capitals, where the non-Han rulers kept all their captive craftsmen. The earliest gold embroidery on silk was found in a third- to fourth-century tomb in Kucha built after the Wei and Jin style but with un-Chinese burial customs. Silk with woven golden threads was possibly used by the wife of the Northern Zhou Emperor Wu, the earliest archaeological indication thus far.¹⁰⁸

In the fifth century a new costume became the dominant feature for images of all social strata and both genders. This outfit comprised a felt hood with a long nape guard and a caftan (Figure 18.9a–b).¹⁰⁹ The Xianbei in the Northeast and Northwest in the third and fourth centuries had already worn

¹⁰⁴ Pearl roundel motifs are seen in the Yungang caves and in the Hudong tomb in Datong (Shanxisheng Datongshi kaogu yanjiusuo, "Datong Hudong," p. 34) as architectural and coffin decoration. In the second half of the sixth century, they appeared as textile patterns. For pearl roundels in Central and West Asia, see Matteo Compareti, "Sasanian textiles," in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, retrieved September 12, 2012, for those in China see Zhao Feng, *Zhongguo sichou tongshi* (Suzhou, 2005), pp. 183–184.

¹⁰⁵ The polychrome "warp-faced" compound weaves of Han times permitted a pattern repeat no more than six to seven centimeters high. For larger pattern repeats, see, for example, Feng Zhao "Evolution of textiles," pp. 272–273, cat. no. 174.

¹⁰⁶ According to written sources, the Northern Wei produced a large quantity of high-quality *jin* silk in the sixth century; see Zhao Feng, *Zhongguo sichou*, pp. 157, 160.

¹⁰⁷ Sichuan was famous for the productions of silk with pearl roundels. But Ye, probably because of production since the Later Zhao period, was also famous for *jin* silk.

¹⁰⁸ Cf. Yang Junchang, Yu Zhiyong, and Dang Xiaojuan, "Xinjiang Kuche Wei Jin Shiliuguo mu (M15) chutu jinxian de kexue fenxi," *Wenwu* 2016.9, pp. 88–94. Jui-Man Wu, "Mortuary art in Northern Zhou," p. 67; and Hou Yangmin and Mu Weisheng, "Bei Zhou Wudi Xiaoling san ti," *Wenbo* 2000.6, p. 40. Lady Ashina died during the Sui. However, the excavator Zhang Jianlin was uncertain whether the golden threads were woven into the fabrics or braided into ribbons since the materials were badly preserved; personal communication.

¹⁰⁹ Albert E. Dien, "A new look at the Xianbei and their impact on Chinese culture," in *Ancient mortuary traditions of China*, ed. George Kuwayama (Los Angeles, 1991), p. 42. It is significant that the cut of these costumes was the same for all members of the Tuoba. The social hierarchy was indicated probably through the choice of fabrics and patterns. Almost all male figures from the latter half of the fifth century were depicted in this style or in Central Asian costumes. The famous lacquer screen from the tomb of Sima Jinlong, with its elegant Chinese figures, is thus far the only exception and is, according to Song Xin, probably an heirloom of the Sima family from the South. Song Xin, "Bei Wei Sima Jinlong muzang de chongxin pinggu," *Zhongguo wenhua yanjiusuo xuebao*, new series 11 (2002), pp. 273–298.



Figure 18.9 Textile patterns and costumes of the North. (a) “Xianbei costumes” on the clay figurines of a male and a female attendant from the tomb of Sima Jinlong in Datong, dated 484; (b) “Xianbei costumes” on the embroidered depictions of Prince Tuoba Jia and his wife, found in Dunhuang, dated 487—the fabrics were decorated with half-palmette motifs; (c) dress of a female figure, from Northern Wei Yongningsi, Luoyang, dated 520s; (d) the conjectured Central Asian forerunners of ladies’ dresses in the Luoyang period, from Luolan LE, Tomb 1, dated third to fourth centuries; (e) depiction of Xu Xianxiu (d. 571) in a Xianbei caftan and a cloak of ermine fur, Taiyuan, Shanxi; (f) depiction of the wife of Xu Xianxiu with a dress in similar style to that of the Luoyang figurine; (g) depiction of a female attendant next to the image of Xu Xianxiu, wearing a long caftan lined with broad borders with pearl roundel patterns. (b) After Dunhuang wenwu yanjiusuo, “Xin faxian de Bei Wei cixiu,” *Wenwu* 1972.2, p. 57; (c) after *Zhongguo shehui kexueyuan*, *Bei Wei Luoyang Yongningsi*, Figure 53.3; (d) after Xu Guangji, *Zhongguo chutu bihua quanji*, Volume 9 (Beijing, 2012), Plate 198; (e–g) after *Taiyuanshi*, *Bei Qi Xu Xianxiu mu* pp. 116, 117; illustration (a, d–g), Müller

similar costumes.¹¹⁰ While the Buddha images became “sinicized” in Yungang,¹¹¹ the donor images beneath them were constantly depicted in Xianbei-style clothing. This can only be interpreted as having inculcated group identity among the Tuoba leaders and subjects; on a lesser scale, especially among Central Asians, other styles coexisted.¹¹² The Northern Wei Emperor Xiaowen and his successors attempted to break away from the Xianbei-izing trend when they moved the capital from Pingcheng to Luoyang, but it would seem that that policy was largely restricted to Luoyang.¹¹³ Under the successors to the Northern Wei, the Xianbei style re-emerged with minor changes.¹¹⁴ Meanwhile, clothing became differentiated among gender, social, and ethnic groups.¹¹⁵ Ladies in the sixth century were clad in blouses with long, pleated sleeves and skirts based on earlier designs from the Tarim Basin (Figure 18.9c–d). The Northern Qi general of Chinese descent Xu Xianxiu (d. 571) was depicted along with his wife surrounded by his retinue; the women are shown clad in dresses with Sogdian-style roundel patterns, while the men wear Xianbei-style outfits. Xu himself wears a Persian-style cloak of ermine fur, and underneath a Xianbei outfit (Figure 18.9e).¹¹⁶

¹¹⁰ Song Xin, “Bei Wei Pingcheng qi de Xianbei fu,” in 4–6 *shiji de bei Zhongguo*, ed. Zhang Qingjie, Li Shuji, and Li Gang, pp. 84–107.

¹¹¹ The monk’s robe of the Buddha became softer-looking. Many scholars, especially those in China, have suggested that this is a sign of Sinicization. However, the pieces composing the robe remained the prescribed “three garments” according to the *vinaya*. The difference in the appearance was probably due to the use of softer materials such as silk; see A. B. Griswold, “Prolegomena to the study of the Buddha’s dress in Chinese sculpture: With particular reference to the Rietberg Museum’s collection,” *AA* 26.2 (1963), pp. 85–131.

¹¹² Dien, “A new look at the Xianbei,” pp. 44–47; Annette L. Juliano and Albert E. Dien, “Fragments of Buddhist banner with Xianbei donors,” in *Monks and merchants*, ed. Juliano and Lerner, pp. 144–147; Song Xin, “Pingcheng qi de Xianbei fu,” pp. 87–95, 106. For a recent find of mural depictions of Central Asians, see Datongshi kaogu yanjiusuo, “Shanxi Datong Yunboli lu Bei Wei bihamu,” *Wenwu* 2011.12, p. 20, Figure 14. For contemporaneous Sogdian costumes, see Sergey A. Yatsenko, “The late Sogdian costume (the 5th–8th cc. AD),” in *Ērān ud Anērān, Webfestschrift Marzbak*, 2003.

¹¹³ Müller, “Gräber der Nördlichen Wei,” p. 179, n. 22. The newly redated Guyuan tomb with lacquer painted coffin (buried 489 CE) supports the Xianbei-izing trend in Pingcheng; for the new dating, see Luo Feng, “Guyuan Bei Wei qiguanhua niandai de zai queding” (forthcoming). The policy was not even successful in Luoyang; Dien, *Six Dynasties civilization*, 428.

¹¹⁴ For example, the hood became smaller and the sleeves longer; see Dien, “A new look at the Xianbei,” p. 55, for more details.

¹¹⁵ See the comprehensive treatment in Dien, *Six Dynasties civilization*, pp. 318–325.

¹¹⁶ Taiyuanshi wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo, ed., *Bei Qi Xu Xianxiu mu*, p. 30. The cloak with narrow false hanging sleeves (“candys”) is considered of Median origin. Traces of a hanging sleeve can be observed on the left-hand side of Xu Xianxiu’s cloak. This was a cloak for Persian royalty and riders. The Tuoba adopted this garment form in the fifth century or earlier. In the sixth century, it became fashionable for high members of society and their spouses in north China to wear the cloak (see the screen of An Jia), even of fur (see Xu Xianxiu’s portrait). Both Zheng Yan (“Bei Qi Xu Xianxiu mu muzhuo huaxiang youguan wenti,” *Wenwu* 2003.10, p. 60) and Kazuko Yokohari (“The Hōryū-ji lion-hunting silk and related silks,” in *Central Asian textiles and their contexts in the early Middle Ages*, ed. Regula Schorta

TENTS, ROOFED DWELLINGS, AND INTERIORS

Tents were part of the living culture in the North and were still used for ceremonies in Tang times.¹¹⁷ Two types of such shelter can be discerned through mural paintings and clay models. Based on features added in paint, the round ones were possibly the earliest depictions of trellis tents.¹¹⁸

Wood was the primary building material in China, but few examples have survived the passage of time. Buddhist art and tomb paintings, as well as the few house-shaped sarcophagi, give us an idea of the appearances of these wooden buildings. A porch is frequently observed, seemingly a tradition from the Guanlong area.¹¹⁹ Such a porch ran along a row of monks' cells in a Northern Wei monastery, one of the earliest thus far archaeologically surveyed, on top of the Wuzhou mountains above the Yungang caves.¹²⁰ Palace foundations excavated in Datong belong mainly to subsidiary buildings such as the Mingtang ritual hall and a granary.¹²¹ However, at Luoyang archaeologists found in the Northern Wei stratum simple semi-subterranean

(Riggsberg, 2006), p. 170) suggest that mantles of *bai diao* presented in 520 by the Hepthalites to the court of Southern Liang as mentioned in *LS* 54.812 and *NS* 79.1984 were meant to be of ermine.

¹¹⁷ Wang Yanqing, "Bei Wei Sima Jinlong mu chutu de youtao zhanzhang moxing," *Zhongguo guojia bowuguan guankan* 2012.4, pp. 56–62.

¹¹⁸ For the definition of trellis tents, see Peter Alford Andrews, *Nomad tent types in the Middle East*, Part 1, *Framed tents*, Volume 1 (Wiesbaden, 1997), p. 5; the depicted tents seem unlikely to be a dwelling form of the Tuoba. See Shing Müller, "Zelte der Tuoba-Xianbei im 5. Jh.: Eine vorläufige Untersuchung," in *Über den Alltag hinaus: Festschrift für Thomas O. Höllmann zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. Shing Müller and Armin Selbitschka (Wiesbaden, 2017), pp. 177–200.

¹¹⁹ See the depiction of a facade carved out of loess on the wall of the entry to the tomb chamber of Yang Luan, the Protector-General (*dubu*) of Qin Zhou, c. the first half of the fourth century, in Qujiang, Xi'an, excavated in 2011. The same mode of construction appears in all of the following: Yungang cave pairs 7–8 and 9–10 (Annette L. Juliano, "New discoveries at the Yungang Caves," in *Chinese traditional architecture*, ed. Nancy Shatzman Steinhardt (New York, 1984), pp. 80–90); the Maijishan Northern Dynasties caves (Fu Xinian, "Maijishan shiku zhong suo fanying chu de Beichao jianzhu," *Wenwu ziliao congkan* 4 (1981), pp. 156–183); the fifth-century house-shaped sarcophagi of Yuchi Dingzhou found at Yanggao near Datong (Datongshi kaogu yanjiusuo, "Bei Wei Yuchi Dingzhou mu fajue jianbao," pp. 4–13, 51); and Song Shaozu (Liu Junxi, ed., *Datong Yanbei shiyuan Bei Wei muqun* (Beijing, 2008), 78). Juliano ("New discoveries at Yungang," p. 82) points out that similar pillared porches were seen in *chaitya* halls in India such as at Karli. Buddhism could have been the ultimate source for such constructions.

¹²⁰ Zhang Qingjie, Li Baijun, and Jiang Weiwei, "Shanxi Yungang shiku kuding Bei Wei simiao yizhi," in 2010 *Zhongguo zhongyao kaogu faxian*, ed. Guojia wenwuju, pp. 127–130. An even earlier Buddhist site was excavated in Chaoyang, Liaoning, dated back to the San Yan period (fourth century). However, the type of construction of the surrounding buildings around the central pagoda is by no means clear. See Liaoningsheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo, ed., *Chaoyang Beitai: Kaogu fajue yu weixiu gongcheng baogao* (Beijing, 2007), pp. 21–23, 26–28.

¹²¹ The cellars of the granary (Zhang Qingjie, "Datong Caochangcheng Bei Wei Taiguan liangchu yizhi chutan," *Wenwu* 2010.4, pp. 53–58, 95) were also reported in *NQS* 57.984.

dwellings for commoners with nearby cellars for food or utensils. These dwellings were also served by large numbers of water wells.¹²²

Although the Northern Wei buildings were Chinese in style, there were differences in construction and technique. While roof tiles were usually black in color, from the firing process, tiles on certain Tuoba palace buildings and Buddhist temples of the highest rank for the first time bore a green glaze, often rather crudely applied.¹²³ This innovation fell into disuse after the fifth century and was not picked up again until the Liao period. Huge amounts of tile have been found in several Northern Wei sites in Datong.¹²⁴ Some extremely heavy tiles suggest that roofs were of an immense weight and thus of large dimensions.¹²⁵ One of the measures used to spread the burden of the roof more evenly onto the beams and columns would have been the inverted V-struts, used for the first time in fifth-century buildings in Datong. Concerning the buildings per se, free-standing timber-frame buildings were a major accomplishment of this period.¹²⁶ The same is true for a two-rafter system, which came to be adopted later for typical Tang buildings.¹²⁷

Even though formalized and possibly bearing certain religious connotations, the depictions on screens of funerary couches of the sixth century of buildings, their interiors, and the private gardens of rich households must

¹²² Zhongguo shehui kexueyuan kaogu yanjiusuo Luoyang Han Wei dui, "Bei Wei Luoyang," p. 1090.

¹²³ Zhang Qingjie, Li Baijun, and Jiang Weiwei, "Shanxi Yungang shiku kuding Bei Wei simiao yizhi," p. 129. Roof tiles of the Northern Wei were usually polished and then fired in a reducing atmosphere, so undergoing a process of carbonizing, thus becoming black in color and glossy. It can be deduced that most of the important buildings at Pingcheng had black roofs. The green-glazed tiles are evidenced for the pagoda atop the Yungang caves, for certain buildings on the palace site in Datong, and for the cloister complex on Fangshan Mountain. Kerr and Wood, *Ceramic technology*, p. 499, on the basis of older finds from Fangshan, assert that a lead glaze was applied.

¹²⁴ Some 180,000 slightly rounded, so-called flat tiles (*banwa*) and 30,000 cylindrical tiles (*tongwa*) were found just at one Northern Wei monastery site on the top of the Yungang caves. For other sites such as the Yonggu mausoleum on Fangshan and the ruins of a palace at Caochangcheng, see Liu Junxi, "Bei Wei Pingcheng yizhi taowa de chubu yanjiu," *Shanxi Datong daxue xuebao (shehui kexue ban)* 23.6 (2009), pp. 37–41.

¹²⁵ The sizes and weights of the flat tiles range from c. $30 \times 50 \text{ cm}^2$ to $43 \times 65 \text{ cm}^2$ and 3.7 to 11.6 kg. I am indebted to Professor Zhang Qingjie for providing these data. No estimation of the roof burden of the Northern Wei wooden constructions has been made. Considering that the excavated Northern Wei roof tiles are larger and heavier than those of the Liao period (up to a ton per square meter, as suggested by Bai Zhiyu, director of the office for architectural preservation at Datong), it is very likely that the roof load of representative Northern Wei buildings was at least similar. The roof load of the Taihedian of the Qing Dynasty is below a ton per square meter (2,000 tons were estimated for the roof weight on an area of roughly 2,300 square meters).

¹²⁶ Dien, *Six Dynasties civilization*, p. 63. See also his section "Architecture" for an extensive treatment.

¹²⁷ Nancy Shatzman Steinhardt, "Crossroads: Architecture in Sogdian funerary art," *OA* 49 (2003), pp. 55–56.

have been made “with careful observation of actual sources.”¹²⁸ Few pieces of furniture are observed in the interior scenes. The most conspicuous pieces are large couches (*chuang*) and canopies (*zhang*).¹²⁹ Already in existence in the Western Han, canopies and couches were integral parts of interior furnishings from the Wei–Jin period. Buddhists as well as several non-Han peoples who had close contacts with China adopted this secular furniture.¹³⁰ After their defeat in 436, the Murong introduced the Tuoba to the symbolic meanings of canopies and couches in mortuary art.¹³¹ Some members of the Tuoba confederation even replaced coffins with stone couches and canopies.¹³² In the Northern Qi and Northern Zhou the single couches were enlarged and reinforced to hold many persons. These “high-end” couches were also used in Sogdian households in North China for their garden parties. On the couch, one either kneeled in the Chinese way or sat cross-legged, sometimes with one leg pendant, as the Hephtalites or Persians did. The Xianbei preferred the latter, as both literary and pictorial sources indicate.¹³³ Tubular cushion bolsters on which to lean backward were known from the fifth century and were associated initially with Central Asians; later some Chinese presumably also adopted bolsters.¹³⁴ However, traditional armrests (*pingji*) remained widely used.

¹²⁸ Steinhardt, “Crossroads,” p. 54. If this is true, there must have been some “foreign” buildings in the capitals at that time. The carvings on the Anyang stone couch with the imagery of Central Asians show unambiguously non-Chinese secular architecture with domed roofs, central crests, and corner acroteria. Although the same kinds of buildings cannot be identified in the contemporaneous Ajanta, Scaglia believes that the depictions of the buildings on the Anyang stone were closely related to Buddhist constructions. Gustina Scaglia, “Central Asians on a Northern Ch’i gate shrine,” *Artibus Asiae* 21.1 (1958), pp. 9–28. Even though these “Buddhist” or “Sogdian” constructions on the Anyang couch could have been projecting scenes of a paradise, they were very likely depicted according to certain existing housing estates of the Sogdians in the city of Ye.

¹²⁹ See Dien, *Six Dynasties civilization*, pp. 300–307; for a comprehensive review, see Sarah Handler, *Austere luminosity of Chinese classical furniture* (Berkeley, 2001), pp. 139–142, where she gives references to the finds of couches and canopies from the Warring States period to the Han as well as to those from the Han to the Six Dynasties period.

¹³⁰ Fu Xinian, “Maijishan shiku,” pp. 171–172.

¹³¹ Ni Run’an, “Beijing Shijingshan Bajiaocun,” pp. 55–56.

¹³² See the Northern Wei tomb at Tiancun, Datong (Datongshi kaogu yanjiusuo, “Shanxi Datong nanjiaoqu Tiancun Bei Wei mu fajue jianbao,” *Wenwu* 2010.5, pp. 4–18), and the Eastern Wei tomb at Gu’an, Anyang (Henansheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo, “Henan Anyang Gu’an mudi kaogu fajue shouhuo,” *Huaxia kaogu* 2009.3, p. 22). The origin of couches or platforms (without coffins) for laying out the deceased is an unsolved problem. Burial habits in Hexi or farther west could also have been a source. Some finds in Kucha attest the use of couch or platforms that pre-dates the Northern Wei Pingcheng; Xinjiang wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo, “Xinjiang Kuche Youyilu Wei Jin Shiliuguoshi shiqi muzang 2007 nian fajue jianbao,” *Wenwu* 2013.12, p. 50, Figure 40.

¹³³ See the description in NQS 57.986 and Sun Ji, *Zhongguo shenghuo*, pp. 127–129.

¹³⁴ Emma C. Bunker, “Early Chinese representations of Vimalakīrti,” *AA* 30.1 (1968), p. 34 and n. 45, sees the origin of these bolsters in the Parthian Near East, where they were reserved for high-ranking

Rugs on which to sit were used on couches or in tents. The paintings on the floors of the *dromoi* leading to the tomb of Princess Ruru and an imperial tomb at Wanzhang, both in Hebei, as well as the carved rock of the floor of Buddhist halls, were probably meant to simulate carpets.¹³⁵ Written sources also mention that sumptuous curtains and wall hangings were used as decoration,¹³⁶ and probably also for warmth in the winter.

PARTICULARITIES IN SEPULCHRAL CUSTOMS

Cao Cao's ban on excessive expenditure for funerals was not seriously followed in his own time.¹³⁷ However, the Western Jin did see the beginning of the more modest single-chamber tombs, and avoiding above-surface funerary monuments led to the shift of steles into tombs, thus creating the tradition of epitaphs.¹³⁸ The ruling elite of the Tuoba combined the sepulchral traditions of the Guanlong and the northeast Liaoxi area with that of the Jin Chinese into a "standardized" format for most burials of imperial kinsmen and elite members of society in the later fifth century. These "standard tombs" included a single square chamber, sometimes with murals, a long *dromos*, the inclusion of a large number of clay figurines, and, later on, square sets of

personages only. Vimalakīrti and the later Sogdians such as An Jia, as well as the chief persons on the Anyang screen, all leaned backwards on a bolster, which was quite "un-Chinese." The Chinese appellation *yinnang* ("sack for [forwards] leaning"), first mentioned by Yan Zhitui (*Yanshi jiaxun*, shang 8.148), implied that Chinese leaned forward against (*ping*) these bolsters in the same way as they used the armrests. The main persons on the screen of the Sogdian Kang Ye were depicted leaning in a Chinese manner against the bolster. Xi'an shi wenwu baohu kaogusuo, "Xi'an Bei Zhou Kang Ye mu fajue jianbao," *Wenwu* 2008.6, pp. 26, Figure 24.1, 27, Figure 25.1. For a general overview, see Cui Shiping, "Yinnang kao," *Kaogu* 2011.12, pp. 83–89.

¹³⁵ For rugs as underlayers, see their depictions on the couches of An Jia and Xu Xianxiu as well as in the tomb mural found at Shuozhou. The "lotus carpets" are seen on the floors of the Yungang cave pair 9–10, and the Binyang, the Lianhua, and Huangfu caves at Longmen; Beijing daxue kaoguxi, ed., *Longmen shiku*, Volume 1 (Beijing, 1991), p. 243; see also Juliano, "New discoveries at Yungang," pp. 87, 89, n. 47, 48.

¹³⁶ See the descriptions in *Yezhong ji*, nos. 6 and 29 (Schafer, "Yeb Chung Chi," pp. 173, 186–187).

¹³⁷ Large Cao-Wei tombs such as that of Cao Xiu (d. 228; Luoyangshi di er wenwu gongzuodui, "Luoyang Mengjin Dahanzhong Cao-Wei guizu mu," *Wenwu* 2011.9, pp. 32–47) and allegedly of Cao Cao (Henansheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo and Anyangshi wenhuaju, "Henan Anyangshi xigaoxue Cao Cao Gaoling," *Kaogu* 2010.8, pp. 35–45) have been discovered in recent times.

¹³⁸ Liu Fengjun, "Nanbeichao shike muzhi xingzhi tanyuan," *Zhongyuan wenwu* 1988.2, pp. 74–82. The post-Han development of the epitaphs is far more complicated than can be treated here. Japanese scholars have made profound contributions in this field. See, for example, Sekio Shirō, "Goko jidai no boshi to sono shūhen," *Kan Nihon: kai kenkyū nenpō* 16 (2009), pp. 1–11, for the Sixteen States period; and Kubozoe Yoshihumi, "Boshi no kigen to sono teikei-ka," *Rissbō shigaku* 105 (2009), pp. 1–22. Qiu Jianzhi, "Jin bainian lai de muzhi qiyuan yu fazhan yanjiu zhi huigu," *Zaoqi zhongguo shi yanjiu* 3.2 (2011), pp. 157–188, gives a comprehensive review of the past hundred years' scholarship on the origin and the development of the epitaphs.

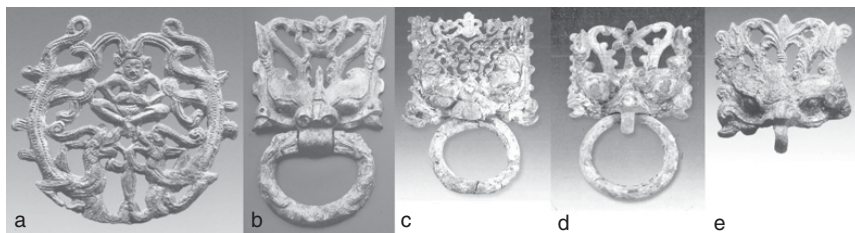


Figure 18.10 *Animal masks as coffin ornaments with the center motif of “master of animals” and its variations in palmette leaves; from cemeteries of the fifth century. (a, e) From Tomb 1 in Hudong (Shanxisheng Datongshi kaogu yanjiusuo, “Datong Hudong,” front cover and p. 29 Figure 5); (b) from a Northern Wei building in the southern suburb of Datong, photo Müller; (c, d) from Tombs 32 and 35 in Qilicun (Datongshi kaogu yanjiusuo, “Datong Qilicun,” Wenwu 2006.10, p. 40)*

epitaphs.¹³⁹ After the North split into eastern and western states, Northern Zhou high officials and military leaders adopted the lengthened *dromoi* together with air shafts and niches on the side walls of the *dromoi* to address their rank and prestige,¹⁴⁰ while in the Northern Qi large-scale murals and unusually thick tomb walls expressed that same high status.¹⁴¹

Certain high tribal members of the Xianbei of fifth-century Datong decorated their tombs or coffins lavishly with large-scale depictions of a prosperous and joyful afterlife, with hunting and outdoor feasting.¹⁴² Others treated the tomb as a Buddhist paradise and decorated this eternal abode with lotus

¹³⁹ Müller, “Gräber der Nördlichen Wei,” p. 146. The Guanlong immigrants probably contributed to the tradition of military presence in the form of figurines, the Liaoxi and Hexi immigrants the painted depictions of afterlife, and the Jin Chinese the single chamber tombs.

¹⁴⁰ Yun Anzhi, *Bei Zhou zhengui wenwu*, pp. 173–175. The wall niches in the *dromoi* seem to be newly introduced in Northern Zhou times and became a standard feature for the great tombs of the Sui and Tang periods. Although the lengths of the *dromoi* and the numbers of air shafts tended to increase with the rank of the deceased, no strict correlation can be observed. See Albert E. Dien, “Observations concerning the tomb of Master Shi,” *BAI* 17 (2003) [2007], pp. 108–109, for Northern Zhou times; and Luo Feng, *Guyuan nanjiao Sui Tang mudi* (Beijing, 1996), pp. 142–144, for Sui and Tang times.

¹⁴¹ The very thick tomb walls were already present in the mausoleum of Northern Wei Emperor Xuanwu (two meters thick); see Müller, “Die Gräber der Nördlichen Wei,” p. 142, nn. 185, 195. For the instance in Northern Qi see the tomb in Wanzhang (presumably the tomb of Gao Yang; 2.25 meters thick), see Zhongguo shehui kexueyuan kaogu yanjiusuo and Hebeisheng wenwu yanjiusuo, eds., *Cixian Wanzhang Beichao bihuamu* (Beijing 2003), p. 11.

¹⁴² See the murals in tombs on Yunboli Road, at Shaling (M7), and at Maxinzhuang (M9), Datong, in Datongshi kaogu yanjiusuo, “Shanxi Datong Yunboli lu Bei Wei bihuamu,” *Wenwu* 2011.12, pp. 13–25; Datongshi kaogu yanjiusuo, “Shanxi Datong Shaling,” pp. 4–24; and Shanxisheng kaogu yanjiusuo and Datongshi kaogu yanjiusuo, “Shanxi Datong nanjiao Tongjiawan Bei Wei mu (M7, M9) fajue jianbao,” *Wenwu* 25.2, pp. 4–22.

flowers, *apsaras*, *gandharvas*, and even worshipping figures.¹⁴³ The entrances were guarded by *yaksha*-like deities;¹⁴⁴ the coffins were fitted with gilded bronze ornaments depicting a reborn soul in a lotus,¹⁴⁵ often coupled with some ring handles of a Xianbei type of animal mask that integrated steppe and Buddhist traditions (Figure 18.10).¹⁴⁶ Similar Buddhist elements were strongly represented on some of the more than ten stone couches found in Datong of the same period. Stone couches have also been found in Northern Wei Luoyang, mostly equipped with a stone screen decorated with stories of filial sons.¹⁴⁷

In addition to couches, at least nine stone house-shaped sarcophagi have been found in fifth-century Datong. These are unique to Northern Wei burials,¹⁴⁸ and form a very “northern” phenomenon. At this stage, while the early couches expressed more or less the wish for a paradise, too little archaeological information is available to explain the ultimate meaning of the sarcophagi and their intrinsic relationships with the deceased, who were of diverse origins.¹⁴⁹ In any case, northern society at the time was liberal enough

¹⁴³ See the tomb of the Prince of Danyang; Huairenxian wenwu guanlisuo, “Shanxi Huairen Bei Wei Danyangwang mu ji huawenzhuan,” *Wenwu* 2010.5, p. 23. The same wish can also be seen in the tomb in Wanzhang; the coffin was placed on a Sumeru-like platform. For the Buddhist elements in Northern Qi tombs see Karg, “Die Grabkultur der Nördlichen Qi-Zeit,” pp. 413–416.

¹⁴⁴ See the tomb on Wenying Road, Datong (Datongshi kaogu yanjiusuo, “Shanxi Datong Yunboli lu,” pp. 21–22); the tomb of the Prince of Danyang (Zhang Qingjie, “New archaeological and art discoveries from the Han to the Tang periods in Shanxi Province,” *Orientalism*, May 2002, p. 54); and a newly discovered tomb in Tongwan, Shaanxi (not yet published).

¹⁴⁵ See the tomb in Hudong; Shanxisheng Datongshi kaogu yanjiusuo, “Datong Hudong,” p. 29, Figure 4. For a recent survey of the motif of the “reborn soul in a lotus” during the Northern Wei period, see Okamura Hidenori and Mukai Yusuke, “Hokugi Hōzan Eikoryō no kenkyū: Tōa kōko gakkai 1939nen shūshūhin wo chūshin to shite,” *Tōhō gakubō* 80 (2007), pp. 106–119.

¹⁴⁶ This constitutes the most peculiar feature of the Northern Wei burials. The basic element, the lord of animals from West Asia, was combined with Buddhist features (Buddhist figures or palmette leaves). Similar elements occurred in Tillya-tepe, but not equipped with Buddhist elements; Müller, “Gräber der Nördlichen Wei,” pp. 151–154; *idem*, “Nomads of the fifth century,” pp. 41–44; and Laursen, “Leaves that sway,” p. 168.

¹⁴⁷ For a brief survey of the lesser known and badly preserved stone couches in the Northern Wei Datong, see Wang Yanqing, “Shanxi Datong chutu de Bei Wei shiguanchuang,” *Wenwu shijie* 2008.2, pp. 12–18, 23. Northerners were far more occupied with stories of filial sons, judging from archaeological remains, than were southerners. Müller, “Sogdier in China,” p. 135. As a takeover of the Chinese tradition, the stories were strongly associated by the northerners with sepulchral beliefs. Dien, “A new look at the Xianbei,” p. 47.

¹⁴⁸ Wu Hung, “A case of cultural interaction: House-shaped sarcophagi of the Northern Dynasties,” *Orientalism*, May 2002, pp. 34–41, considers that the Sichuan Han sarcophagi were the forerunners. However, this still needs further discussion; see Dien, *Six Dynasties civilization*, 428; and Müller, “Sogdier in China,” pp. 134–135.

¹⁴⁹ Two were decorated with Xianbei motifs (Zhijiabao and the newly discovered sarcophagus of Zhang Zhilang in Datong; personal communication with Prof. Zhang Qingjie). That of Song Shaozu (from Dunhuang—Liu Junxi, ed., *Datong Yanbei shiyuan*, pp. 79–82) was fitted with apotropaic animal masks and painted with musical scenes which were probably related to the Longxi area, while that of Yuchi

that in the sixth century,¹⁵⁰ heads of the Sogdian or Central Asian communities such as *sabao* or *tianzhu* adopted sarcophagi and couches to express the same wish to be reborn and to abide in their own paradise.¹⁵¹ The trapezoidal shape of Xianbei coffins came, by the Northern Wei, to be adopted by Han Chinese.

One artifact with no less significance was the square stone epitaph set. Starting in the Jin period, the epitaphs were used more frequently in the North, intriguingly even by the non-Han.¹⁵² The Northwest exerted a strong influence in their use, but it was in sixth-century Luoyang that the norm for the square epitaph sets of stone was established and followed until the end of Tang.¹⁵³ A set consists of a biographical tablet and a cover in the form of a truncated pyramid. When placed in the tomb, the set symbolized a burial in miniature and the eternal existence of the deceased.¹⁵⁴

CONCLUSION

In the Pingcheng period of the Northern Wei dynasty (386–494), the material culture as revealed in burials and sites indicates the emergence of a self-aware Xianbei culture. Even during the interlude from the 500s to 530s, when Xianbei customs were under duress, the northern culture was still distinctive. Visually, the North took pleasure in the use of color, as is shown in the ceramics, textiles, and wall paintings; in its love of gold, silver, and objects that shone and glittered; in pompous processions; and in its love of everything large. One can imagine the loud sounds in the streets and taverns as different languages were spoken, and people sang and danced to music that would have been inharmonious to our ears because of the odd assemblage of musical

Dingzhou (Datongshi kaogu yanjiusuo, “Bei Wei Yuchi Dingzhou,” pp. 4–13, 51), was blank. Yuchi referred to the ruling family of Khotan.

¹⁵⁰ In Han Chinese South, though foreigners also lived there, their presence was not as recognizable as in the North. Müller, “Sogdier in China,” pp. 140–141.

¹⁵¹ The major pictorial programs of the known Sogdian/Central Asian sarcophagi or funerary beds thus far discovered are probably of an autobiographical nature. See Dien, “Tomb of Master Shi,” p. 107. The journey to paradise can be best seen on the back wall of the sarcophagus of Shi jun (Master Shi, d. 579), excavated in Xi’an. Judith A. Lerner, “Zoroastrian funerary beliefs and practices known from the Sino-Sogdian tombs in China,” *TSR* 9 (2011), p. 22.

¹⁵² The reason is probably more complicated than the word “Sinicization” can cover. The Chinese language might be considered as a ritual language for the sake of communication with deities.

¹⁵³ See Kubozoe Yoshihumi, “Boshi no kigen,” pp. 17–18, for his account of the standardization of the square Northern Wei epitaph sets in the Luoyang period.

¹⁵⁴ The cover stood for the cosmos surrounding the dead while the inscribed stone represented the deceased per se in words; see Liu Fengjun “Nanbeichao shike muzhi,” p. 80; Müller, “Gräber der Nördlichen Wei,” pp. 230–231; Wu Hung, *The art of the Yellow Springs: Understanding Chinese tombs* (Honolulu, 2010), p. 176.

instruments from all regions to accompany the fashionable Sogdian swirl dancers. Rulers were depicted for the first time, although disguised in the form of monumental stone statues of the Buddha.¹⁵⁵ The non-Xianbei peoples, including the Chinese, seemed to enjoy greater liberty to maintain their cultural legacies. Never before were the identities of foreigners living on Chinese soil as obvious as in this period in the North. It seems that the Persian, and later the Tujue, cultures were much favored by high society, but it was proficiency in the Xianbei language and customs that enabled one to hope for a post at court.¹⁵⁶

The majority of the Northern Wei tombs in present-day Datong notably do not contain weapons, much unlike the burials in southern Manchuria in the fourth century. This could point to a relatively peaceful period. In the latter half of the sixth century, there is evidence of unusual longevity; some people lived to be as much as ninety despite the troubled years. Reasons other than high-protein diets must have enabled such longevity,¹⁵⁷ and the question should be pursued in the future.

It has long been recognized that the northern culture had a particularly important impact on that of the Tang. Scholars have often described the material culture of the Northern Dynasties as being that of the Han Chinese, but such a view places too much stress on Chinese sources. Rather, the northern material culture is a complex and multilayered one. It is best seen as a result of the reciprocal interactions of the cultures of the Xianbei, the Han Chinese, and the many other peoples who were active at that time. It has aptly been termed a “hybridized” society,¹⁵⁸ one full of creativity, innovation, and vitality.

¹⁵⁵ The five monumental Buddhas in the Yungang caves 16 to 20.

¹⁵⁶ See the famous complaints of Yan Zhitui (*Yanshi jiaxun*, *shang* 2.20 and 12.327; Ssu-yü Teng, *Family instructions for the Yen clan: Yen-Shih Chia-Hsiin by Yen Chib-t'ui. An annotated translation with introduction* (Leiden, 1968), pp. 7, 119). The Southern Qi envoys had already taken note that the Xianbei tongue was spoken at court. Sporadic commentaries in literary sources indicate that the language never went out of use in the Northern Dynasties period. Miao Yue, “Beichao zhi Xianbei yu,” in *idem*, *Dushi cunghao* (Beijing, 1963), pp. 53–77. See also Dien, “A new look at the Xianbei,” pp. 54–55.

¹⁵⁷ Pan Jiancai et al., “Henan Anyang Gu'an mudi renyu de C, N wending tongweisu fenxi,” *Jiangnan kaogu* 2009.4, pp. 114–120. For the excavation see Henansheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo, “Henan Anyang Gu'an mudi,” pp. 19–23.

¹⁵⁸ Dien, *Six Dynasties civilization*, pp. 424–429.

CHAPTER 19

SOUTHERN MATERIAL CULTURE

Annette Kieser

INTRODUCTION

During the Six Dynasties, much as in the North, the South was also subject to enormous changes in the composition of its population. Even before the fall of the Western Jin, large parts of the northern elite lineages fled south in several waves of migration that would last until the mid-fifth century. In the South, the refugees found themselves a minority in an unfamiliar environment, but they still maintained control of what remained of their state; in 317, Jiankang (modern-day Nanjing) was established as the capital of what we term the Eastern Jin. But Jiankang was not the only destination of the northern refugees. Some chose the middle reaches of the Yangzi, or settled in the southeastern coastal regions, while some headed even further south toward modern Guangzhou. These population movements clearly manifest themselves in the archaeological evidence. The tombs excavated in south China from the years before the establishment of the Eastern Jin in 317, and those from after that date, especially in Jiankang, show distinctive differences in their design and contents.

The tombs and burial goods serve as the main source of information for the material culture of the South. Since, unlike in the North, the southern tradition does not encompass pictorial representations on wall paintings in either tombs or Buddhist cave temples, objects themselves have to tell their own tale. Further, the southerners did not share the northern passion for decorating stone with relief carvings; scattered brick relief scenes, however, are a notable exception. In addition, excavated city sites are less prominent than in the North.¹

¹ The long-term occupation of settlements in the south makes excavation of sites difficult, and further, what has survived is not very well preserved; see Albert E. Dien, *Six Dynasties civilization* (New Haven, 2007), p. 32. However, increased building activity during recent years has given archaeologists access to some long-hidden remains of old Jiankang; see He Yun'ao, *Liuchao wadang yu Liuchao ducheng* (Beijing, 2006); and Wang Zhigao, "Guanyu Liuchao Jiankang ducheng he gongcheng de chubu yanjiu," in *Nanjing chengqiang zhi*, ed. Yang Guoqing and Wang Zhigao (Nanjing, 2008), pp. 11–74.

Keeping their mortuary nature in mind, the objects still can mirror changes in the material culture of the local population, as well as that of the émigrés. Divided into two parts, this chapter will give an overview of the material evidence as reflected in tombs before and after 317, the turning point in the South.

SOUTHERN TOMBS BEFORE THE NORTHERN INFLUX:
WU AND WESTERN JIN

Building for the Dead: The Tombs

The majority of tombs are brick-built single chambers, many with a short entrance passage. Earthen pits for simple burials exist but in contrast to the North, the high water table south of the Yangzi often made cave-like tombs dug into the ground impossible. To avoid using tunnels that would be prone to collapse, recourse was to a brick chamber at the bottom of a shaft; in the southwestern regions stone rather than brick occurs. Rock-cut tombs are found only in Sichuan, where this type of tomb continued from the Han dynasty. Elsewhere in the South, larger tombs usually consist of two chambers: in many cases a square front chamber with a high domed or cloister-vault ceiling (*qionglong*) is where the mourners at the funeral congregated around an offering platform. A rectangular back chamber holding one or two coffins was built with a lower barrel-vault ceiling. Narrow side chambers for the accommodation of more coffins may open from the front chamber (Figure 19.1). In Hubei and Jiangxi, as well as later in Guangdong, a type appears in which the side chambers are reduced to niches attached to both sides of the front chamber. Jiangxi was the home of a very economical kind of double chamber: an archway or other such partition made of brick separates a long, rather narrow, chamber, thus creating two separate spaces for offering and burial (Figure 19.2). In Hubei one finds two burial chambers side by side, often connected by a small passageway (Figure 19.3). Various means were employed in the southern tombs to mitigate against dampness inside the chamber, such as the installation of drainage systems, multilevel floors, or coffin platforms. The coffins were exclusively made of wood, sometimes lacquered black or red. Early, during the Wu period, they were carved out of single logs with the head- and footboards attached. Later, coffins came to be constructed out of boards. Their shape is nearly rectangular, the flat lids being longer than the coffin itself and rounded at the ends. A well-preserved example from Xiafang, Jiangsu, has a compartment for grave goods at the head end.²

² Wang Zhigao, "Jiangsu Jiangningxian Xiafangcun Dong Jin mu de qingli," *Kaogu* 1998.8, p. 49.

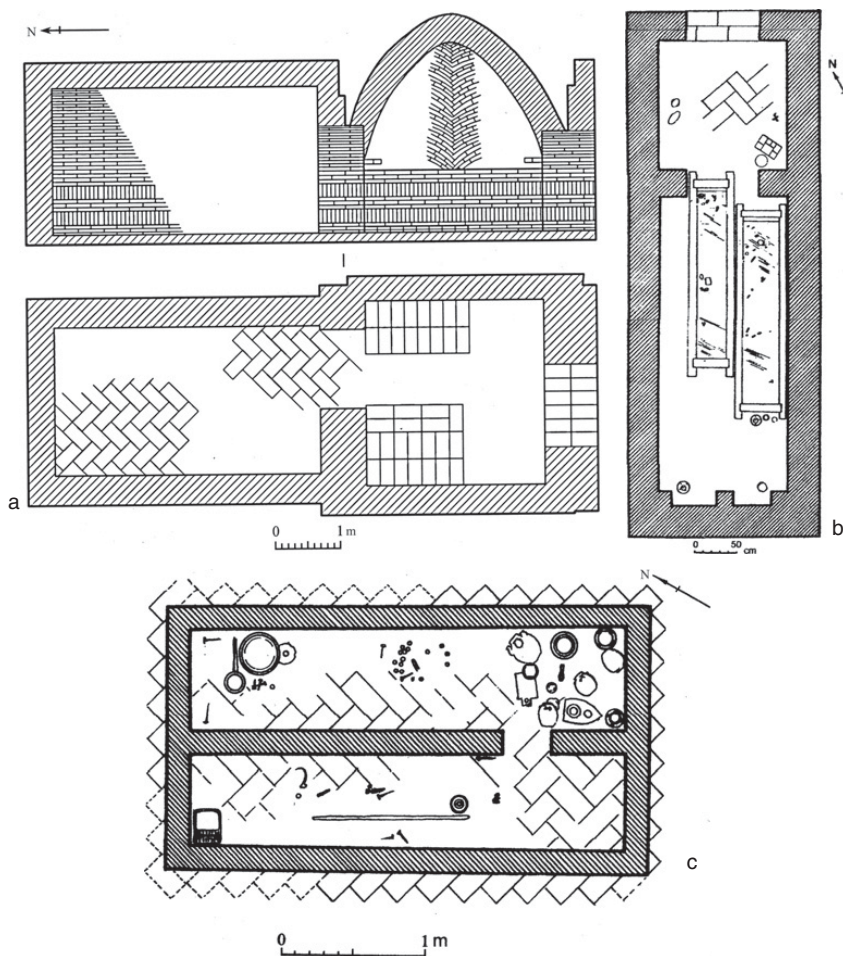


Figure 19.1 *Tomb types of the Wu and Western Jin. (a) Double chambers from Ma'anshan, Anhui; (b) Nanchang, Jiangxi; and (c) Echeng, Hubei. After Ding Bangjun, "Anhui Ma'anshan Dong Wu Zhu Ran mu fajue jianbao," Wenwu 1986.3, p. 1, Figure 1; Yu Jiadong, "Jiangxi Nanchang Jin mu," Kaogu 1974.6, p. 373, Figure 1; Jiang Zanchu, ed., Echeng Liuchao mu (Beijing, 2007), p. 45, Figure 32*

Since the dampness ruled out murals painted on plaster walls (often seen in the North), the South preferred relief decor on bricks. Geometrical patterns and coin motifs reign, while designs continuing such Han-tradition figures as the three-legged sun raven or the four spirits of the cardinal directions (*sisben*), the white tiger, green dragon, vermilion bird, and the black warrior, are confined to the middle and lower reaches of the Yangzi.

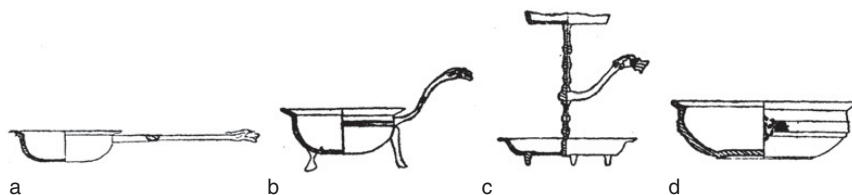


Figure 19.2 *Bronze vessel types of the Wu and Western Jin: (a) flatiron, (b) wine warmer, (c) lamp, (d) basin. After Zhang Zhixin, "Jiangsu Wuxian Shibizishan Xi Jin mu qingli jianbao," Wenwu ziliao congkan 3 (1980), p. 135, Figure 10*

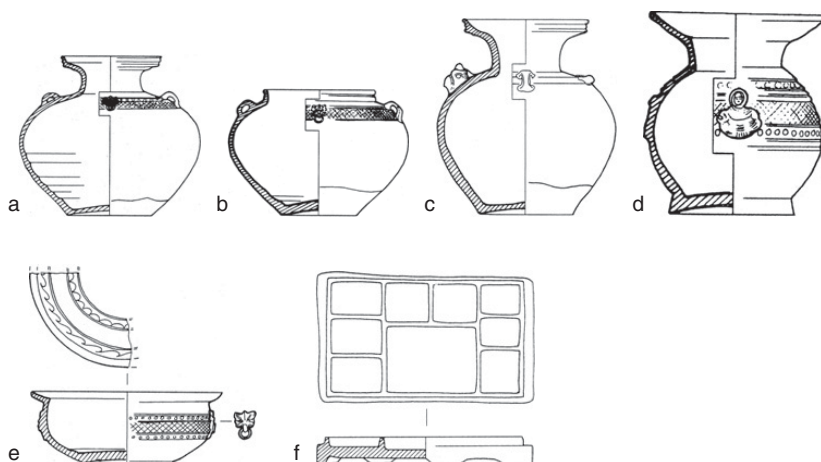


Figure 19.3 *Vessel types and typical decoration of the Wu and Western Jin. Green ware: (a) pankouhu-jar, (b) guan-jar, (c) chicken-bead ewer, (d) spittoon, (e) xi-basin; earthenware: (f) fruit box. After Jia Weibong, Zhou Weilin, and Zhang Jiuwen, "Nanjing Jiangning Shanghu Sun Wu, Xi Jin mu," Wenwu 2007.1, p. 38, Figure 7, p. 42, Figure 14*

Writing for the Dead: Tomb Inscriptions

Writing, as preserved in tombs, was carved or molded into the bricks: these provide the name of the deceased, the year of the tomb construction, the craftsman, or auspicious sayings. Inscriptions sometimes appear in mirror image, which may be a calligraphic style as it is later known from inscriptions that occur on the Liang dynasty spirit path, the avenue lined with sculptures that lead to a tomb, but such inscriptions may here instead have been due to error in copying the characters into the brick

molds.³ Visiting or name tablets written in ink on wood bear the name and titles of the deceased.⁴ Other written material, on wood as well as on lead, steatite or brick, includes tomb inventory lists,⁵ and grave-quelling documents that merge in character and content with land contracts, both addressing the authorities of the netherworld.⁶

Producing for the Dead: Materials

Bronze and lacquer had been the choice materials for burial goods during the Han. Even though pottery would eventually take their place, all materials were still in use during the Wu and Western Jin. While some vessels (like the eared cup *erbei*) appear in all materials, bronze was used where its metallic qualities were best suited, i.e. for flatirons (*yundou*), lamps, braziers, incense burners, and cooking vessels, as well as for long-handled tripod wine warmers (*jiaodou*) (Figure 19.2).⁷

Lacquerware such as trays, plates, and cosmetic or fruit boxes painted in the traditional figurative Han style were prized grave goods, probably made in the main lacquer production centers in Shu, i.e. Sichuan, as inscriptions on vessels show.⁸ Although Han dynasty workshops are known to have been in Panyu (Guangzhou), Bushan (Guangxi), and Juxian (Shandong), thus far no other lacquer production marks have been identified for the Six Dynasties.⁹ Written sources also name private workshops in Sichuan.¹⁰ There were many decor techniques, such as engraving and gilding, gold inlay, carved surfaces

³ Annette Kieser, *Grabanlagen der Herrscherhäuser der Südlichen Dynastien in China (420–589): Geisterwege und Gräber im Spiegel der Geschichte* (Mainz, 2004), pp. 93, 119–180. Reversed writing, *daoshu*, is recorded in the *Taiping yulan*: a certain Yu Yuanwei (sixth century) states in his essay to have inscribed a screen in over a hundred different scripts, among them the reversed writing; see *Taiping yulan* 748.2b, p. 3449b.

⁴ Such tablets are quite common in Wu tombs, e.g. that of Xue Qiu in Nanjing; see Wang Hong and Zhou Baohua, “Nanjing Daguanglu Sun Wu Xue Qiu mu fajue jianbao,” *Wenwu* 2008.3, p. 7, or of Zhu Ran, Maanshan, Anhui, dated 261; see Ding Bangjun, “Anhui Ma’anshan Zhu Ran mu fajue jianbao,” *Wenwu* 1986.3, p. 7.

⁵ Liu Lin, “Jiangxi Nanchangshi Dong Wu Gao Rong mu de fajue,” *Kaogu* 1980.3, pp. 226–227.

⁶ While grave-quelling documents were believed to announce the entry of the deceased into the underworld and to release him from any culpability, land contracts were meant to negotiate ownership of the site of the tomb from the authorities of the nether world. Albert Dien, “Instructions for the grave: The case of Yan Zhitui,” *CEA* 8 (1995), p. 56.

⁷ For a comprehensive overview on the bronze vessels of the Six Dynasties, see Wu Xiaoping, “Liuchao qingtong rongqi de kaoguxue yanjiu,” *Kaogu xuebao* 2009.2, pp. 185–216.

⁸ Two of the nearly seventy pieces of lacquer ware from the tomb of Zhu Ran, Anhui, bear such inscriptions. Ding Bangjun, “Anhui Ma’anshan,” Table 2.1. Two other tombs with rich finds of lacquerware as well as other perishable materials such as wooden tablets or shoes were found in Nanchang, Jiangxi; see Liu Lin, “Jiangxi Nanchangshi,” pp. 219–228; and Zhao Delin and Li Guoli, “Nanchang huochezhan Dong Jin muzangjun fajue jianbao,” *Wenwu* 2001.2, pp. 12–41.

⁹ Wang Zhongshu, *Han civilization* (New Haven, 1982), p. 85.

¹⁰ Chen Jing, ed., *Zhongguo qiqi quanji*, Volume 4, *Sanguo–Yuan* (Fuzhou, 1998), p. 7.

revealing layers of different colors (a method previously believed to have only appeared in the Tang),¹¹ and of course painted and monochrome surfaces.

However, pottery largely replaced bronze and lacquer ware as the most common material for burial goods. During the Wu a locally produced soft, low-fired earthenware of red, and later mostly grey core, played a very prominent role among the burial goods. Of increasing importance, especially from the Western Jin onwards, is a type of stoneware known as greenware (*qingci*). Northern Zhejiang had been a producer of high-fired glazed stoneware since the Bronze Age, and of greenware since the Eastern Han. But it is only during the Six Dynasties that all four aspects of ceramic making—handling of clays, composition of glazes, construction of kilns, and control of firing—had been mastered. According to Nigel Wood, the local raw materials (rich in quartz and mica in the South), and the types of fuel available led to the very different ways kiln designs and firing temperatures evolved in the South and North.¹²

The southern greenware (also known as celadon ware or Yue ware) is characterized by its greenish lime glazes. Variations in color (in core as well as glazes) depend on the amount of iron that the core and glazes contain, as well as the handling of the reducing process in the kilns. Different shades of color range from yellowish light green to bluish olive green. The most prominent wares were those of the Yue kilns in Shangyu, Kuaiji commandery, present-day Zhejiang. Ultimately, these kilns would be the first whose products became identified with their name.¹³ Most of the greenware in the capital-area tombs are products of the Yue kilns. Although the Junshan kiln near Yixing was closer to Jiankang, the quality of its products was regarded as inferior to that of the Yue kilns. The same is true for the yellowish products of two kilns from Jiangxi and Hunan (Hongzhou and Xiangyin), where the bonding of glaze and core was often insufficient and the glazes therefore flaked.¹⁴ Whereas vessel types and styles were copied, local varieties such as wares with decorative glaze tears along the lower, otherwise unglazed, part of vessels are known. Greenware was produced as far south as Guangdong, but at least during this early period the products of the Yue kilns were preferred as burial goods in tombs there as well.

The reasons for the increasing popularity of pottery in the grave goods were partly economical—pottery being much easier and cheaper to produce than lacquerware and bronzes—but may also have resulted from a change in

¹¹ Dien, *Six Dynasties civilization*, p. 294.

¹² Nigel Wood, *Chinese glazes: Their origins, chemistry, and recreation* (London, 1999), p. 27.

¹³ Regina Krahl, *Yuegutang: A collection of Chinese ceramics in Berlin* (Berlin, 2000), p. 59.

¹⁴ On kiln sites, see Michèle Pirazzoli-t'Serstevens, "De l'efficacité plastique à la productivité: Les grès porcelainaux du Jiangnan aux IIIe–IVe siècles de notre ère," *TP* 84 (1998), pp. 21–61.

fashion, i.e. a transition in the predominant colors of tableware from the warm reds and blacks of lacquer and the shiny golden color of newly cast bronze to the predominately colder, lighter tones of the grey-greenish greenware.¹⁵

Offering to the Dead: Vessels

The vessels containing offerings placed inside the tombs may give a glimpse of the great variety of types, shapes, and decor used in tableware during the early days of the Six Dynasties. The most common are bellied jars (*guan*) and dish-mouthed jars (*pankouhu*), larger basins (*xi* or *pen*), fruit boxes with compartments (*guobe*), plates (*pan*), and bowls and cups of different forms and sizes (*bei*, *zhan* or *wan*). In general, vessels tend to be small and round-bellied. Typically, they were decorated with bands of geometrical design around the shoulders, rim, or body, with an embossed ornament (animal masks, immortals riding beasts, depictions of the Buddha) obscuring the seam where the two ends of the band joined (Figure 19.3). Findings of large-bellied *guan* jars that bear distinctly auspicious motifs, such as feathered figures, dragons, phoenixes, or the Buddha, rendered in brownish paint underneath the glaze are limited to the capital and push the starting point of under-glaze painting back as early as the Wu dynasty (Figure 19.4).¹⁶

Being of a hard and durable quality, greenware as found in tombs could have provided fine tableware. Some types, however, were exclusively produced for use in burials. These include the typical southern chicken-headed ewer (*jishouhu*) (Figure 19.3), which has no opening in its non-functional spout. Animal-shaped *zun* vessels (Figure 19.5) show the southeastern potters' masterful handling of the materials. The *zun* are limited to Jiangsu, Zhejiang, and Jiangxi, as is the most famous southern "vessel," the so-called figured jar (*hunping* or *duisuguan*) (Figure 19.6). It appears in greenware as well as earthenware and basically has the shape of a *guan* jar. The lids take the form of architectural structures such as granaries, four-tower manors, or temples, and feature figures in a wide range of activities, even mourning over a coffin. What makes these vessels so intriguing is the fact that they do not seem to have a common program—mythical creatures appear as well as Buddhas, women holding a body, naked figures, etc. Although the lid is removable in some cases, the vessels had no practical use. Thus far the meaning of this peculiar

¹⁵ Michèle Pirazzoli-t'Serstevens, "From ear-cup to the round cup: Changes in Chinese drinking vessels (2nd to 6th century AD)," *OA* 48.2 (2002), p. 26.

¹⁶ Wang Zhigao and Jia Weiyong, "Nanjing faxian de Sun Wu youxia caihui ciqu ji qi xiangguan wenti," *Wenwu* 2005.5, pp. 39–53.

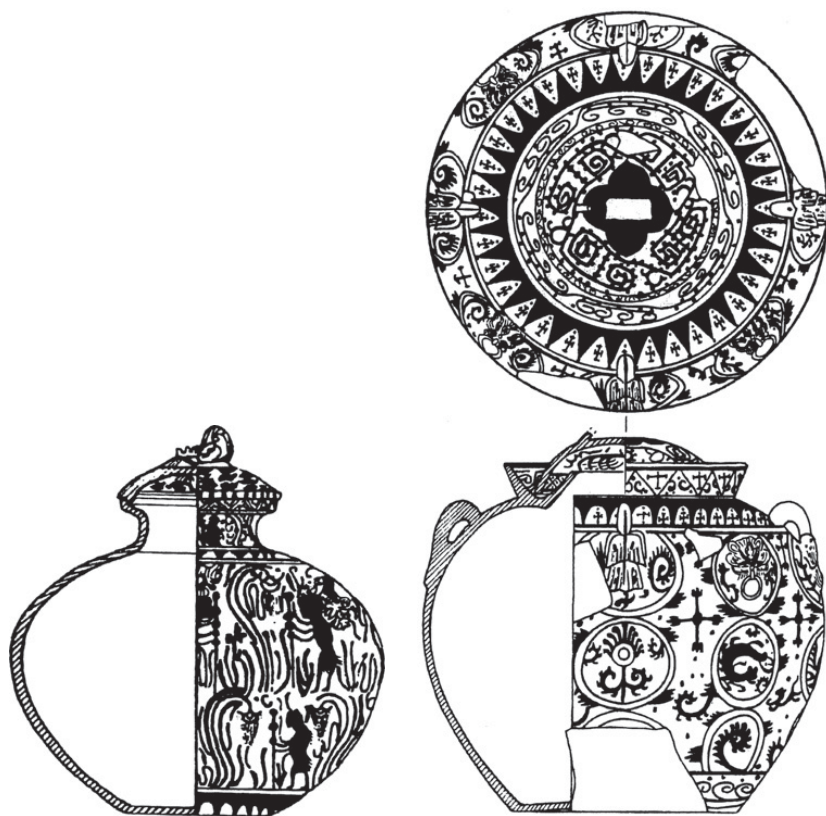


Figure 19.4 Guan jars with brownish under-glaze painting. After Wang Zhigao and Jia Weiyong, “Nanjing faxian de Sun Wu youxia caibui ciqu ji qi xiangguan wenti,” *Wenwu* 2005.5, p. 40, Figure 2, p. 50, Figure 42

burial item is not fully explained, though many theories have been suggested.¹⁷

Furnishing the Tomb I: Models

In general, a tomb was meant as a copy of the deceased's aboveground abode and therefore had to be equipped accordingly. A large group of early Six Dynasties' tomb furnishings therefore are architectural models (made from

¹⁷ Various theories on the nature and significance of the *bunping* are summarized by Albert E. Dien, “The *duisuguan* or ‘figured jar’ as a case in point,” in *Between Han and Tang: Cultural and artistic interaction in a transformative period*, ed. Wu Hung (Beijing, 2001), pp. 509–546.



Figure 19.5 *Bear-shaped zun vessel. After Nanjing bowuyuan, ed., Jiangsu Liuchao qingci (Beijing, 1980), Plate 40*

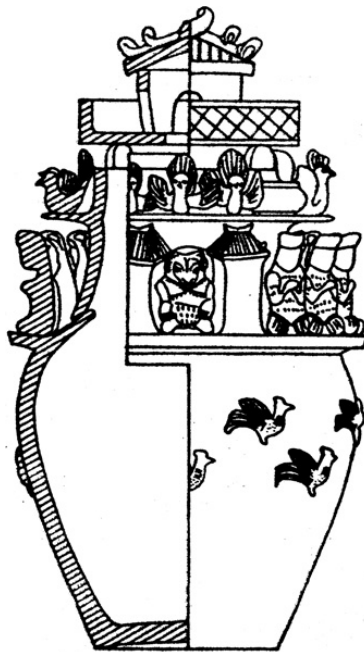


Figure 19.6 *Figured hunping or daisuguan jar. After Qi Haining, "Nanjingshi Dongshanqiao 'Fenghuang san nian' Dong Wu mu," Wenwu 1999.2, p. 35, Figure 6*

both earthenware and greenware). Architectural models of whole estates—larger versions of the structures on top of the figured jar—are rarely seen and limited to some early tombs from Hubei (Figure 19.7a).¹⁸ Other, more fanciful renderings of house models are known from the Sichuan cliff tombs in Tujing (Figure 19.7b).¹⁹ These models show the three basic roof types of the period: the hipped roof, the gable roof, and the combination hip and gable. Some of these models also feature tile ends (*wadang*) mirroring the real ones such as have been excavated in large numbers from various Six Dynasties' sites.

While models illustrating aspects of daily life at an estate, such as granaries, wells, stables, chicken coops, and pigsties with different kinds of toilets attached (Figure 19.8), prevail in most regions, depictions of rural activities are limited to Sichuan and Guangdong, where scenes of plowing were found in Shaoguan, or the model of a spirit distiller in Lianxian.²⁰ The furnishing of a tomb may even go into greater detail: one finds a whole array of models of household equipment such as brooms, mortars, grinding stones, treadmills, sieves, and also stoves complete with pots, steamers, and ladles, and sometimes even servants.²¹

Furniture does not play a dominant role in tombs, reflecting the domestic situation of the period. While rectangular pottery boxes imitate wooden wardrobes,²² a group of figures from a Wu tomb in Shangfang, Nanjing, offers a glimpse of what a southern aristocrat's inner quarters might have looked like (Figure 19.9).²³ Surrounded by musicians and his attendants the deceased sits on a couch (*ta*), a low table in front of him, the southern equivalent of the depictions on murals in the North. In some tombs stone or earthenware sockets indicate that screens, no longer surviving, were placed at the back and sides of some couches that could seat several persons (*chuang*); such screens might sometimes have had canopies (*zhang*). Items placed on the table or couch included armrests, braziers, incense burners, and lamps or candle holders, wax being more common in the South than in the North.²⁴ Heated wine would be offered in the long-handled tripods (Figure 19.2), and spittoons were placed for convenience. Tombs also show the importance of presenting oneself as a cultured person: writing utensils such as inkstones, water vessels, often in the shape of toads, and even models of brushes made from greenware were provided.

¹⁸ Echengxian bowuguan, "Echeng Dong Wu Sun jiangjun mu," *Kaogu* 1978.3, p. 165.

¹⁹ Sichuansheng wenwuguanli weiyuanhui, "Sichuan Zhongxian Tujing Shu Han yamu," *Wenwu* 1985.7, pp. 49–95.

²⁰ Guangdongsheng bowuguan and Xianggang Zhongwen Daxue wenwuguan, eds., *Guangdong chutu Jin zhi Tang wenwu* (Hong Kong, 1985), p. 98, pl. 2, 85.

²¹ For a tomb furnished with the mentioned items, see Nanjingshi bowuguan, *Nanjing Shangfang Sun Wu mu* (Nanjing, 2006).

²² Nanjing bowuyuan, "Nanjing Fuguishan Dong Jin mu fajue baogao," *Kaogu* 1966.4, p. 202.

²³ Nanjingshi bowuguan, *Nanjing Shangfang*, p. 22. ²⁴ Dien, *Six Dynasties civilization*, p. 364.

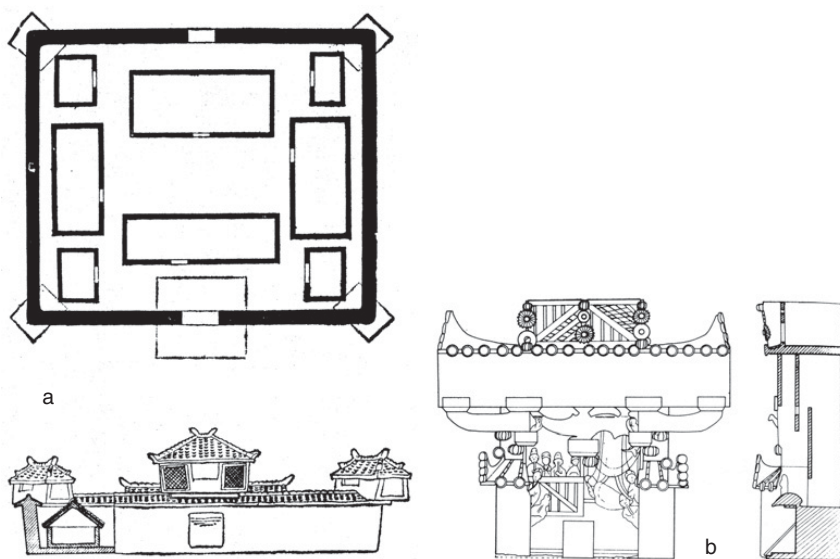


Figure 19.7 Models of estates, (a) from Echeng, Hubei and (b) Tujing, Sichuan. After Echengxian bowuguan, "Echeng Dong Wu Sun jiangjun mu," *Kaogu* 1978.3, p. 165, Figure 4; and Zhang Caijun, "Sichuan Zhongxian Tujing Shu Han ya mu," *Wenwu* 1985.7, p. 74, Figure 59

Furnishing the Tomb II: Figures (and Clothing)

Tomb figurines, made mostly of greenware, did not play a dominant role in the early tombs. In the Nanjing tombs they are confined to a few figures, one of which might represent the deceased, dressed in a traditional long, wide-sleeved robe closed to the right. While there is a case of a female with a naked upper body, attendants usually are dressed in a shirt with a vertical textile button border and a skirt with an apron, which might point to local styles. In both Hunan and Hubei tombs, in which a larger number were found, figurines apart from attendants and servants include soldiers, mounted warriors, civil officials, and even scribes at work. These are seldom seen in other regions. Sichuan is home of yet another tradition: the cliff tombs from Tujing yielded over 100 finely made figurines of red or gray earthenware, some featuring dots resembling the Buddhist *urna* on the forehead. Among them are servants, attendants, dancers, musicians, singers, and one sole warrior.²⁵

²⁵ Sichuansheng wenwuguanli weiyuanhui, "Sichuan Zhongxian Tujing," pp. 49–95. One tomb contained sixty-five figurines, the rest were distributed among the remaining tombs.

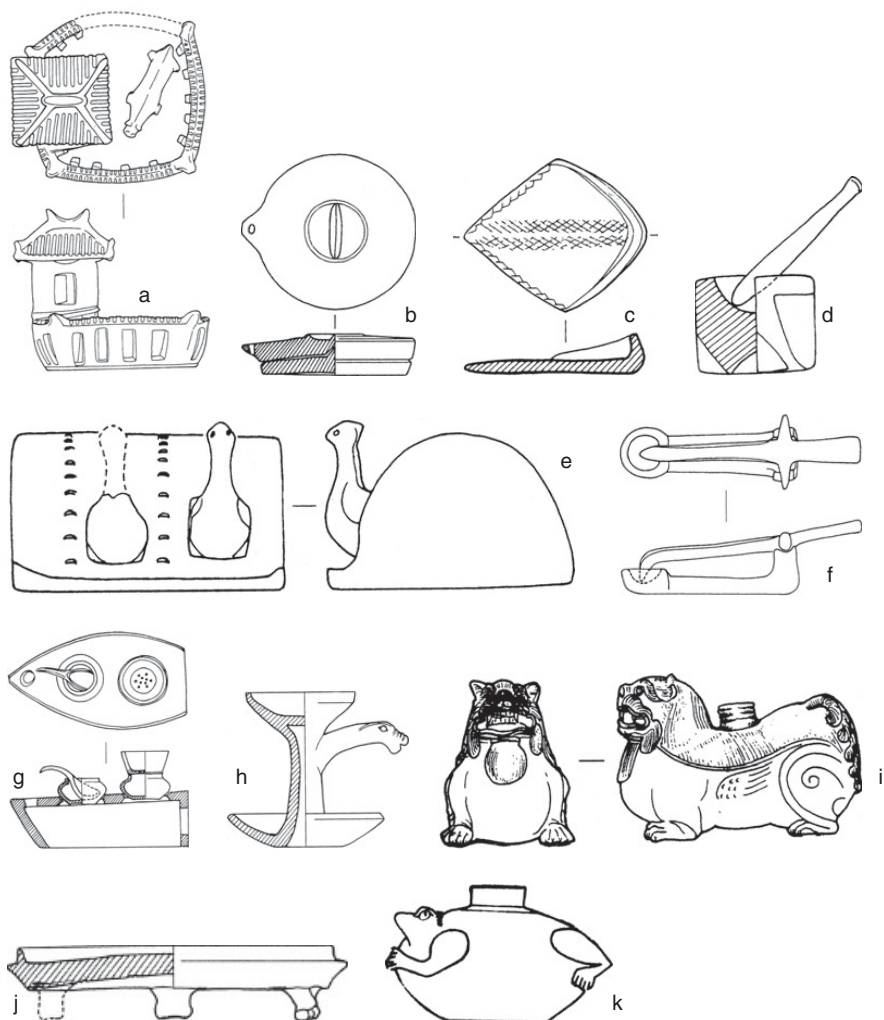


Figure 19.8 Earthenware models of (a) toilet, (b) grinding stone, (c) winnowing basket, (d) mortar, (e) chicken coop, (f) treadmill, (g) stove, (h) lamp, (i) greenware candle holder, (j) ink stone, (k) water vessel. After Wang Zhigao, Jia Weiyong, "Nanjing Xianbeshan Sun Wu, *Xi Jin mu*," *Wenwu* 2007.1, p. 31, Figure 16; Jia Weibong, Zhou Weilin, and Zhang Jiuwen, "Nanjing Jiangning Shanghu Sun Wu, *Xi Jin mu*," *Wenwu* 2007.1, p. 43, Figure 15; Zhang Heng, "Zhejiang Shengxian Datangling Dong Wu mu," *Kaogu* 1991.3, p. 212, Figure 7



Figure 19.9 *Group of figures from Shangfang, Jiangsu. After Nanjingshi bowuguan, ed., Nanjing Shangfang Sun Wu mu (Nanjing, 2006), p. 22*

Tomb figures also provide an idea of the forms clothing took in the Six Dynasties, for nothing is left of the original clothing of the deceased.²⁶ An exception is lacquered wooden clogs found in a few tombs with holes for straps that have not survived.²⁷

Equipping the Dead: Adornment and Personal Effects

Personal ornaments given to the dead were often made from durable materials. Besides plain gold and silver rings, bracelets and hairpins, there are golden leaf-shaped ornaments (some in openwork technique), and rings that might have been sewn onto fabrics. Silver or gilded bronze paired belt plaques and matching belt ornaments, derived from the northern nomadic cultures, appear from the Wu onwards.²⁸ The traditional Han belt hook (*daigou*) is still to be found but was being replaced by the plaques or buckles (*daikou*). Since jade was

²⁶ For literary sources on the clothing of the South, see Fu Jiang, "Zongrong churu wangruo shenxian: shilun Liuchao shizu de fushi wenhua," *Dongnan wenhua* 1996.1, pp. 121–125.

²⁷ Cf. note 8 above. A recent find of twelve shoes from the Eastern Jin and Southern Dynasties yielded further sub-types of round and rectangular shapes of sandals; see Wang Zhigao and Jia Weiyong, "Nanjing Yankefang chutu Dong Jin, Nanchao muji kao: jianlun Zhongguo gudai zaoqi muji de jieduanxing tedian," *Wenwu* 2012.3, pp. 41–58.

²⁸ Wang Hong and Zhou Baohua, "Nanjing Daguanglu," p. 8, Figure 7.

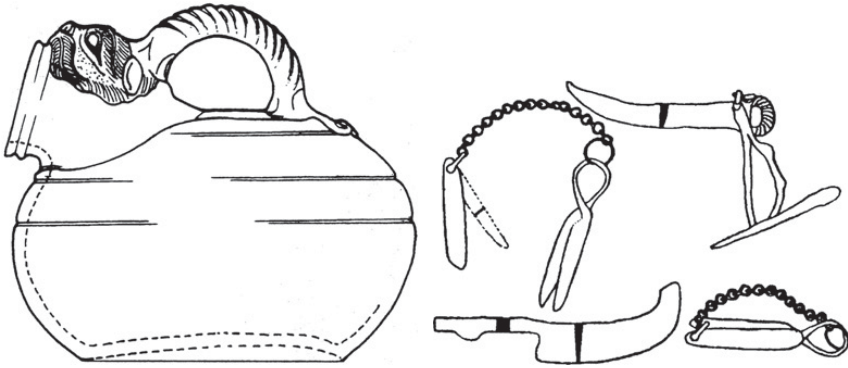


Figure 19.10 Items for personal hygiene. Urinal, small knives and scissors, ear- or toothpick. After Jia Weibong, Zhou Weilin, and Zhang Jiuwen, "Nanjing Jiangning Shangbu Sun Wu, Xi Jin mu," *Wenwu* 2007.1, p. 38, Figure 7; and Nanjingshi wenwu baoguan weiyuanhui, "Nanjing Xiangshan Dong Jin Wang Danbu mu be er, si hao mu fajue jianbao," *Wenwu* 1965.10, p. 43, Figure 22

difficult to obtain in the South,²⁹ ornaments such as pendant sets were either imitated in cheaper soapstone or restricted to rich tombs.³⁰

Hygienic and makeup accessory items were also placed inside or near the coffin. Urinals (*buzi*) were put next to men (Figure 19.10),³¹ and stone palettes used for applying makeup were common in both male and female burials. Bronze or iron mirrors as well as other articles such as wooden combs, little iron scissors, tweezers, and knives were often grouped in lacquer toilet boxes.

The combination of a bronze crossbow mechanism (sometimes in the form of a replica made from soapstone) and mirror stored in a lacquer or bronze box occurs only in the middle and lower reaches of the Yangzi. Weapons laid beside the body are mostly swords, either iron double-edged (*jian*) or single-edged blades (*dao*). They occur in tombs in Sichuan, Guangdong, and the lower Yangzi regions.³² Whereas the organic parts of scabbards have mostly

²⁹ Dien, *Six Dynasties civilization*, p. 273, points out the inaccessibility of the source of jade (actually nephrite) from its natural deposits in Xinjiang.

³⁰ Liu Hong's tomb of the Western Jin, published in Lei Ming and Lei Fen, "Hunan Anxiang Xi Jin Liu Hong mu," *Wenwu* 1993.11, pp. 1–12, is important for its unique richness of seventeen pieces of jade, among them two Han-style vessels.

³¹ Discussion about this vessel's usage is ongoing; however, its specific placement in tombs is very explicit; Nanjingshi bowuguan, "Nanjing Xiangshan 5 hao, 6 hao, 7 hao mu qingli jianbao," *Wenwu* 1972.11, p. 29.

³² Explaining the distribution of weapons, Dien, *Six Dynasties civilization*, 338, speaks of a "garrison mentality in the frontier areas."

decomposed, jade scabbard slides do survive. Swords were not exclusively restricted to a male tomb occupant.

SOUTHERN TOMBS AFTER THE NORTHERN INFLUX:
EASTERN JIN AND SOUTHERN DYNASTIES

Building for the Dead: The Tombs

The influx of the northerners before and especially after the founding of the Eastern Jin in Jiankang led to enormous changes in the burial system of the South. Interestingly enough this change does not so much manifest itself in a predominance of northern burial customs, brought down south with the émigrés, but rather in a reduced version of earlier southern tombs. This can partly be explained by the fact that the Eastern Jin tombs of the northern emigrants were meant to be temporary resting places, since the refugees had no intention of staying in the South. Therefore these tombs—many of which have been excavated on the outskirts of Nanjing—are small-scale single chambers where only some offering vessels were placed. There was no need to furnish these with models or figurines since it was expected that the dead would soon be taken north to return home. However, as that hope faded in time, the attitude toward tomb building gradually changed. By the Southern Dynasties period, the emigrants' tombs came to be furnished more lavishly.³³

However, it should be noted that many of these changes can be seen also in tombs other than those of the Jiankang emigrants. In the Eastern Jin, the predominant type of tomb in the lower and middle regions of the Yangzi is a small-scale, mostly single chamber with a barrel vault (Figure 19.11a). Some regional variations, such as the Jiangxi double chamber, spread along the rivers and were built as far south as Guangdong by the Eastern Jin. These might indicate that migration from the middle Yangzi reached to areas further south.³⁴ By the Southern Dynasties period the connected-chambers type from the Echeng region was being built not only in Jiangxi and Hunan, but also in Guangdong, together with a new tomb variety from Hubei and Jiangxi which featured tiers along the back and side walls (Figure 19.11b).

³³ Annette Kieser, *Landadel-Emigranten-Emporkömmlinge: Familienfriedhöfe in Südchina im 3.-6. Jh. n.Chr.*, Asiatische Forschungen 144 (Wiesbaden, 2002), and *idem*, "New insight on émigré tombs of the Eastern Jin in Jiankang," in *The yields of transition: Literature, art and philosophy in early medieval China*, ed. Jana S. Rosker and Natasa Vampelj Suhadolnik (Cambridge, 2011), pp. 53–74.

³⁴ Annette Kieser, "Nur Guangzhou ist ruhig und friedlich: Grabkult und Migration während der Sechs Dynastien im heutigen Guangdong," in *Guangdong: Archaeology and early texts/Archäologie und frühe Texte (Zhou–Tang)*, South China and Maritime Asia, Volume 13, ed. Shing Müller, Thomas O. Höllmann, and Putao Gui (Wiesbaden, 2004), pp. 101–124.

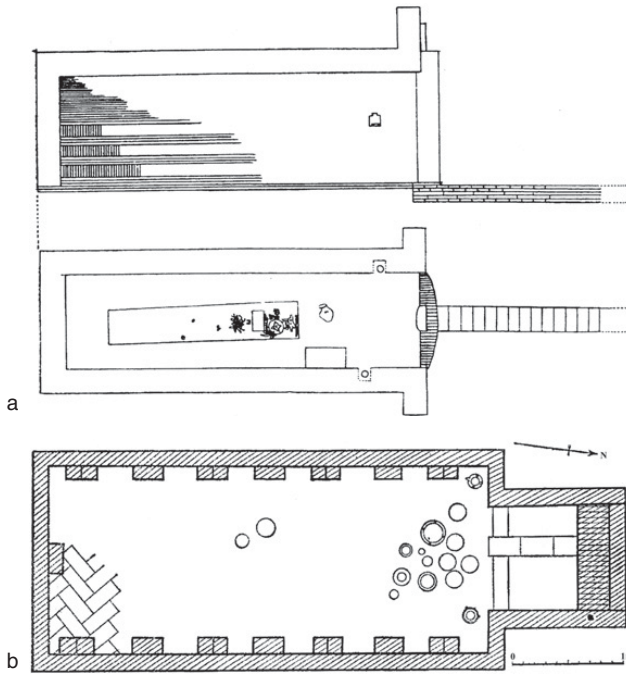


Figure 19.11 *Small-scale single chamber (Nanjing, Jiangsu), and new variety with tiers along back and side walls (Meixian, Guangdong).* (a) After Nanjingshi wenwu baoguan weiyuanhui, "Nanjing Xiangshan Dong Jin Wang Danbu mu be'er, si hao mu fajue jianbao," Wenwu 1965.10, p. 30, Figure 1; and (b) Gu Yunquan, "Guangdong Meixian gu muzang he gu yaozhi diaocha, fajue jianbao," Kaogu 1987.3, p. 207, Figure 1

The interiors of the tomb chambers also displayed many changes. In the Nanjing region false lattice windows and niches containing lamp bowls are often seen. As for the relief decoration, by the Southern Dynasties, a lotus flower design, mostly showing two flowers per tile, and other floral patterns had replaced the earlier geometric and coin patterns as the dominant motif. An increasing number of Buddhist elements, especially from Liang onwards, illustrate the growing influence of that religion in art; examples are the precious vase (*baoping*) and *apsarases* (*feitian*). Worshipping figures carrying flowers or incense burners are also common. In contrast, motifs continuing Han traditions, such as scenes of filial piety, still to be found in the North, are lacking in the South. Earlier reliefs consisted of isolated motifs restricted to one tile, but increasingly there was a tendency toward a relief program combining a number of bricks. This reaches its climax with the representation of the "Seven Sages of the Bamboo Grove" that decorates five tombs of Liu-Song and Southern Qi

emperors in Nanjing and Danyang (for further details, see Chapter 29 below).³⁵ Such scenes may cover the entire side of a tomb chamber wall; additional motifs include immortals with dragons and tigers, *apsarases*, lions, guards of honor, and so forth. The appearance of such relief decor shows the progress in artistic tomb decoration made since the Wu and Jin. Traces of pigments prove that at least some relief scenes had even been painted.

Buddhist influences are manifested not only inside the tombs but also above ground, with the so-called spirit paths that led to the tombs of the Southern Dynasties' imperial families. Emperor Wu of Liang (r. 502–549), first emperor in the South to elevate Buddhism to the state religion, had lion-like winged creatures, steles, and fluted columns placed before his father's, brothers', and nephews' tombs. The steles are decorated with elements of Buddhist iconography, and the columns with little lions on top are imitations of those erected by the Indian Maurya king Aśoka (304–232 BCE), known as a significant patron of Buddhism.³⁶

Writing for the Dead: Tomb Inscriptions

It was only in the post-Jin Southern Dynasties period that the northern tradition of epitaph tablets with long inscriptions gained a foothold in the South, and that mainly in the Jiankang region, where most of the eminent northern families had settled.³⁷ Tablets in the earlier Eastern Jin temporary tombs had merely been markers, executed sometimes with crude writing on building bricks, with the sole intention to identify the deceased and his northern lineage when the tomb was reopened.³⁸ Seals bearing names and titles are also mainly found in the Jiankang émigré tombs. Other sorts of writing in tombs (grave-quelling documents, tomb inventories, and tile inscriptions) still occur outside the capital area, but in increasingly small numbers.

Offering to the Dead: Vessels

Greenware was the dominant material among the burial vessels after 317. Their silhouettes over time underwent much change. This is especially

³⁵ A discussion on the dating of the tombs can be found in Kieser, *Grabanlagen der Herrscherhäuser*, pp. 54–92.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 139–144.

³⁷ During the Southern Dynasties these epitaph inscription tablets were still restricted to northern families and not yet accepted by southerners. They came to be used more widely during the Tang dynasty.

³⁸ Hua Rende, "Eastern Jin epitaphic stones: With some notes on the 'Lanting Xu Debate'," *EMC* 3 (1997), pp. 40–41; Annette Kieser, "Northern influence in tombs in Southern China after 317 CE? A reevaluation," in *Between Han and Tang*, ed. Wu Hong, p. 260.

apparent in the late Southern Dynasties period when elegant elongated vessels, most distinctly seen in the chicken-headed ewers or the dish-mouthed jars, were favored. Some types were totally altered, such as the square *guobe* fruit boxes becoming round. Other changes include the eared cup, *erbei*, on a *pan* plate that came to be replaced by a *zhan* bowl (or cup) on a saucer (*zhantuo*). The reason for this might have been a change in drinking habits due to increasing consumption of tea.³⁹ At the same time one may note a reduction of both different types and numbers of the larger *wan* bowls, *xi* or *pen* basins, and *guan* jars. This might point to an increasing standardization and economizing in the ceramic workshops. Along with the usual greenish-grey glazes, the Eastern Jin especially had a liking for dark brown, nearly black glazes (due to a high content of iron) that is mainly seen on chicken-headed ewers. It is striking that the sort of decoration with geometrical bands used in the past completely ceased to be applied after 317 (Figure 9.12). Starting from the Liu-Song, there appear vessels adorned with the typical southern incised or appliquéed lotus petal motif. The climax of this development was surely reached with the production of the lotus *zun* vessels (*lianhua zun*). The most spectacular of these was one found in a royal Liang tomb in Nanjing (Figure 19.13).⁴⁰ Similar vessels are known from the contemporary North.⁴¹

Furnishing the Tombs 1: Models

One of the most striking developments in the South is the near total disappearance of models—architectural structures, household articles, and such—after 317. Along with the disappearance of the figured jar, the animal shaped *zun*, and also most of the simulated writing equipment, this must have led to an enormous change in the production processes of the ceramic workshops. The only exceptions are inkstones, models of granaries, and stoves with changed shapes that still appear in some tombs. In part, this development may be explained by the building of what were intended to be temporary tombs around Jiankang; however, this does not clarify the reasons for the termination of this group of burial goods over southern China in general.

³⁹ Pirazzoli-t'Serstevens, "From ear-cup," p. 25.

⁴⁰ An excavation report of the tomb was never published. Since it shares the characteristics of the royal tombs (e.g. furnished with a stone door) it is believed to be the tomb of a Liang prince.

⁴¹ A discussion with a background of regional bias concerning the place of production—North or South?—is ongoing. Considering the long tradition of greenware and the liking for lotus motifs in the South, the argument for northern production is less persuasive. Conclusive proof will be reached through chemical testing only.

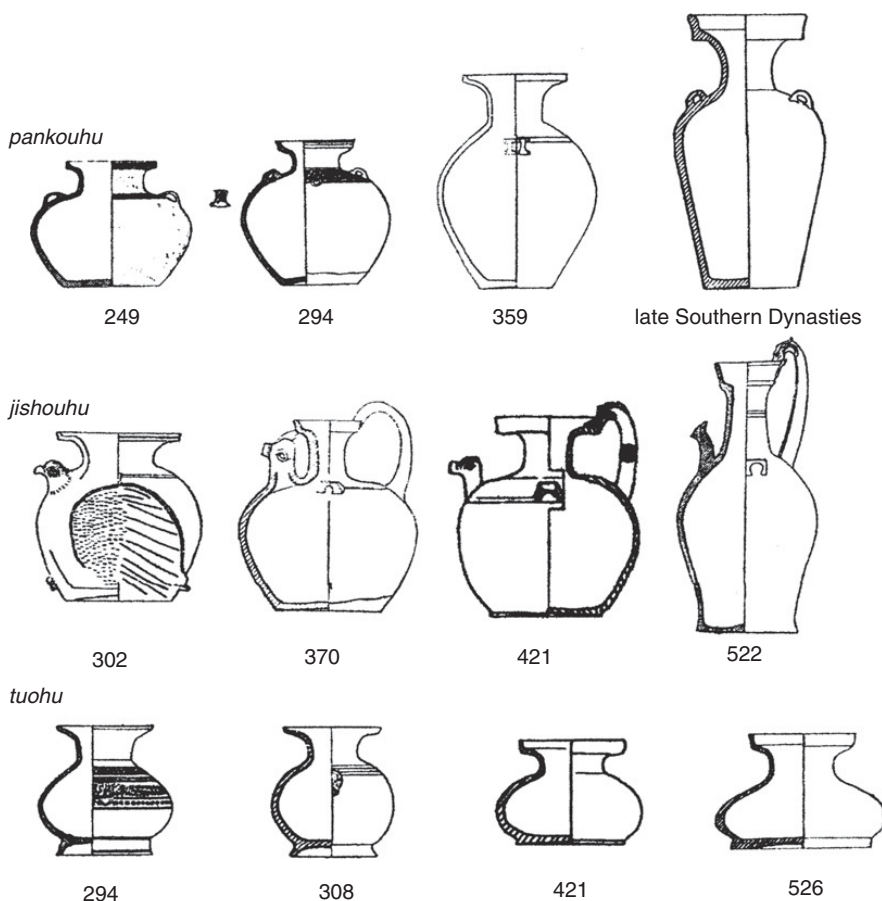


Figure 19.12 *Development of vessel shapes (pankouhu, jishouhu, tuohu). The numbers below the items represent the date of the tomb in which the item was recovered*

Furnishing the Tombs II: Figures (and Clothing)

The fact that tomb figurines appear more frequently from the Southern Dynasties onwards can be attributed to northern influence. However, their number is by no means comparable to that in the North, and even in the capital such figurines are mostly limited to two. As the military did not dominate society in the South as it did in the North, these are usually civil figurines such as a male and female attendant plus the occasional servant or groom. But these southern figurines, by now made of earthenware rather than of greenware, are not as standardized as the mold-made northern ones and may even be crudely hand-shaped (Figure 9.14). The clothing is quite uniform;



Figure 19.13 *Lotos zun vessel*. After *Nanjing bowuyuan*, ed., Jiangsu Liuchao qingci (Beijing, 1980), Plate 105

they are depicted in long robes, the lapel closed over the right and fastened with a girdle, worn over a straight-necked undergarment. Servants wore tight-sleeved garments, or short jackets of the same cut combined with trousers (sometimes knotted at the knee) or skirts; attendants wore wide sleeves that for practical reasons might be knotted above the wrist. Servants and attendants are not differentiated by their headgear: men wore pillbox-shaped hats or ones low in front, higher in back with a bow set in the center. Ladies wore arched caps. While attendants often had their hair fixed in two buns, the southern ladies had a liking for extravagant hairdos piled up in complicated shapes that illustrate the “false hair on wooden frames” or wigs known from the *Jinshu* (*History of the Jin*).⁴² As for the footwear, wooden clogs are known from archaeological findings as well as from mentions in the *Yanshi jiaxun*.⁴³

⁴² JS 27.826.

⁴³ As Yan Zhitu, *Yanshi jiaxun huizhu* (Taipei, 1960), 11.71a, observed, “The Liang scholar-officials usually wore loose garments, along with a wide girdle, a grand hat, and high clogs. When they went out they used carriages or sedan chairs; coming back they had the help of servants. In the suburbs and environs of the city nobody was ever seen on horseback.” Translation by Ssu-yü Teng, *Family instructions for the Yen clan* (Leiden, 1968), p. 116. Cf. also note 27 above.

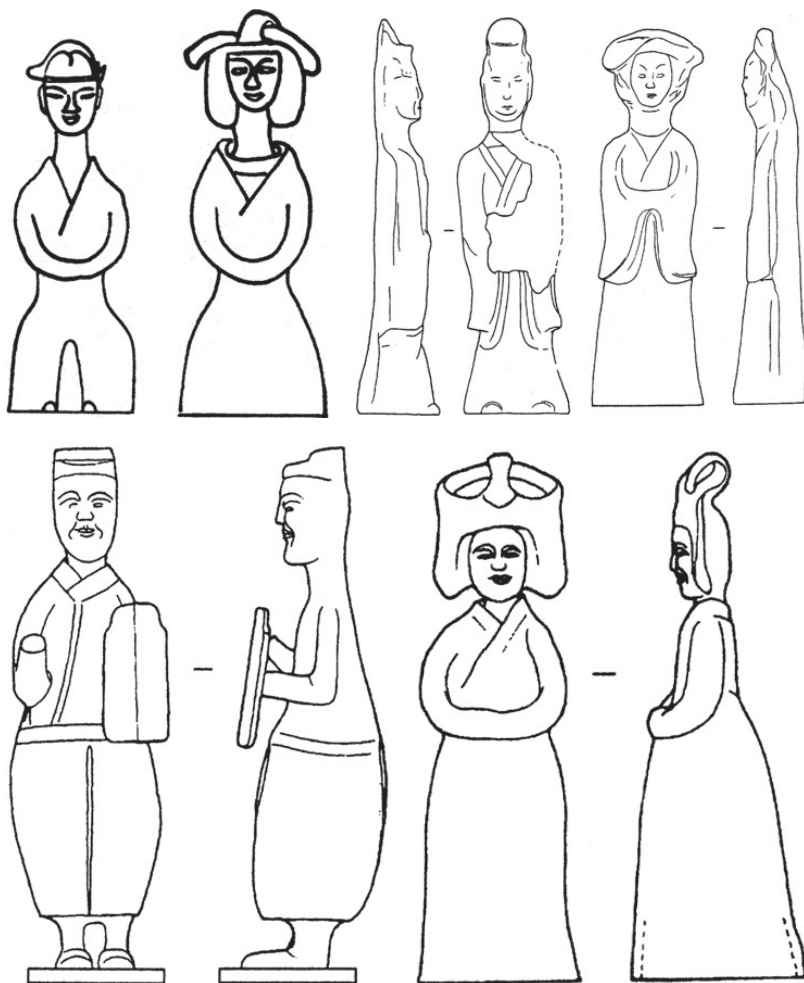


Figure 19.14 *Male and female figurines of the Eastern Jin and Southern Dynasties.* After Gu Suning, "Nanjing Yubuataiqu san zuo Liuchao muzang," *Dongnan wenhua* 1991.6, p. 196, Figure 6; and Yue Yong, Zhang Jiuwen, "Nanjingshi Guojiashan Dong Jin Wen shi jiazhu mu," *Kaogu* 2008.6, p. 10, Figure 11, 20, Figure 29

Some figures show poullaine-like shoes with the tips curled upward that are best seen on Liang dynasty relief tiles. This style became even more fashionable in the Tang dynasty. The tiles also give us a sense of the preference for pleats, scarves, and stoles in the ladies' fashion of the Southern Dynasties.

Near the Southern Dynasties' northern border, there are some tombs in southern Henan and northern Hubei that show more distinct northern

influence: they not only yielded up to fifty-five figurines per tomb, some military men, but the figurines were also very similar in style to the northern ones.⁴⁴

Tomb figurines fashioned from stone are only known from imperial tombs; similarly, doors, armrests, and other items were made of stone for the ruling families exclusively. Steatite figurines are a local characteristic in Guangxi's Southern Dynasties' tombs, where military processions, not known elsewhere in the South, were also placed. One figurine is carried in a sedan chair, which is also depicted on a tomb tile in Dengxian, Henan.⁴⁵ Ox carts were a popular mode of transportation even among the elite, as is known from written sources, figurines, and tomb tiles.⁴⁶ Even though the sources would indicate that horseback riding was out of fashion, at least during the Southern Dynasties,⁴⁷ the combination of ox-drawn cart and saddled horse is found in tombs. Considering the importance of waterways in the South, it is amazing that models of ships did not play a more dominant role in tombs. But since known examples from Guangdong were made from wood, others might simply not have survived.⁴⁸

Equipping the Dead: Adornment

Plain gold and silver ornaments still prevailed in this period. Hairpins in the shape of small battle-axes worn by the Jiankang nobility, criticized in the *Soushen ji* as bad omens, are noteworthy.⁴⁹ The headdress jewelry (*dang*) showing immortals riding dragons or cicadae with a granulated design and golden ornaments, made in openwork technique depicting birds, from Jiankang have their near identical counterparts in Echeng and seem to be crafted from the same workshops (Figure 19.15). The location of such workshops is not known, but it has been proposed that these ornaments were made for the market by private shops since they do not reach the quality of the

⁴⁴ The Dengxian tomb is also well known for its brick relief scenes; see Annette Juliano, *Teng-Hsien: An important Six Dynasties tomb* (Ascona, 1980). The Xiangyang tomb in Hubei is located not far from Dengxian, just at the Henan border, and its figurines as well as its relief carvings are very close to those of Dengxian; see Cui Xinshe and Fan Jiefu, "Xiangyang Jiachiachong huaxiang zhuan mu," *Jiang-Han kaogu* 1986.1, pp. 16–32. A third tomb was discovered further south, in Wuchang; see Wuchangshi geweihui wenhuaju wenwu gongzuozu, "Wuchang Wujiawan fajue yizuo gu mu," *Wenwu* 1975.6, pp. 93–94.

⁴⁵ Juliano, *Teng-hsien*, p. 98.

⁴⁶ *Shibshuo xinyu jianzhu*, comp. Yu Jiayi (Beijing, 1983), Chapter 30, number 5, p. 880; Richard B. Mather, trans., *Shib-shuo hsün-yü: A new account of tales of the world* (Minneapolis, 1976), p. 460; *Yanshi jiaxun*, 11.71a; Teng, *Family instructions*, p. 116.

⁴⁷ *Yanshi jiaxun*, 11.371a; Teng, *Family instructions*, 116.

⁴⁸ Guangdongsheng bowuguan, *Guangdong chutu Jin*, p. 116.

⁴⁹ *Soushen ji* by Gan Bao, ed. Zhongguo gudian wenxue jiben congshu, Volume 7 (Beijing, 1985), p. 193.

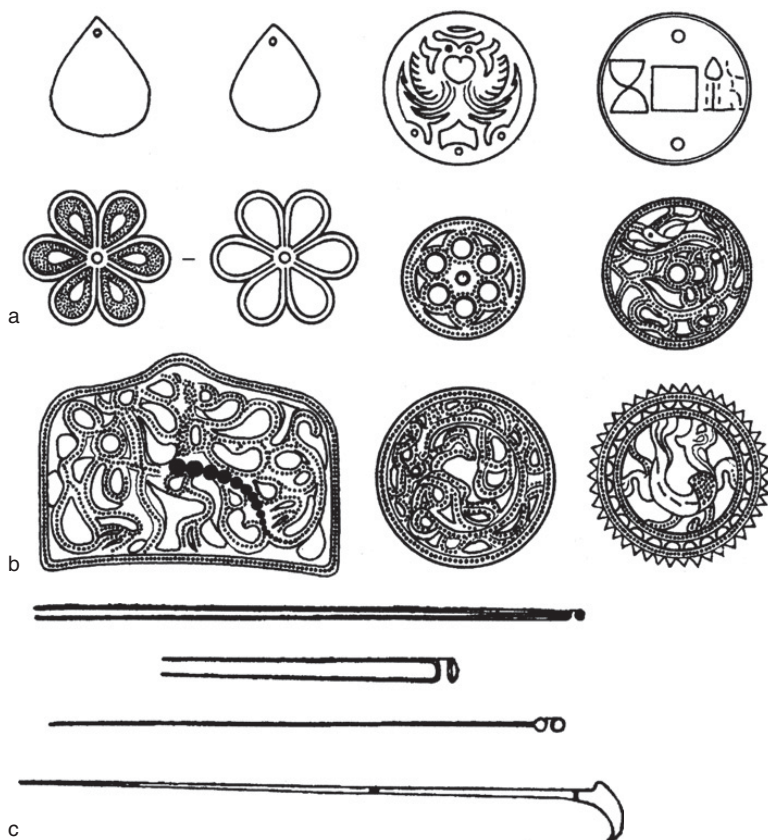


Figure 19.15 *Jewelry*. (a) *Golden ornaments*, (b) *beaddress dang*, (c) *hairpins*. After Jiang Zanchu, ed., *Echeng Liuchao mu* (Beijing, 2007), p. 257, Figure 186; and Nanjingshi wenwu baoguan weiyuanhui, "Nanjing Xiangshan Dong Jin Wang Danbu mu be er, si hao mu fajue jianbao," *Wenwu* 1965.10, p. 43, Figure 22

contemporary northern ones produced in state-run facilities.⁵⁰ Jade is most often found in the tombs of the ruling elite in Jiankang. It was used for ornaments as well as for objects in the shape of cicadae or pigs that were placed in the mouth and in the hands of the deceased;⁵¹ these came more commonly to be made of soapstone. Wristlets made from imported beads (often carved in

⁵⁰ François Louis, *Die Goldschmiede der Tang- und Song-Zeit: Archäologische, sozial- und wirtschaftsgeschichtliche Materialien zur Goldschmiedekunst Chinas vor 1279* (Bern, 1999), p. 89.

⁵¹ On a possible meaning of placing these pig-like figurines in tombs, see Dien, "Instructions for the grave," pp. 53–54.

lion or *bixie* “repel-evil beast” shapes) of turquoise, rock crystal, chalcedony, amber, or agate were also prized among the émigrés. It is mainly their tombs that also yield other imported goods, such as glass vessels,⁵² a nautilus shell turned into a vessel,⁵³ or even a diamond ring.⁵⁴ However, love of the exotic manifests itself in isolated finds only. The southerners did not commonly share the northern non-Chinese passion for imported exotica; gold and silver vessels, for example, do not seem to have appealed to the southern taste. Imported silver vessels are extremely rare in the South, but some were found in a hoard near the Guangdong coast.⁵⁵ Even though the South is known for its deposits of gold and silver,⁵⁶ and the crafting of golden vessels is known at least for Sichuan,⁵⁷ such material does not show up in the archaeological evidence.

As has been suggested by Albert Dien, the near disappearance of swords and blades from the tombs during the Eastern Jin might hint at a tapering off of violence and warfare.⁵⁸ On the other hand, that weapons were not seen as a part of male accoutrement may indicate a lessening of confidence in the apotropaic role that weapons had been believed to have in the afterlife.

CONCLUSION

The material culture of the Six Dynasties in the South that is reflected in tombs is mainly that of the Han Chinese elite. This is especially true for the centers of Chinese migration such as modern Jiangsu or Hubei. The emergence of certain tomb types may reflect an increased migration toward Zhejiang and Fujian as well as Hunan, and later even Guangdong. The burial tradition of the southwestern regions (Sichuan, Yunnan, Guangxi, and Guizhou) mirrors, to a certain degree, the material culture of an indigenous population no doubt influenced by different natural resources and climate. This is expressed in the employment of different materials and methods for tomb construction, as well as for burial goods. Varieties in tomb furnishing, especially in the models, are consonant with the living conditions of the

⁵² The origin of these vessels is believed to be the Roman Orient; see An Jiayao, “Early Chinese glassware,” trans. Matthew Henderson, *Oriental Ceramic Society Translations* 12 (1987), pp. 1–46; An Jiayao “The early glass of China,” in *Scientific research in early Chinese glass: Proceedings of the archaeometry of glass sessions of the 1984 international symposium on glass*, ed. R. H. Brill and J. H. Martin (Corning, NY, 1991), p. 9.

⁵³ Nanjingshi wenwu baoguan weiyuanhui, “Nanjing Rentaishan Dong Jin Xingzhi fufu mu fajue baogao,” *Wenwu* 1965.6, Plate 1.

⁵⁴ Nanjingshi bowuguan, “Nanjing Xiangshan 5 hao,” pp. 23–36 and Plate 5.

⁵⁵ Suixixian bowuguan, “Guangdong Suixixian faxian Nanchao jiaocang jinyinqi,” *Kaogu* 1986.3, pp. 243–246.

⁵⁶ *Wenxuan*, comp. Xiao Tong (Taipei, 1959), 5.14b; translation in David Knechtges, *Wen xuan or selections of refined literature* (Princeton, 1982), 1.393.

⁵⁷ *NQS* 37.653; *WS* 98.2164. ⁵⁸ Dien, *Six Dynasties civilization*, p. 338.

Southwest. Yet in other southern regions (Zhejiang, Fujian, or Guangdong) where undoubtedly a large part of the population was still of non-Chinese origin, this fact does not manifest itself as clearly.

In the regions that bordered the northern regimes, such as northern Hubei, southern Henan, and northern Sichuan, as well as the part of Shaanxi south of the Qinling mountains, tombs as well as burial goods reflect the ever-changing borders during the nearly 400 years of separation. Distinct evidence of northern influences on southern tombs is mainly limited to these regions. Elsewhere, it is the difference from the northern culture that is striking, a difference that prevailed even with the increased influx of northerners after 317. While some of this can be ascribed to natural conditions or political and social circumstances, others are harder to explain.

Foreign influence in the Six Dynasties South is barely to be marked, although the increasing overseas trade surely must have left its mark on southern China; foreign traders and craftsmen undoubtedly lived in the South as they did in the North. Further research on the maritime and southern routes of the Silk Road has yet to be done.⁵⁹

The legacy of the South during those centuries exemplifies a certain sophistication. This expresses itself in the polite arts from literature to painting and calligraphy. In the material culture, as seen in tombs, it is embodied in the shape and decor of ceramics, the style of relief carvings, and stone sculpture. While part of this legacy left its imprint on the culture in the subsequent Sui and Tang, some elements of its material culture, however, did not survive.

⁵⁹ Written sources on the southern routes have been collected in Wang Zhongshu, "Shilun Echeng Wulidun Xi Jin mu chutu de Bosi Sashan chao boliwan wei Wu shi you hailu chuanru," *Kaogu* 1995.1, pp. 81–87.

WOMEN, FAMILIES, AND GENDERED SOCIETY

Jen-der Lee

INTRODUCTION THROUGH THE LIFE OF A NUN

Among the numerous inscriptions that have been digitally archived and uploaded online there is an arresting epitaph of a sixth-century Buddhist nun.¹ The story of this twice-widowed aristocrat, and her eventful life, unearthed nearly a century ago, may serve as a useful example for us to understand the history of women and gender in the Six Dynasties period.²

Yuan Chuntuo, born in 475 to a royal family of the Tuoba Northern Wei, was the great-granddaughter of Emperor Wu (428–452) and the fifth daughter of Tuoba Yun, Prince Rencheng (447–481).³ According to her epitaph, she was brilliant, elegant, and most beloved since a little girl. It is said that her father, the prince, often held her in his arms and let her sit on his lap. The depth of her grief on his death was seen as unusual in someone that young. She was married when around fifteen to a scion of the powerful Mu family, a longtime political ally of the Tuoba ruling clan. When her husband died shortly after the birth of a daughter she intended to remain a widow, but her elder brother Yuan Cheng (467–519)⁴ intervened and she became the second

¹ “Dajuesi Yuanni muzhiming,” in Yen Chuan-ying, *Beichao Fojiao shike tapian baipin* (Taipei, 2008), pp. 69–70. For a clear digital image, see <http://catalog.digitalarchives.tw/item/00/1b/fd/6a.html>.

² For the place of archaeological discoveries in new research, see Albert E. Dien, *Six Dynasties civilization* (New Haven, 2007), *passim*. For a methodological discussion on the use of epitaphs in historical analysis, see Lu Yang, “Cong muzhi de shiliao fenxi zouxiang muzhi de shixue fenxi: yi xinchu Wei Jin Nanbeichao muzhi shuzheng wei zhongxin,” *Zhonghua wenshi luncong* 84.4 (2006), pp. 95–127; as well as Timothy M. Davis, *Entombed epigraphy and commemorative culture in early medieval China: A brief history of early Muzhiming* (Leiden, 2015).

³ Tuoba Yun’s biography is in *WS* 19B.461–462.

⁴ Yuan Cheng, who succeeded to his father’s title as Prince of Rencheng and held high ranks in the military and at court, has biographies in *WS* 19B.462–480 and *BS* 18.654–661. An indication of his importance in the Tuoba regime is that, aside from his biography, the *Weishu* mentions his name eighty-five times. His efforts to relieve the population of the intolerable burden placed on them by the profligate court earned him much respect.

wife of a widower, Xing Luan (464–514), a high official of Han Chinese origin. Besides his success in the military, Xing Luan was respected for his erudition.⁵ Their marriage is portrayed in the epitaph as “harmoniously complementing each other like two-stringed instruments.” Xing Luan had a son from his previous wife, and Chuntuo brought up the child with much love.⁶ In addition, her epitaph states that she served Xing Luan’s mother with propriety and got along well with all of his concubines.

Although she was described as one who aspired to uphold Confucian wifely precepts early on, Yuan Chuntuo was probably not steeped in classical learning until her second marriage. Her epitaph indicates that it was during the course of her stepson’s education that she began reading widely in all the Confucian classics. After that, she was praised as discreet and trustworthy in her conversations. When Xing Luan died unexpectedly, she was described as having mourned in the manner of a virtuous widow.

At this point, Yuan Chuntuo decided to join a religious order. The epitaph cites her as having said, “I have lived a difficult life and endured the hardship of being widowed twice. I feel embarrassed to have remarried and served another man without upholding my virtue. Happiness may derive from adversity and effect may spring from causes.” She then discarded her worldly goods and dedicated herself wholly to Buddhism, “widely collecting sutras and extensively studying the (religious) ordinances.” She was then ordained in the Dajuesi temple at Luoyang. Her grandson Yuan Cong, through the daughter from her first marriage, Lady Mu, was the governor (*mu*) at the capital, Luoyang.⁷ In any event, she became seriously ill while living at his villa. Her epitaph says that briefly before her death, “she became conscious and requested that she be buried alone in order to proceed along the path [of Buddhist observances]. Her children dared not go against her wishes and followed her will.” She died in the tenth month of 529, and a month later was laid to rest on Mount Mang, northeast of Luoyang, where her epitaph was found.⁸

⁵ WS 65.1447.

⁶ The only son listed for Xing Luan in WS is Xing Xun (491–546), described as ill-favored in appearance and short of stature, but with a rather pleasant personality. However, during his career in office, he was criticized for being too keen on financial matters; WS 65.1448.

⁷ Yuan Cong, style Weiqing, the name by which he is referred to in his grandmother’s epitaph, has a short biography in WS 19A.444 and BS 17.632. He was the great-grandson of Emperor Wu, Tuoba Dao (r. 424–552); he inherited the title of Prince of Xihe when his father relinquished the title and became a Buddhist monk.

⁸ This epitaph was excavated early in the twentieth century and first published among the reproduction of rubbings in Zhao Wanli, *Han-Wei Nanbeichao muzhi jishi* (Beijing, 1954). A printed version first appeared in Zhao Chao, *Han Wei Nanbeichao muzhi huibian* (Tianjin, 2008), pp. 261–262. I base my English

Reading the account of the fifty-five years of Yuan Chuntuo's life, one finds multilayered conflict and compromises in cultural exchanges typical of the Six Dynasties. Born to a ruling house, loved by her father, and married to her peers in the upper social stratum, Chuntuo, however, considered herself ill-fated and resorted to religion to find peace of mind. She is said to have enjoyed marital affection in her second marriage to a widower, and devoted herself wholeheartedly to raising her stepson; she also lived and died on the estate of her grandson born of her daughter from her first marriage. To all intents and purposes, her familial relationships were cordial and even loving, and yet she refused burial with either of her husbands.⁹ Her brother Yuan Cheng, who allegedly forced her to violate the principle of Confucian widow chastity, was in fact one of the formulators of the Xianbei sinification policy of the late fifth century. Yuan Cheng's arrangement for his sister exemplifies the sinification strategy of strengthening marriage alliances between the Tuoba and their Han subjects, while Chuntuo's epitaph presents the ideal of feminine gender behavior the Han elite would have preferred their nomadic overlords adopt.¹⁰

Since the late nineteenth century, traditional Chinese society has been characterized by some as "Confucian" in a negative sense, and the social position of women seen to be oppressive. In his pioneer work of the 1920s, Chen Dongyuan sought to demonstrate that historically women's lives were pitiable by providing some rather depressing depictions over the span of imperial China.¹¹ But even Chen, motivated as he was by the May Fourth Movement to use such a negative picture to spur the emancipation and modernization of China, nonetheless had to admit to a certain element of spontaneity during the Six Dynasties.¹² Framed in the context of a Confucian code of ethics in decline, he related stories of unorthodox marriages, jealous wives, and self-indulgent men and women who paid more attention to their appearance than to personal virtue.

renderings on the notes appended to Yen Chuan-ying's transcription of the text, p. 70; I also consulted the *Weishu* (*History of the Wei*) in reconstructing Yuan Chuntuo's life.

⁹ Along with the strengthening of imperial power in medieval China, religious organizations came under stricter official supervision. By the Tang, authorities required Buddhist monks and nuns to register and to live in a designated temple; they were not allowed to travel freely and remain in non-religious lodgings as Chuntuo did. See Liu Shufen, "Zhongguo Fojiao zhengce yu sheyi de zhuanxing," *Tang yanjiu* 13 (2007), pp. 241–299.

¹⁰ There is no signature at the end of the epitaph, but the fact that Chuntuo was addressed as "the successor lady of his lordship" in the title indicates the composer's affiliation with the Xing family, whose perspectives were most likely followed in the text.

¹¹ Chen Dongyuan, *Zhongguo funu shenghuoshi* (Shanghai, 1928). See especially Chapter 4 on the Six Dynasties period, pp. 62–87.

¹² For a critique of Chen's work, see Dorothy Ko, *Teachers of the Inner Chambers: Women and culture in seventeenth-century China* (Stanford, 1994), pp. 1–26.

Indeed, women of the Six Dynasties seem to have lived more freely than their sisters in later times. Scholars contesting the image of an authoritarian tradition turn to Six Dynasties records in which women went on excursions and attended social events; those in the North even practiced archery and horse-riding, a cultural environment that eventually led to the emergence of a woman emperor in Tang times. Yuan Chuntuo's epitaph, however, reminds us that certain underlying axioms about women, gender and society were also emerging. What, then, were the defining codes of ethics and behavior in this period? Against what background should Six Dynasties' spontaneity be discussed? We need to explore the ever-present possibility of treating "woman" as a category before we can identify the various ways women existed in different stages of their lives, supporting or negating such gender ideology.

WOMEN IN CONFUCIAN FAMILY ETHICS

As early as the third century, it was decreed that the system of *wufu* (five degrees of mourning) should be employed as a principle for legal decisions. That is to say, graded penalties would be meted out to ensure the hierarchy within a family should its members become involved in legal cases. The mourning system is recorded in the *Yili*, the ancient *Classic on Etiquette and the Rites*, which, when troubled with family disputes, medieval intellectuals often quoted and invoked. According to the system, when a person died, the durations of the mourning period, ranging from three months to three years, and flax clothing made of five different materials and shapes, were assigned to each family member based on his or her relation with the deceased, in terms of both closeness and status. The mourning obligations were fashioned around the male members; the system thus showed the scope and composition of a patriarchal family. A man, unless adopted into another household, would stay in his family with his relations to other members uninterrupted, but a woman's mourning obligations changed with her marital status. When she married into her husband's family, her mourning for her natal family members would be reduced, and her most serious obligation, the three years' mourning for her father, was transferred to her mourning for her husband.¹³

As a wife, her family identity shifted from her natal family to her husband's, and her most important responsibilities in his family were to prepare food and produce male offspring. Dietary duties involved the preparation of everyday

¹³ The first and best overview of the *wufu* system and its application in imperial China remains to date Ch'ü T'ung-tsu, *Law and society in traditional China* (Paris, 1961), pp. 15–20. For analysis of the *wufu* ethics in Six Dynasties Chinese legal development, see Jen-der Lee, "The death of a princess: Codifying classical family ethics in early medieval China," in *Presence and presentation: Women in the Chinese literati tradition*, ed. Sherry J. Mou (New York, 1999), pp. 1–37.

meals as well as of the offerings for ancestral worship; relatedly, a line of sons and grandsons ensured future victuals for both mundane and ritual purposes. She was expected to be diligent in needlework and discreet in words and certainly not concerned about fine clothes and cosmetics.¹⁴ Whether giving birth or not, she was to occupy a status inferior to her husband's but superior to that of his other women. Children of his concubines were to respect her as their legal mother and pay a heavier mourning obligation to her than to their birth mothers; their prescribed relations with her, or with any other woman in the family, were based on neither personal affection nor gratitude for care given as an infant, but on her relationship with their father.¹⁵

The rhetoric in Yuan Chuntuo's epitaph presents the image of an ideal daughter, wife and mother abiding by the precepts summarized above. But the actions she took, voluntarily or not, indicate more complicated interactions with the world in which she lived. Fortunately, recent research on women's encounters with law, medicine and religion has in many ways broadened our knowledge of this period. Based on these studies, this chapter will first investigate legal and ceremonial debates on Confucian ethics as they related to women; second, examine the development of reproductive health care to understand better women's roles as wives and mothers; and third, explore women who deviated from the patriarchal norms to enter a spiritual realm that may or may not have welcomed them as equals. The chapter will then conclude with some discussion of the physical bonds between family members to illustrate an important feature of this period: women's participation in politics.

ARISTOCRATIC WIVES DEFYING MARITAL HIERARCHY

Half of Yuan Chuntuo's epitaph was taken up with a description of her life as a wife. Although scant details were recorded about her first marriage, the narrative of her years in the Xing family are quite detailed. Companionship between the couple rather than hierarchy was emphasized, which may have revealed sentiments of the time. Moralists, such as Ge Hong (284–363), criticizing "erroneous behaviors," detested the idea that men, in the name of intimacy, stayed in the inner chamber with their wives.¹⁶ Couples exchanged

¹⁴ The four "wifely qualities," which included virtues, words, appearance, and needlework, were first proposed by Ban Zhao of the Han dynasty in her *Nü Jie* (*Admonitions for Women*). Following Ban Zhao's precedent, at least thirty different essays on women's education and propriety were written by the end of the Six Dynasties, and most of them favored virtues and skills over appearance. See discussion in Jen-der Lee, "The life of women in the Six Dynasties," *Funü yu liangxing xuekan* 4 (1993), pp. 47–80.

¹⁵ See the chapters on mourning in the *Yili*, *Shibsanjing zhushu*, juan 28–33.

¹⁶ Ge Hong, in his promotion of sexual segregation, claimed that even with the degree of closeness between husbands and wives, a man should not stay in the inner chamber during daytime unless he was ill. See *Baopuzi waipian jiaojian*, Volume 1 (Beijing, 1991), p. 616.

correspondence of both a practical and an affectionate nature. Yan Zhitui (531–591+), compiling his family precepts in the sixth century, mentioned that women in the North would express their affection for their husbands by addressing them in an informal manner, quite contrary to prescribed conjugal propriety.¹⁷

Challenges to husband-dominant status can also be examined through the issue of female jealousy. In aristocratic marriages, a wife was a representative of the alliance supported by her natal family. If the two parties were equal in social and official status, she would not be docile and submissive.¹⁸ We can see how this played out when Lady Liu, wife of the Eastern Jin Grand Mentor (*taifu*) Xie An, defied her husband's intention to take in concubines. When challenged by Xie An's nephews, who quoted the *Book of Odes* to praise the womanly virtue of tolerance, she retorted, "The Duke of Zhou was a man and wrote these poems for his kind. Now if it were the *Duchess* of Zhou, [the tradition] would not have been such!"¹⁹ Scholars of the early twentieth century rejected this anecdote's credibility and suspected that it was fabricated to make a laughingstock of Lady Liu, who was known for her jealous nature.²⁰ But the story vividly conveys an unorthodox perspective recognized by people of that time. History says that the court discussed his proposal but decided not to carry it out.

Reactions from the authorities, however, appear to have varied regionally. In the Southern Dynasties, one emperor commissioned the composition and circulation of anti-jealousy literature, including tales like the one above, to warn and to reprimand insubordinate women. Another ordered punishments ranging from execution and flogging to forced divorce for envious wives of his subjects. Interestingly, in the Xianbei North, an imperial clansman and high official sent a memorial to the throne requesting support to establish concubinage as an official institution by flogging and even expulsion of dominant wives.

Since antiquity, legal interference was anticipated if violence did occur between couples, and this is where gender ideology came into action. Excavated bamboo slips from early Han show that the law would punish a belligerent wife more harshly than her hostile husband.²¹ Extant cases of the

¹⁷ Yan Zhitui, *Yanshi jiaxun huizhu*, ed. Zhou Fagao (Taipei, 1960), 5.12b. Ssu-yu Teng, trans., *Family instructions for the Yen Clan: An annotated translation with introduction* (Leiden, 1968), p. 19.

¹⁸ Chen Dongyuan reckons the support of natal family as a minor reason for wives' outspokenness, but Liu Tseng-kui considers it a major factor in aristocratic alliances. See Liu Tseng-kui, "Wei Jin Nanbeichao shidai de qie," *Xin shih xue* 2.4 (1991), pp. 1–36.

¹⁹ Yu Tongzhi, *Du fu ji*, cited in Ouyang Xun (557–641), *Yiwen leiju* (Beijing, 1965), 35.614–615.

²⁰ *Shih-shuo hsin-yu jianshu*, by Liu Yiqing (403–444), annotated by Yu Jiaxi (Shanghai, 1993), 35.695–696; Richard Mather, *Shih-shuo hsin-yü: A new account of tales of the world*, by Liu I-ch'ing with commentary by Liu Chün, translated with an introduction (Minneapolis, 1976), pp. 353–354.

²¹ Hsing I-tien, "Zhangjiashan Hanjian 'Ernian luling' duji," in *idem*, *Di bu ai bao: Handai de jiandu* (Beijing, 2011), pp. 144–199.

Six Dynasties again imply regional differences. While in the South, in cases of violence, a wife paid a heavier price than unrelated offenders, in the North, at times the husband received the heavier penalty. One can also detect a hesitation by the judiciary in the North to recognize the dominant status of the husband when children were involved. For example, there is the case of a son in the South who was decapitated for not reporting his mother's dissection of the father's remains for medical reasons, whereas in the North, a son would be protected by law not to disclose his mother's killing the father.²²

The legal principle involved in failure to report such parental homicides led to debates among officials. In the middle of the sixth century, it was determined at the Eastern Wei court that a son who reported the murder of his father by his mother should rather himself be executed. But referring to the venerable mourning system as the legal basis for recognition of the husband's superior status vis-à-vis both his wife and son, an official sent a memorial to the throne challenging the validity of such a law. If the son concealed the crime, said the official, quoting from the *Yili*, "It proves that he knows only his mother but not his father. This is the attitude of wild men; such behavior is close to that of a beast." A legal expert at the court countered his argument by asserting that "a person receives flesh and care from both parents and has the same affections for both. This presumptuous distinction between superiority and inferiority is hard to endure and bears no historical precedent." Although the opponent filed another plea, citing other passages from the classics, no further response was heard from the imperial court and the regulations based on the maternal bond remained intact.²³

MATERNAL BONDS CHALLENGING PATRIARCHY WHILE REINFORCING REPRODUCTION

The physical bond between a mother and her son posed constant challenges to patriarchal family ethics; the mourning system was often the focus of debate. We have a rare case in the Northern Wei in which a bereaved mother, despite her own concubinage status, excluded mention of her husband's senior wife in the dedicatory inscription commemorating her deceased son.²⁴ Other records show that filial sons insisted on paying heavier mourning obligations to their birth mothers regardless of the latter's status in the household; time and again

²² For differences of legal development between North and South, see Lee, "The death of a princess."

²³ WS 88.1910.

²⁴ Kate A. Lingley, "Lady Yuchi in the first person: Patronage, kinship and the voice in the Guyang Cave," *EMC* 18 (2012), pp. 25–47.

imperial authorities would concede and approve the revision of standard rituals. For instance, the *wufu* system prescribed that a concubine's son could only accord three months' mourning to her if he became his father's legal successor.²⁵ Several imperial heirs-apparent in the fourth century insisted on fulfilling three years' mourning for their concubine mothers to express their unwavering affection, inviting both blame and praise. Popular practice among the literati to stay in prolonged mourning for their concubine mothers may have attracted emulation from royalty and affected the latter's interpretations of the classical texts.²⁶ After extensive discussions, the Eastern Jin court finally compromised and decreed that a concubine's son could pay nine months' mourning to his birth mother even if he were designated the heir.²⁷ The situation was similar concerning the mourning for a remarried widow. Patriarchal ethics considered such a woman unrelated to her former husband's family; moreover, legal regulations since the Han dynasty exempted her from collective responsibility with that family in the event of some criminal transgression. Accordingly, a son born of the previous marriage owed no obligation to her, nor was he to observe any of the mourning rites for her. However, as is obvious in Yuan Chuntuo's story, since widow remarriage was a common practice in this period, it would seem possible that the woman would maintain contact with any children from her previous marriage. It was quite impossible to forbid them to mourn her in the name of filial piety. Scholars therefore proposed and eventually included mourning obligations for a married widow mother in official sanctions.²⁸

Other maternal relations also triggered debates among early medieval intellectuals; consequently, the imperial court decided at last to strengthen the mourning obligations a man paid to his siblings of different fathers and his maternal uncles. Both groups, perceived as outsiders according to the classical patriarchal definition, gained their ritual status through maternal

²⁵ According to classical sources, a legal wife's son could pay either one or three years' mourning to his mother depending on whether or not his father had already died when his mother passed away.

²⁶ For prolonged mourning and its social ramifications, see Keith N. Knapp, *Selfless offspring: Filial children and social order in early medieval China* (Honolulu, 2005), pp. 137–163.

²⁷ See officials' discussions recorded in *Tongdian*, comp. Du You (734–812) (Beijing, 1988), 92.501. Japanese scholars have investigated this issue early on; see Fujikawa Masakazu, *Gishin jidai ni okeru sōfukurei no kenkyū* (Tokyo, 1960), *passim*; and Kamiya Noriko, *Haba no tame mofuku: Chūgoku kodai shakai ni miru fukun-fuken, tsuma=haba no chii ko no gimu* (Tokyo, 1994), *passim*. For latest detailed analysis, see Cheng Ya-ju, "Zhonggu shiqi de muzi guanxi: xingbie yu Han-Tang zhijian de jiatingshi yanjiu," in Lee Jen-der, ed., *Zhongguoshi xinlun-xingbieshi fence* (Taipei, 2009), pp. 140–152.

²⁸ The rationale was that, unlike a divorced mother, a widow was not forced out of the house by her husband; therefore the son was not violating the precept of father superiority. As for mourning for a divorced mother, the ritual was not amended until mid-Tang after a series of women rulers were in charge of the government. See Cheng, "Zhonggu shiqi," p. 148.

bonds.²⁹ In these cases of ceremonial revision, as in the debates on concealing the crimes of one's mother, the line of reasoning was that a child received his body and care from both parents. That a baby derived its body from the father but also its *qi* from the mother ran through most of the arguments that upheld maternal status. While physical bonds made a substantial impact in modifying the father-centered principles, they may have also reinforced a woman's procreative duty. Reproduction was essential not only to ensure the paternal line but also to improve maternal standing. Correspondingly, medical historians have observed increased concerns about childbirth in this period.³⁰

Extant medical texts from early China suggest that doctors' intervention into women's reproductive function started with the maladies that afflicted gestation. But their investigations and instructions advanced steadily. By the end of the seventh century, when an independent "Recipes for Women" appeared, medical men already came up with a whole set of techniques to treat childbirth, from begetting a son to postpartum care. Thus a gendered view of the body was built around women's reproductive function and their weak nature.³¹

Research has shown the efforts that were made to accumulate and to standardize reproductive knowledge during the Six Dynasties. Male authors of medical texts gradually agreed upon the proper time for ingesting herbal medicine to ensure a quick and safe delivery. They integrated previously separate "delivery charts"—used to identify squatting positions and geomantic directions in delivery as well as locations for the burial of placenta—into one chart.³² The systematization of medical practices, though aimed at protecting childbearing women, may have also affected the role of women in health care. Midwives were sometimes blamed for incompetence although childbirths were almost always handled by female servants. Studies suggest that women had practiced medicine since antiquity; some even made a living

²⁹ Cheng, "Zhonggu shiqi," pp. 135–190. For the larger role of maternal relatives in the Han, see Hou Xudong, *Beichao cummin de shenghuo shijie: chaoting, zhouxian yu canli* (Beijing, 2005), pp. 60–107.

³⁰ *Qi*, perceived as the vital force to sustain human life in Chinese medicine, was thought to function differently between men and women. While in men it was manifested as *jing* (essence), in women it would be better understood through *xue* (blood). Conception occurred when the two met and mingled—this discourse elaborated around blood laid the foundation for Chinese gynecology. See Charlotte Furth, *A flourishing yin: Gender in China's medical history, 960–1665* (Berkeley, 1999).

³¹ Sun Simiao (581–682) was the first to propose independent "recipes for women" and included one such section in his highly regarded work *Beiji qianjin yaofang* (Beijing, 2004). His arguments that women differed from men both physically and emotionally were elaborated by later medical writers and influenced the distinct development of Chinese gynecology. See Jen-der Lee, "*Isbinpo* and its excerpts from *Chanjing*: A Japanese medical text as a source for Chinese women's history," in Clara W. C. Ho, ed., *Overt and covert treasures: Essays on the sources for Chinese women's history* (Hong Kong, 2012), pp. 185–216.

³² Jen-der Lee, "Gender and medicine in Tang China," *AM* 16.2 (2003), pp. 1–32.

by doing so. But their role as healers was hardly acknowledged; instead, they were often praised not for their skills but for their sacrifices in tending to sick family members.³³

Such devotion to domestic care instigated additional disputes over women's status in the patriarchal household. In one case from early Eastern Jin, an aristocratic wife who had not borne a son filed a petition to confirm her relationship with her adopted son, emphasizing not any flesh-and-blood connection but rather her unconditional love. She faced a dilemma when her husband's concubine bore him a male heir, and she was asked to send back the adopted one. She cited numerous legal precedents and historical accounts, trying to argue that a mother–son relationship is independent of the patriarchal line. She mentioned the medication she took so that her barren body could produce milk for the child and stressed her dedicated care lasting nearly twenty years. Unfortunately, her eloquence failed to win her the case. Though more than one participant in the court debates took pity on her solitary motherhood, the final ruling was to reinforce the father's defining role in family relations. The verdict criticized her erroneous interpretations of Confucian classics and ordered her adopted son to return to his original family.³⁴

Debates over the nature of motherly care also occurred when people mourned their wet nurses and emperors bestowed honorific titles on their former nannies. It was common practice since antiquity for aristocratic families to recruit wet nurses to care for their newborns, and materials from the Six Dynasties suggest that these women were often selected from household servants. According to the *wufu* system, one should pay three months' mourning to one's wet nurse. Proponents of such a practice claimed that whatever her origins, a *rumu* (literally a "milk mother") did carry the name of "mother" and substantiated her motherly merits with her milk. Opponents, however, rejected the idea that milk and maternal care could allow a maid to transcend class boundaries. Objections were even stronger when emperors granted noble titles to imperial wet nurses. Inspired by his predecessors in the Han dynasty, an Eastern Jin bureaucrat warned that political danger could arise if powerful men confided in and were influenced by these women to whom they felt they owed their life.³⁵

³³ For the development of women's medicine and their roles in health care in medieval China, see Lee Jen-der, *Nüren de Zhongguo yiliaoshi: Han Tang zhijian de jiankang zhaogu yu xingbie* (Taipei, 2008).

³⁴ For a detailed discussion of this case, pled by Lady Yu in 330, see Cheng Ya-ju, *Qinggan yu zhidu: Wei Jin shiqi de muzi guanxi* (Taipei, 2001). For an English translation of this case, see Jessey Choo, "Adoption and motherhood: The petition submitted by Lady (née) Yu," in *Early medieval China: A sourcebook*, ed. Wendy Swartz et al. (New York, 2013), pp. 511–529.

³⁵ Jen-der Lee, "Wet nurses in early imperial China," *NN* 2.1 (2000), p. 31. For a specific example, see Jen-der Lee, "The epitaph of a third-century wet nurse, Xu Yi," in *Early medieval China*, ed. Wendy Swartz et al., pp. 458–467.

Interestingly, this was not considered a debatable matter in the Xianbei North; indeed, imperial wet nurses were twice lifted up to the position of empress dowager in the early fifth century. The reason for this was that mothers of the heirs apparent were put to death for fear of maternal interference in dynastic politics.³⁶ Whether to accuse a woman of foisting her own adopted son over a boy produced by a concubine or to execute the woman who gave birth to an imperial heir, it appears that motherhood caused quite some anxiety for the patriarchal authorities.³⁷ The peculiar feature of women rulers of this period showed that widowed mothers may have exerted even more influence on their sons. Before turning to the political realm, we shall first examine the kind of difficulty the final request of Yuan Chuntuo created for her children.

THE WIDOWED AND THE UNMARRIED: RELIGION AS AN ALTERNATIVE

It was not uncommon for a devout widow to ask for burial separate from her husband and not in his family burial ground. This act to sever her secular role as a wife usually depended upon her status as a mother. Her son, who composed the epitaph, aware of its deviance from Confucian ethics and contemporary practice, emphasized her virtues of endurance and his own filial piety to fulfill her wish.³⁸ Some women went even farther by demanding that their corpses be exposed for animal consumption, following the Buddha's example.³⁹ Just as in legal and in medical history, recent studies on medieval religion find that the female body was the point of reference and focus of debates. In addition to secular rulers and the sangha, women were perceived in eschatological scriptures as one of the factors that affected the decline of the dharma, and profuse stone inscriptions demonstrate negative attitudes toward their bodies. While the epitaphs of some aristocratic ladies may have displayed positive views toward a female body in its advancement to nirvana, most women believers regarded their

³⁶ Scott Pearce, "Nurses, nurslings, and new shapes of power in the mid-Wei court," *AM*, 3rd series 22.1 (2009), pp. 287–309. The fate of these mothers reminds us that the imperial household was the most patriarchal institution in Chinese society and our impression of advances in the status of women in the North needs qualification.

³⁷ For one of the pioneering works concerned with mothers' influence on their sons and the impact on the patriarchal society of early imperial China, see Shimomi Takao, *Jukyō shakai to bōsei: bōsei no iryoku no kanten de miru Kan Gi Shin Chūgoku joseishi* (Tokyo, 1994; revised edn, 2008).

³⁸ Liao Yifang, *Tangdai de muzi guanxi* (Taipei, 2009).

³⁹ Liu Shufen, "Death and degeneration of life: Exposure of the corpse in medieval Chinese Buddhism," *JCR* 28 (2000), pp. 1–30.

physical existence as defiled and anticipated leaving its confinement for rebirth in Paradise.⁴⁰

The ways women prepared for their death testified to the significant role of religion in their life. Women in the Six Dynasties were recorded to have visited Buddhist temples, made pilgrimages to miracle sites, and participated in Buddhist preaching assemblies, much to the dismay of advocates of sex segregation.⁴¹ Recovered documents in north China, however, also demonstrate that, for over 400 years since the sixth century, village women organized all-female auxiliary communities, sometimes under the leadership of a nun, either to patronize Buddhist image-buildings or to support ailing members.⁴² Scholars suspect that these were widowed mothers in charge of family finance since they had sufficient resources at their disposal.⁴³

It was not surprising that the first Buddhist nun in China was a fourth-century widow. Jingjian (c. 291–361), who made a living by teaching music and calligraphy to aristocratic boys and girls, decided to receive ordination after vigorously reading sutras.⁴⁴ Yuan Chuntuo was said to have studied Buddhist texts extensively as well. Aristocratic families provided their daughters with basic education; talented ones mastered the classics so well that they either personally tutored their sons or offered their expertise to the government.⁴⁵ Biographies of both Buddhist nuns and immortals highlighted literate young ladies favoring religious scriptures over Confucian classics. Wei Huacun (252–334), the first matriarch of the Shangqing school of Daoism, was portrayed as fond of reading *Laozi* and *Zhuangzi* since childhood.⁴⁶ Along with the emergence of Daoist monasticism in the sixth century, precociousness became a common feature attributed to female renunciants. Unlike their predecessors, who were often married and practiced religion together with their husbands, later Daoist women, like their

⁴⁰ Lin Hsin-yi, *Shehui guizhen: Zhongguo Handi Fojiao famieguan yu funü xinyang* (Taipei, 2008).

⁴¹ Lee, "The life of women in the Six Dynasties," p. 51.

⁴² Hao Chunwen, "Zailun Beichao zhi Sui Tang Wudai Songchu de nüren jieshe," *Dunhuang yanjiu* 6 (2006), pp. 103–108.

⁴³ For women's property rights in the Six Dynasties, see Jen-der Lee, "Han Tang zhijian nüxing caichan-quan shitan," in *idem*, *Zhongguo shi xinlun: Xingbieshi fence* (Taipei, 2009), pp. 191–237.

⁴⁴ Kathryn Ann Tsai, trans., *Lives of the nuns: Biographies of Chinese Buddhist nuns from the fourth to sixth centuries. A translation of the Pi-ch'iu-ni chuan, compiled by Shih Pao-ch'ang* (Honolulu, 1994), pp. 17–19. For the establishment of nuns' ordination and lineage in China, see Li Yu-chen, *Tangdai de biqiumi* (Taipei, 1988), pp. 111–144.

⁴⁵ See the examples of Lady Zhang in SGZ 28.784–785, Lady Song in JS 96.2521–2522, Feng Zhuo in WS 92.1978, Lady Cui in BS 91.3007, and Han Lanyin in NS 11.330. See also Lee, "The life of women in the Six Dynasties," pp. 52–54.

⁴⁶ Catherine Despeux and Livia Kohn, *Women in Daoism* (Cambridge, MA, 2003), pp. 14–15.

Buddhist counterparts, sometimes left their families without parental consent.⁴⁷ When accused by her father of being irresponsible as a daughter, An Lingshou (c.280–?), replied that she studied Buddhism to free all living beings from suffering, how much more so her parents. Why, she asked, should she be considered an upright woman only if she followed the Confucian precept of dedicating her life to submitting to her father, her husband, and finally her son during her lifetime?⁴⁸

This nun's refutation demonstrates that while a young woman would be pressured to marry and produce heirs, devout widows were not necessarily expected to remarry. Hagiographical stories, however, indicate that determined young women might receive support from both secular and even divine intervention to lead a celibate life. In one case, by means of a prominent monk collecting funds to return the bride-price to her future in-laws, a maiden escapes from an involuntary marriage. Another was saved from the approaching wedding when her fiancé was suddenly gored by an ox and died.⁴⁹ In both cases the two women had already dedicated themselves to becoming nuns. The displeased father of An Lingshou, cited above, was eventually promoted to high office when her piety drew the attention of the king, who was himself a Buddhist devotee.

In an environment of rising devotion, religious women, like pious men, may have carried unexpected influence—such could have been in the minds of both propagating hagiographers and skeptical sovereigns. In the South, an erudite nun, when consulted by the Eastern Jin emperor, persuaded him to change the imperial appointment of a militarily strategic position; thus one may note criticism in court circles at the undue influence exercised not just by a ruler's former wet nurse but also by nuns.⁵⁰ Twice in the Northern Dynasties, threatened Xianbei emperors banned Buddhism to curtail its political strength. Nonetheless, steles and temples kept proliferating between periods of prosecution; moreover, imperial consorts joined nunneries after being widowed.⁵¹ A newly published epitaph suggests that an interested empress dowager would invite a learned nun to lecture and expound on the scriptures in the inner palace.⁵² Historians have long noted that Buddhist teachings and rituals complemented the significance of a woman's love for her

⁴⁷ Despeux and Kohn, *Women in Daoism*, pp. 104–128, which draws upon the surviving fragments of the *Daoxue zhuan*, for which see Stephen Peter Bumbacher, *The fragments of the Daoxue zhuan* (New York and Frankfurt am Main, 2000).

⁴⁸ Tsai, *Lives of the nuns*, pp. 20–21. ⁴⁹ Tsai, *Lives of the nuns*, pp. 49–50, 92–95.

⁵⁰ Tsai, *Lives of the nuns*, p. 34. For criticism of pairing nuns with nannies, see Lee, "Wet nurses in early imperial China," p. 28 and n. 97.

⁵¹ Shufen Liu, "Ethnicity and the suppression of Buddhism in fifth-century north China: The background and significance of the Gaiwu Rebellion," *AM*, 3rd series 15.1 (2002), pp. 1–22.

⁵² Wang Shan, "Bei Wei Sengzhi muzhi kaoshi," *Beida shixue* 13 (2008), pp. 87–107.

son, which in turn intensified the latter's duties to realize her salvation.⁵³ None of the regent empress dowagers of this period explicitly referred to Buddhism as the basis of their hold on their sons, but their reliance on the maternal bonds was likely sustained by the religious atmosphere of the time.

WOMEN RULERS AS FAMILY ROLES

In his pioneering analysis of female rulers, Yang Lien-sheng demonstrates that, since early China, having the empress dowager serve as regent was an established institution essential to the imperial family in times of succession crises; furthermore, the nature of her power, though legitimate and real, was temporary and transitional.⁵⁴ Granted a measure of expediency, in some cases the regency was extended if she took a forceful interest in politics at the expense of a docile young emperor. Empress Dowager Wenming (441–490) of the Northern Wei, the one who initiated having a nun preach in the harem, twice rose to power through the clever deployment of confidants and successive *coups d'état* to remove first a political rival and later her legal son—the emperor. When she served as regent for her grandson, the renowned filial Emperor Xiaowen (467–499), she initiated reform policies that were later reckoned as the precursors of the sinification movement. Her insights and implementations in transforming a nomadic tribe into a bureaucratic government ruling over agrarian China proved her to be a politically capable woman.⁵⁵

Empress Dowager Wenming, however, did not rise to power out of nowhere. The Tuoba rulers applied the Han institution of regent empress dowager within a long tradition of socially energetic wives and mothers. Yan Zhitui, in his family instructions, portrayed the northern women as actively promoting family welfare, filing complaints on behalf of their husbands, and applying for official positions for their sons. Yan attributed all these practices to the legacy of nomadic heritage.⁵⁶ Such cultural background and Wenming's precedent no doubt created ambitious emulators. Empress Dowager Ling (?–528), the first in the Northern Wei to have escaped execution as the mother of an imperial successor, ascended from consort to dowager through cunning use of her role as mother. She performed prayers when pregnant, expressing a willingness to sacrifice her life if it would provide her reigning husband an heir. Except for a very short period when she was ousted

⁵³ Stephen F. Teiser, *The Ghost Festival of medieval China* (Princeton, 1988), pp. 130–134. See also Alan Cole, *Mothers and sons in Chinese Buddhism* (Stanford, 1998).

⁵⁴ Yang Lien-sheng, "Female rulers in Imperial China," *HJAS* 23 (1960–1961), pp. 47–61.

⁵⁵ Kang Le, *Cong xijiao dao nanjiao: guojia jidian yu Bei Wei zhengzhi* (Taipei, 1995), pp. 113–164.

⁵⁶ Yan Zhitui, *Yanshi jiaxun*, 5, 12b; Teng, *Family instructions*, p. 19.

by a coup, she presided over the government as dowager empress for more than ten years on behalf of her juvenile son. She sent confidants to spy on the young emperor and resorted to the rhetoric of maternal affections when faced with imminent conflict.⁵⁷

Empress Dowager Ling's figure loomed large in sixth-century political, religious, and cultural history. One incident that occurred during the zenith of her regency merits analysis. A nobleman had extramarital affairs with two married women of commoner status and beat his pregnant wife, a jealous imperial princess, such that she had a miscarriage. Brought to the attention of the emperor, there then ensued serious debate on what would be an appropriate punishment for the nobleman, the two women, and their brothers, who were somehow connected to the case. An imperial decree favored severe punishments for all three parties because causing the abortion of an imperial family member should be considered treasonous. By citing the *wufu* system and legal precedents drawing on shifting allegiances and the identity of married women, some court officials challenged the decree by arguing that what this man killed was his unborn baby, not an imperial offspring, and that the brothers should take no blame for crimes committed by their married sisters. However, the original judgments were sustained by a response decree; the protesting officials were all deprived of salary for three months.⁵⁸

This case occurred about fifty years after the Xianbei came to be influenced by the Han, and nearly two and a half centuries since the first edict had been issued to call on the *wufu* system in deciding verdicts, and still one may see that there was uncertainty in the legal codification relating to a married woman's family identity. This was also the time of Yuan Chuntuo's ordination, and her subsequent choices testified to the gradual changes in conformity to Confucian gender ideology in social practice as well. A late fourth-century household registration, recently discovered in northwest China, recorded that, after being widowed, women resumed using their maiden names and returned to live with their natal families.⁵⁹ A recently excavated Northern Wei epitaph portrays an aristocratic woman living in the same neighborhood as her natal family and participating in decisions of its ceremonial events.⁶⁰ Chuntuo's epitaph described her brother as *wei yi duo qing* 違義奪情; that is, "transgressing the bounds of human relationships and depriving her of the emotions [she

⁵⁷ For the Empress Dowager's life and politics, see WS 13.337–340.

⁵⁸ For a detailed discussion, see Lee, "The death of a princess." For an English translation of the case, see Lee, "Crime and punishment: The case of Liu Hui in the *Weisbu*," in *Early medieval China*, ed. Swartz et al., pp. 156–165.

⁵⁹ Rong Xinjiang, "Tulufan chutu Qian Qin Jianyuan ershinianji yanjiu," *Zhonghua wenshi luncong* 88.4 (2007), pp. 1–30.

⁶⁰ Luo Xin, "Ba Bei Wei Zheng Picheng qi Li Huiyi muzhi," *Zhongguo lishi wenwu* 2005.6, pp. 44–49.

would naturally feel in mourning her departed husband],” but her remarriage suggests a woman’s close association and sometimes sociopolitical symbiosis with her natal family.⁶¹

Publications on powerful Tang princesses have been prolific. Recent research indicates that imperial daughters of the Six Dynasties also took active roles in politics. Descriptions of Yuan Chuntuo sitting on her loving father’s lap and constantly being held in his arms mirror paintings of family life in archaeological sites and exhibit the doting affections daughters may have received.⁶² To advance their purposes, imperial princesses emphasized their family roles in sharing the political burdens of their fathers and brothers. In the South, princesses’ personal mansions, located outside but close to the imperial palace, were used as the perfect space, in the name of family gatherings, to settle political discord. In the North, we find imperial princesses serving as *nüshangshu* (Female Imperial Secretary), a position Empress Dowager Ling exploited to recruit her aides and advisers.⁶³ Though exceptional in status, imperial princesses remind historians to further explore the roles of daughters and the connections between family, gender, and power.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Living between the two unified empires, people of the Six Dynasties have long fascinated historians by their vibrant energy in managing social, cultural, and political conflicts. Earlier studies of the aristocratic society and the rule by nomads, two distinct features of this period, have shown us the impact of class and ethnicity in history and the ways we understand it. Lately, research on women has confirmed that gender is also a useful category for our analysis of this period. On the one hand, moralists often invoked women’s assigned places in family and in society as criteria to evaluate contemporary civilization, while on the other, women’s lived experiences constantly challenged those assigned roles and open different perspectives for insight into an era sometimes referred to as “early medieval.”

This chapter has used the story of a twice-widowed aristocratic nun to help access a world in which women engaged with men as wives, mothers, devotees,

⁶¹ The term *wei yi duo qing* more commonly refers to an official who is denied leave in order to mourn the death of a parent.

⁶² Judy Chungwa Ho, “Portraying the family in the metropolitan and frontier regions during the transition between Han and Tang,” in *Between Han and Tang: Cultural and artistic interaction in a transformative period*, ed. Wu Hung (Beijing, 2001), pp. 463–506.

⁶³ Huang Zhiyan, *Gongzhu zhengzhi: Wei Jin Nanbeichao zhengzhishi de xingbie kaocha* (Taipei, 2013). For a detailed introduction and review of the book, see Mark Lewis, “Review: Huang Zhiyan, *Gongzhu zhengzhi: Wei Jin Nanbeichao zhengzhishi de xingbie kaocha*,” *NN* 16.2 (2014), pp. 367–371.

and rulers. The goal was not to cover every aspect of the life story of women in the Six Dynasties but to show the making of gender ideology in a period of cultural diversity. New discoveries of stone and bamboo documents enable historians to probe unknown details of the past, and the flourishing of legal, medical, and religious history in recent decades deepens our understanding of women's roles and status within that world. Previous research in these fields focused on the development and exchanges of ideas. Women were easily overlooked since they were rarely authors of prescriptive works. Curiosity about women's experiences inspired us to examine history from their perspective. Women were thus found included and placed in relation to men to form ethical norms, and their actions either in support of or against such precepts contribute to our understanding of a resilient Chinese tradition.

In examining Yuan Chuntuo's life as a wife, it is clear that Confucian family ethics were applied eclectically in different regimes to serve various purposes. While marital hierarchy was gradually codified in the South, a married woman's changed family identity could be challenged in the North either by a determined elder brother or by a forceful woman ruler. Chuntuo's experience of an indissoluble link to her birthed daughter carried through her remarriage and resonated with medical emphasis on women's reproductive role at the time. Maternal bonds were utilized not only to strengthen the ceremonial performance of filial sons but also to fortify the regency of empress dowagers. Chuntuo's final request, however, exemplifies a woman's alternative of totally breaking away. Religious vocations provided women high and low with alternative options for life and for death. The Six Dynasties was an era of transformation, and Yuan Chuntuo's story leads us to a world of vigorous cultural diversity.

CHAPTER 21

LOCAL SOCIETY

Hou Xudong*

INTRODUCTION

The registered population of China during the Six Dynasties would seem to have fluctuated between approximately 23 million and 50 million.¹ Based on the number of government seats from the district (*xian*) level up, this number may well have been growing over time. At the end of the Han dynasty, the total of these entities numbered more than 1,100, but by the end of the Northern and Southern Dynasties, there were approximately 1,700 government seats in the North and South combined. No data remain on the total population in these towns during this period. If research on the Northern Song dynasty and later is any indication, the population of those living in towns did not exceed 10 percent of the total population. Therefore, one may conclude that over 90 percent of the population lived in the world of villages below the administrative level of the district, and perhaps even more so during the Six Dynasties.² While some would have been relatives of officials, most village residents were commoners (*min*) whose presence is rarely recorded in the literature. But in recent years, much new information has been obtained through increased textual findings of excavated bamboo strips and documents, and the widespread use of information from statue dedications, stele inscriptions, and tomb memorial tablets (*muzhiming*). Through all of these developments, we can now gain some sense of the life of these villagers. This chapter

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¹ Ge Jianxiang, *Zhongguo renkou shi* (Shanghai, 2002), Volume 1, pp. 448, 475.

² Jiang Tao, "Chuantong renkou de chengxiang jigou: lizu yu Qingdai de kaocha," *Zhongguo shehui jingji shi yanjiu* 1998.3, pp. 25–42; Wu Songdi, *Zhongguo renkou shi* (Shanghai, 2000), pp. 614–619. Chao Kang's estimates of urban population between the Han and Tang being between 17.5 percent and 20.8 percent are too high. See Zhao Gang, "Qin Han yilai chengshi renkou zhi bianqian," in *idem*, *Zhongguo chengshi fazhanshi lunji* (Beijing, 2006), pp. 60–63.

on “local society” will examine the range of activities of villagers in the Six Dynasties period.³

LOWER-LEVEL SETTLEMENTS

In the Six Dynasties, most capital cities and the seats of prefectures (*zhou*), commanderies (*jun*), and districts (*xian*), as well as frontier military garrisons (*zhen*), were walled, some even with double walls because of military concerns. But many lower-level communities from the Han on had no walls, especially those south of the Yangzi river; it was certainly not the case that everyone resided within walled settlements. Comparatively speaking, the scale of the average northern lower-level community was larger, with the population reaching several hundred and even surpassing a thousand. Within these settlements, the houses were scattered and separated by the fields about them, leaving enough open space for the construction of a Buddhist temple.⁴ In the South, due to the limitations imposed by the topography, rivers, and mountains, communities were usually more isolated and smaller in terms of area and population. Even those settled by northerners who had emigrated to the South to escape the ravages of war at the beginning of the fourth century followed this pattern.

There was a wide variation of terminology used by these communities for their nomenclature, the roots of which go far back in history. During the Spring and Autumn and Warring States periods, the different terms for a settlement varied among the different states.⁵ After the Qin unification, all subdistrict settlements were to be designated as townships (*xiang*) and villages (*li*), and the Han followed this system. However, in practice many other terms continued to be used. Both received and excavated texts and also stone inscriptions from various locations in both the North and South reveal such terms as “settlement” (*ju*), and in the North there were also “hamlets” (*ge*). Juyan at the northwest frontier had settlements known as “homesteads”

³ For the meaning of “local,” see Joseph W. Esherick and Mary Backus Rankin, eds., *Chinese local elites and patterns of dominance* (Berkeley, 1990), pp. 10–11.

⁴ Hou Xudong, “On hamlets (*cun*) in the Northern Dynasties,” trans. Stuart H. Sargent, *EMC* 13–14 (2007), p. 128; *idem*, *Beichao cummin de shengbuo shiji: Chaoting, zhouxian yu cunli* (Beijing, 2005), p. 328. The ruins of a Han community at Sanyangzhuang, Neihuang county, Henan, are an earlier example; see Henan sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo and Neihuangxian wenwu baohu guanlisuo, “Henan Neihuangxian Sanyangzhuang Handai tingyuan yizhi,” *Kaogu* 2004.7, pp. 34–37; *idem*, “Henan Neihuang Sanyangzhuang Handai juluo yizhi dier chu tingyuan fajue jianbao,” *Huaxia kaogu* 2010.3, pp. 22–25; Liu Haiwang, “Xin faxian de Henan Neihuang Sanyangzhuang Handai yizhi xingzhi chutan,” in *Jianbo yanjiu* 2006, ed. Bu Xianqun and Yang Zhenhong (Guilin, 2008), pp. 293–301; and Tristram R. Kidder, Haiwang Liu, and Minglin Li, “Sanyangzhuang: Early farming and a Han settlement preserved beneath Yellow River flood deposits,” *Antiquity* 86 (2012), pp. 30–47.

⁵ Ikeda Yūichi, *Chūgoku kodai no juraku to chibō gyōsei* (Tokyo, 2002), pp. 66–83.

(*tianshe*).⁶ In Changsha in the South, settlements using the term “hillock” (*qiu*) in the nomenclature began to appear no later than the middle of the Eastern Han (90–112 CE),⁷ and by the early Three Kingdoms period it had become quite common. Moreover, named hillocks were still situated even further south in Chenzhou, Hunan, about 300 CE, according to wooden strips that have been discovered in that area. The earliest appearance of the term *cun* is also recorded on those wooden strips, carrying the same meaning as *qiu*.⁸ *Cun*, now generally translated as “village,” was used for many settlements in the North during the Six Dynasties, and not a few in the South as well. But at the same time, in the South, there were also many that took hydrological features for their settlement name, such as “ford” (*pu*), “isle” (*zhou*), “gully” (*gou*), and “islet” (*zhu*). There were even settlements termed “rampart” (*wu*) that took shape amid such unsettled times and emphasized their strong defensive qualities.

While the term *cun* in the names of small settlements was never standardized across the whole of China, ultimately it did come to be a general term that distinguished rural settlements from cities and towns, especially in the North. In the latter half of the fifth century, the Southern Dynasties’ regimes began to standardize the use of *cun* as a general word in the terminology relating to small settlements—for example, *cunxian* (a small and remote district seat), and *cunzhang* (village elder) or *cunsi* (village manager). The most direct impetus for this change came in the seventh century with the early Tang court’s institutional regulation of the term, and the subsequent practice of Tang rule for more than 200 years that followed.⁹ Even so, the emergence of *cun* did not bring about a thoroughgoing change and the older terms still persisted.¹⁰

⁶ Hou Xudong, “Beijing Dabaotai Han mu zhujian shiyi: Handai juluo ziming de xinzhengju,” *Zhongguo lishi wenwu* 2009.5, pp. 62–66; *idem*, “Han Wei Liuchao de ziran juluo: jianlun ‘cun’ ‘cun’ guanxi yu ‘cun’ de tongchenghua,” in *Zhongguo shi xinlun: jiceng shehui fence*, ed. Huang Kuan-chung (Taipei, 2009), pp. 134–146; Liu Hsin-ning, “Juyan Han jian suojian zhujia yu lizhi: yi ‘tianshe’ wei zhongxin,” in *Guwenzi yu gudaishi*, ed. Li Zong-kun, Volume 3 (Taipei, 2012), pp. 435–452.

⁷ On the Eastern Han bamboo documents excavated from Changsha in 2010, see Changshashi wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo, “Hunan Changsha Wuyi guangchang Dong Han jiandu fajue jianbao,” *Wenwu* 2013.6, pp. 16–18. Scholars still debate the characteristics of “*qiu*,” but increasing evidence suggests that “*qiu*” were settlements with a local population.

⁸ For examples, see Chenzhou Western Jin strips 1-45, 1-47, 1-48, 1-62, etc.: Hunansheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo and Chenzhoushi wenwuchu, “Hunan Chenzhou Suxianqiao yizhi fajue jianbao,” *Hunan kaogu jikan* 8 (2009), pp. 99–100. In China today, the general terms for rural settlements that are the counterpart of urban cities are *nongcun*, *xiangcun*, or *cunluo*.

⁹ Miyakawa Hisayuki, “Rikuchō jidai no son ni tsuite,” in *idem*, *Rikuchō shi kenkyū: seiji shakai ben* (Tokyo, 1956), pp. 443–452; Hou, “On hamlets,” pp. 101–109; *idem*, “Han Wei Liuchao,” pp. 152–182.

¹⁰ This point of view is very popular among scholars of Japan’s Kyoto school. See Miyazaki Ichisada, “Chūgoku ni okeru juraku keitai no hensen ni tsuite,” *Ōtani shigaku* 6 (1957), pp. 5–26; Tanigawa Michio, *Medieval Chinese society and the local “community”*, trans. Joshua A. Fogel (Berkeley, 1985), pp. 103–104.

BASE-LEVEL ADMINISTRATION OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Within the received literature from the Six Dynasties, there are few texts dealing only with the basic system of subdistrict administration, and quite a few scholars even hold that there was little or no township–village system during this period. But with the continuing accumulation of excavated material from various places over these last several decades, including “tomb-quelling” texts and land deeds, the features of this basic system across the North and South are gradually becoming clearer. Villages all played an important function in the court’s control of territory. This is true in the Northern and Southern Dynasties as well as in the war-torn and short-lived Sixteen Kingdoms. In the countryside, the village (*li*) was usually the unit of population registration and was often composed of a set number of households. The regulations in the textual sources usually set a village at 100 households. A district (*xian*) was composed of several townships. From the Northern and Southern Dynasties on, villages also acquired corresponding territorial boundaries. Therefore, tomb descriptions regularly have inscriptions with the formula “such-and-such township, such-and-such village” as a way of indicating the specific location of a grave. At the same time, both tomb epitaphs (*muzhiming*) and “tomb-quelling” texts, popular during the Sixteen Kingdoms, record the deceased’s commandery and district and, often, his or her township and village as well.

Townships and villages each had their own name. A township that was also the district seat was called the “township seat” (*duxiang*). During the Northern and Southern Dynasties, the government utilized village names to promulgate Confucian ethics. Village names such as “Elevating Humaneness Township,” “Elevating Virtue Township,” “Filiality and Righteousness Village,” “Filiality and Respect Village,” and “Cultivating Righteousness Village” became commonplace throughout the land. Within the official histories’ “Biographies of the Filial and Righteous” (*Xiao yi zhuan*) chapters, one often sees that because of a “filial son” who came from a certain place, the court ordered the local residents to change the name of their village, for example, to “Filiality and Righteousness (*xiaoyi*) Village,” “Filial Conduct (*xiaoxing*) Village,” or “Unmatched Filiality (*duxiao*) Village.”

Beneath the *li* village there was an even smaller system of registration: the “household unit of ten and five” (*shiwu*). Every five households were organized into a *wu* (five-household unit), and two *wu* formed one *shi* (ten-household unit). The purpose of this structure was mutual surveillance.¹¹ The so-called

¹¹ See Li Mingzhao (Lai Ming-chiu), *Fucou yu zhexu: Han diguo difang shehui yanjiu* (Hong Kong, 2013), pp. 203–235.

Wu strips (described below) confirm the existence of a five-household system, and the Eastern Jin may also have established these five-household units. In 420, a heated debate was held at the Southern Dynasties' Song court about crime and punishment: when a crime was discovered, courtiers were divided over whether punishment should be extended to all within the criminal's five-household unit regardless of whether there were *shiren* (well-born) families within it.¹²

Townships and villages were not only units of population registration; they were also the deep-reaching tentacles of the government. Theoretically, installed in every township and village was at least one sub-official functionary (*li*), and sometimes several of them, whose responsibility it was to manage the inhabitants and to requisition taxes and labor. One such village functionary that was recorded in the Wu strips sought to work together with the township functionary to put in order the population registers for next year's labor conscriptions, and then to submit them to the marquissate level.¹³ Although there is no comparable material for other times, one may infer that the work undertaken by township and village functionaries was similar to this.

While local great families vied for dominance and to strengthen their control over the commoners, the Northern Wei court in 486, in accordance with statements in the venerable *Zhouli*, began the establishment of the three-elders (*sanzhang*) system below the district administration. Five households were to make up one neighborhood (*lin*), headed by one neighborhood elder (*linzhang*). Over five neighborhoods, there was one village elder (*lizhang*). Over five villages, there was one ward elder (*dangzhang*). The neighborhood elder, the village elder, and the ward elder were collectively termed the three elders. With the introduction of the new system, the traditional division between townships and villages still continued to be employed. According to regulations, the three elders were appointed from among the local great families, and were compensated with graduated exemptions from military service for one to three people from within their household. The three elders were responsible for the household registers, for requisitioning corvée labor and taxes, and to care for the poor and orphaned under their jurisdiction. Sometimes this even meant the duty to provide food for destitute refugees who came from elsewhere.¹⁴ Indeed, the introduction of this system initially produced the

¹² JS 80.2098; *SōS* 41.1317–1321. Masumura Hiroshi, "Shin, Nanchō no fu gosei," *Kadai shigaku* 4 (1956), pp. 11–15; Kawai Yasushi, "Nanchō-Sō hatsu no 'dō go hanhō' no rongi," *Shūkan tōyōgaku* 67 (1992), pp. 99–110.

¹³ Hou Xudong, "Changsha Zoumalou Wu jian 'Jiahe liu nian (Guangchengxiang) Xianli limin renming nianji koushi bu' jicheng yanjiu: san shiji chu Jiangnan xiangli guanli yipie," in *Disijie guoji Hanxue huiyi lunwenji: gudai shimin shehui*, ed. Hsing I-tien and Liu Tseng-kuei (Taipei, 2013), pp. 127–133.

¹⁴ *WS* 110.2855, 2856; *BS* 42.1559.

desired results of state registration. The Northern Wei court established two new prefectures, eight new commanderies, and thirty-five new districts, estimating that 600,000 people were brought back onto state registers.¹⁵ Later, the imperial court continued to increase the responsibilities of the three elders. They were to assume joint responsibility to gather taxes, register land, and control population under their jurisdiction, but at the same time there was a decline in commensurate compensation for these increased responsibilities. Although the three-elders system was somewhat modified afterwards, it continued to be used throughout the Northern Dynasties until it was finally abolished in 589 when the Sui unified the North and South.

According to traditions stemming from the pre-Qin period, township and village functionaries (such as the three elders) were to be chosen from among the commoners. However, because of the court's high regard for family status and the distinction that developed in the later Northern and Southern Dynasties between officials (*guan*) and sub-official functionaries, commoners were limited in the positions to which they could rise. Furthermore, by acting as the court's "talons and teeth" for controlling and exploiting the population, sub-official functionaries encountered inevitable conflicts with the interests of their fellow commoners with whom they were so closely associated. There were perhaps not many who were willing to take on this responsibility, so its standing gradually declined. Interestingly, in associations of Buddhist and Daoist commoners formed to engage in meritorious activities (see below), one only sees prayers expressing heartfelt well-wishes to those above them (specifically the emperor, his ministers, and officials, and the principals of the prefecture, commandery, and district), but none made on behalf of the three elders or township–village functionaries. Moreover, the locals did not rely upon the township–village or three-elders systems to organize charitable associations. On the contrary, what the record reflects is the reliance of the commoners upon such bodies as the family, hamlet, and same-surname groups, despite the fact that it was the three elders with whom they had closest everyday contact.¹⁶ This contradiction is indicative of the complex relationship that existed between the local authorities and the commoners.

In addition, "posts" (*ting*) were established during the Han dynasty in urban and rural areas to be responsible for suppressing criminal activity and transmitting official correspondences, among other things. These posts still existed in the Wei-Jin period, but rarely appear in sources after that time.¹⁷

¹⁵ Hou, *Beichao cunmin*, pp. 112–120.

¹⁶ JS 24.746–747; SoS 40B.1258. Yan Gengwang, *Zhongguo difang xingzheng zhidu shi, yibu: Wei Jin Nanbeichao difang xingzheng zhidu* (Shanghai, 2007), pp. 344–349, 681–689, 879–885; Hou, *Beichao cunmin*, pp. 108–171, 265–296.

¹⁷ Yen Gengwang, *Zhongguo difang xingzheng zhidu shi, yibu*, pp. 346–347.

During the Northern and Southern Dynasties period, the North was far more effective than the South in using the township–village or three-elders systems to control the commoners. This is indirectly reflected in the population numbers recorded in the histories of these dynasties. This difference also gave the northern states greater strength compared with that of the south.¹⁸ In the end, the northern conquest of the south, thereby unifying the Chinese cultural realm, was directly related to these local policies. Finally, the conventional belief that the rule of the imperial court only reached to the urban areas is far from accurate, even during the Six Dynasties when court control was relatively weak.¹⁹ One must not overestimate the autonomy of local society.

COMPOSITION OF RESIDENT HOUSEHOLDS

Hundreds of thousands of bamboo strips were excavated (October 1996) at a site in downtown Changsha, Hunan, that date back to the early years (220–237) of the Sun Wu state, of the Three Kingdoms period. These serve as an invaluable source of information about Changsha's residents of that period.²⁰ By the end of 2018, nearly 62,000 Wu strips had already been published. As an example of what information can be gleaned from this material, there is much detail about twelve township and village households in Linxiang marquisate, which was under the authority of the Changsha commandery. For example, at the beginning of the third century the marquisate had villages of fifty households. The townships consisted of five to seven villages, or about 300 households, and had their own corresponding territorial boundaries.²¹ Aside from those concerning the “township seat” (*duxiang*)—that is, the local administrative center—the remaining registers all deal with the rural residents. These particular strips were probably township and village population registers that were submitted to the marquisate to requisition corvée labor and taxes according to the township–village administrative system, and not what is usually meant by “household registers.”²²

¹⁸ For the Eastern Jin and Southern Dynasties, see William G. Crowell, “Northern émigrés and the problems of census registration under the Eastern Jin and Southern Dynasties,” in *State and society in early medieval China*, ed. Albert E. Dien (Stanford, 1990), pp. 171–210.

¹⁹ Max Weber, *The religion of China: Confucianism and Taoism*, trans. Hans H. Gerth (Glencoe, IL, 1951), p. 91.

²⁰ For an introduction to these documents, see Yang Lu, “Managing locality in early medieval China: Evidence from Changsha,” in *Early medieval China: A sourcebook*, ed. Wendy Swartz et al. (New York, 2014), pp. 95–107.

²¹ Yang Zhenhong, “Changsha Wu jian suojian Linxiang Houguo shuxiang de shuliang yu mingcheng,” in *Jianbo yanjiu* 2010, ed. Bu Xianqun and Yang Zhenhong (Guilin, 2012), pp. 139–144.

²² Hou, “Changsha Zoumalou,” pp. 137–142.

According to analysis of these broken and incomplete registers, relying especially on those that aggregated numbers from the townships, villages, and households, the average household at that time did not exceed five people. This is consistent with conclusions drawn from received texts and excavated information from the Han, Sixteen Kingdoms, and Northern Dynasties periods. Specifically, the smallest household had only one person, and the largest had twenty-three people. But households of three to five people make up more than 50 percent of the records. Primarily these households were composed of a husband and wife and their unmarried children. In many of the two-person households, the husband had passed away and the wife was listed as the head of the household. There were three situations in which households had comparatively large numbers of people. The first circumstance was polygyny. Contemporary records differentiate between “major wife” (*daqī*), “middle wife” (*zhongqī*), and “lesser wife” (*xiaoqī*), according to relative ages. These women would all consent to the taking on of another wife, and their status was higher than that of a “concubine” (*qīe*), who was usually procured by purchase. (We have not yet seen among the registers in the Wu strips the situation of a man’s spouse being called a concubine, but there are many women with the name “concubine.”)²³ As one might expect, there were many children in such households. (This situation was also seen in the elite households of the Six Dynasties.)²⁴ The second situation was when extended kin were counted as being within the same household. These kin could include, on the paternal side of the head of the household, the grandfather, grandmother or father’s siblings; on his mother’s side, her father or brothers; and on that of his wife, her parents or siblings. Finally, the third situation was the inclusion of male and female slaves, who account for less than 5 percent of the population registered in these households. Their status was recorded as either “members of the household” or “property.”²⁵ In the recently published bamboo strips (Volumes 4 and 7), there are some documents concerning the buying and selling of “living mouths” (*sheng kǒu*). Further research is needed to determine

²³ This situation existed in elite families, as seen in received literature, and is probably a remnant of the practice of polygyny. See Wang Zijin, “Shuo Zoumalou jian suojian ‘xiaoqī’ jian lun Liang Han Sanguo shehui de duōqī xiānxiāng,” in *idem*, *Gushī xīngbiē yānjiū cōng gāo* (Beijing, 2004), pp. 254–265; Zhao Chongliang, “Shilun Zoumalou Wu jian suojian ‘zhongqī’,” *Wu jian yānjiū* 3 (2011), pp. 132–140. While some have assumed that *qīe* derived from *zhongqī*, there is no evidence for this.

²⁴ Wang Lihua, *Zhongguo jiāting shǐ. Dìyī: Xiān Qín zhi Nánběicháo shìqī* (Guangzhou, 2007), pp. 381, 405–407.

²⁵ Sun Wenbo, “Zoumalou jian ‘limin bu’ suojian Sun Wu jiāting jiégōu yānjiū,” in *Jiānbō yānjiū* 2007, ed. Bu Xianqun and Yang Zhenhong (Guilin, 2010), pp. 246–261; Yang Jiping, “Qín Han huji guānlǐ zhídù yānjiū,” *Zhōnghuá wénshǐ lúncong* 2007.1 (85), pp. 33–35; Shen Gang, “Sī núbì shēng yì,” in *idem*, *Chāngshā Zoumalou Sanguo zhujiān yānjiū* (Beijing, 2013), pp. 212–215.

whether there is a connection between “living mouths” and those identified with the ordinary terms for slaves (*nubi*).

Only a few registrations of agricultural lands have been discovered among the Wu strips. They reveal that in some families, wives still had property under their own name. It would seem to indicate that up to the beginning of the third century, in the Changsha district, official registration of the immovable property of husbands and wives in the same household was kept separate. Women may still have independently owned some amount of property. After a husband died, a widow who had an adult son could still become the head of household and own farmland under her name. For example, Pan Yin, a female head of household in Xian village, Guangcheng township, had under her name fourteen *mu* of land and a twenty-year-old son.²⁶ This situation persisted into the Six Dynasties.²⁷ But by the Tang dynasty, a woman by law could assume the position of head of household only when her household lacked an adult male member.²⁸ Compared to the earlier Han and Three Kingdoms periods, the possibility of a woman assuming the position of head of household had greatly diminished.

Residents were identified on these registers in categories primarily divided between officials and commoners, with the former further separated as officials of districts, commanderies, and prefectures, and of the military. Officials and commoners lived together within a settlement called “such-and-such *qiu*,” and all were included in the township–village system of the government. But “official” households were given special treatment in the type and amount of corvée labor and taxes they had to bear. Sons of officials were called “official scions” (*li zidi*). After becoming adults, they were also given priority to serve as an official. When not serving as an official, they would remain at home cultivating land that was specifically designated for this purpose, and paying the government from its harvests. In this official identification, there already begins to appear the emergence of hereditary distinctions, probably related to the local low levels of education and the shallow pool of eligible candidates for office with the requisite skills in literacy, arithmetic, and law.²⁹ At the same

²⁶ Changshashi wenwukaogu yanjiusuo, Zhongguo wenwu yanjiusuo, and Beijingdaxue lishixuexi Zoumalou jiandu zhenglizu, *Changsha Zoumalou Sanguo Wu jian Jiabe limin tianjia bie* (Beijing, 1999), 1.218 and 2.210, 5.467; Changsha jiandu bowuguan, Zhongguo wenwu yanjiusuo, and Beijing daxue lishixuexi Zoumalou jiandu zhenglizu, *Changsha Zoumalou Sanguo Wujian: zhujuan*, Volume 2 (Beijing, 2007) 1.222 and 230, 2.764 and 765, slips 2.2299 and 2.2363.

²⁷ See Lee Jen-der, “Han Tang zhijian nüxing caichanquan shitan,” in *Zhongguo shi xinlun: xingbie shi fence*, ed. *idem* (Taipei, 2009), pp. 218–228.

²⁸ Hou Xudong, “Changsha Zoumalou,” pp. 116, 123; Deng Xiaonan, “Liu zhi ba shiji de Tulufan funü: tebie shi tamen zai jiating yiwai de huodong,” in *idem*, *Langrun xueshi cong gao* (Beijing, 2010), pp. 259–260.

²⁹ Hou Xudong, “Changsha Zoumalou,” pp. 34–43.

time, the status of officials in the hereditary “official households” that gradually took shape during the Six Dynasties decreased. Among the ranks of these “officials” were increasing numbers of “official staff” (such as bailiffs, lictors, and messengers) engaged in the mundane work of the offices.³⁰ The decreased status was probably a result of this developing trend.

The state of Qin had begun establishing a system of keeping household registers no later than 375 BCE, and this practice has persisted throughout Chinese history until the present day. The earliest actual household registers that have as yet been discovered come from the Qin dynasty.³¹ Han dynasty household registers were copied onto multiple strips; the original copy was preserved in the township while the district office maintained a duplicate copy. The commandery office and the imperial court only kept aggregate numbers. At the end of every year, these statistics would be reported up the administrative hierarchy. After the fourth century, paper came to be used to transcribe household registers, and duplicate copies were deposited at the court. From top to bottom, states relied upon rigorous maintenance of household registers in order to control the population and to arrange military service and corvée labor. Some dynasties even relied upon them for land allocation.³²

Paper fragments of household registers from 384, 416, and 547 have also been discovered in the Northwest at Dunhuang and Turfan. These registers augment information gleaned from textual sources and tomb documents and reveal circumstances of households in specific times and places. The family scale corresponds to that derived from the statewide population data provided in certain chapters of the official histories. Over time, there are indications of growing numbers of large households with multiple generations living together and sharing property. This was a new phenomenon and was promoted by the government. It was mainly current among the elite, especially among the wealthy stratum in the North, and was not typical of the general population. Ordinary households were still primarily composed

³⁰ Tang Changru, “Wei Jin Nanbeichao shiqi de li yi,” in *idem*, *Shan ju cun gao xubian* (Beijing, 2011), pp. 133–152. Reprint from *Jiang Han luntan* 1988.8.

³¹ For the relevant provisions, see the administrative documents written on bamboo slips that have been excavated from the Qin dynasty (221–208 BCE) *Liye* site and the early Han dynasty site at Zhangjiashan (*Ernian liling*, *buli*). For the Qin, Hunan Sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo, *Liye fajue baogao* (Changsha, 2007), pp. 203–208, and Plates 37–39. For the Han, see Zhangjiashan ersiqihao Hanmu zhujian zhengli xiaozu, *Zhangjiashan Hanmu zhujian* (*Ersiqihao mu*): *shiwen xiuding ben* (Beijing, 2006), pp. 51–56, bamboo strips 305–346.

³² On household registers and administrative systems from pre-Qin to the Tang, see Ikeda On, *Chūgoku kodai sekichō kenkyū* (Tokyo, 1977); Zhang Rongqiang, *Han Tang jizhang zhidu yanjiu* (Beijing, 2010).

of the parents and unmarried children.³³ At that time, the usual age of marriage for commoners was fifteen to sixteen for men and thirteen to fifteen for women.³⁴

Settlements in this period were generally of mixed surnames. For example, in one set of Wu strips of the third century, in almost all of the 141 *qin*-hillcock settlements that it included, there were people of multiple surnames living together, with no single-surname settlements. There are a few surnames that occur spread out among a large number of settlements; these would have belonged to large lineages of the area.³⁵ In the North, during the fifth and sixth centuries, statue dedications provide several examples of villages of predominantly one surname, but far more common still were settlements composed of people of many different surnames.³⁶ As in the Wu case above, written sources also record a great number of people of a certain surname all living spread out in a particular area.³⁷ Yet overall, when looking at the situation both north and south, settlements of mixed surnames were by far the rule. These patterns are extremely important for understanding the forms of self-organization among commoners in medieval Chinese society. Ultimately, whether the forming of groups and collective activities depended upon paternal lines of consanguinity or upon other methods of organization is directly related to how the residents within a settlement were constituted.

In the Six Dynasties, were there “patrilineal descent groups” (or lineages, loosely speaking) like those of late imperial China? Although the depiction from ancient sources is quite vague, many scholars came to believe that they did exist. But now, quite a few have rejected the idea, even if applied only to social elites.³⁸ Carefully combing through the various records from the Qin and Han onward, one finds that commoners began taking surnames (*xing*)

³³ Hori Toshikazu, “Chūgoku kodai no kazoku keitai,” in *idem*, *Chūgoku kodai no ie to shūzoku* (Tokyo, 1996), pp. 95–153; Keith N. Knapp, *Selfless offspring: Filial children and social order in early medieval China* (Honolulu, 2005), pp. 14–20; *idem*, “Creeping absolutism: Parental authority in early medieval tales of filial offspring,” in *Confucian cultures of authority*, ed. Peter D. Hershock and Roger T. Ames (Albany, 2006), pp. 75–79.

³⁴ Wang Lihua, *Zhongguo jiating shi*, pp. 367–374, 416–418; Xie Baofu, “Beichao hunling kao,” *Zhongguo shi yanjiu* 1998.1, pp. 71–73.

³⁵ Li Mingzhao (Lai Ming-chiu), *Fucon yu zhixu*, pp. 304–307, 313–315.

³⁶ For examples, see Li Qing, *Qin Han Wei Jin Nanbeichao shiqi jiazou zongzu guanxi yanjiu* (Shanghai, 2005), pp. 100–112.

³⁷ *Tongdian*, comp. Du You (734–812) (Beijing, 1988), 3.62.

³⁸ For examples, see Zhou Yiliang, “‘Boling Cui shi geanyanjiu’ pingjie,” *Zhongguo shi yanjiu dongtai* 1982.1, pp. 160–166; reprinted in *idem*, *Wei Jin Nanbeichao shi lunji* (Beijing, 1997), pp. 517–523; Patricia Buckley Ebrey, “The early stages in the development of descent group organization,” in *Kinship organization in Late Imperial China 1000–1940*, ed. Patricia Buckley Ebrey and James L. Watson (Berkeley, 1986), pp. 17–18; Albert E. Dien, “Introduction,” in *State and society*, ed. *idem*, pp. 7, 21–24; Andrew Chittick, *Patronage and community in medieval China: The Xiangyang garrison, 400–600 CE* (Albany, 2009), pp. 3, 71–74, 130–131, 139–140.

approximately during the latter part of the Warring States period. In this early stage, people could still change them as they pleased and there was no guarantee that a son would take that of his father. Changing one's surname came under criticism beginning in the latter half of the second century. This habit of maintaining the memory of paternal ancestral lines developed only gradually, first appearing among Confucian scholars just after the middle of the second century. Doing so only became popular among commoners in about the sixth century. Meanwhile, the adoption of different surnames similarly underwent a change from an allowable practice to an illegal action in the latter part of the third century. From this one can see that "same-surname communities" are by no means an ancient tradition.

The development of a patrilineal identity upon which the patrilineage depended gradually came about beginning in the second century. From the Qin and Han through to the Six Dynasties period, maternal relatives still held a significant position in everyday lives. The three-year mourning rituals (rules about observing varied lengths of time for mourning depending upon the nature of the relationship between oneself and the deceased) were closely associated with the patrilineage. In principle, the observance of mourning for patrilineal relations was longer than for those of the corresponding matrilineal relationship. But for a long time, these rituals were only practiced among a few Confucian scholars. It was not until the third quarter of the third century that it became a legal regulation common throughout the entire state.³⁹ Instead, there were contemporary practices like "selection for office esteemed ancestral achievements," religious concepts like the Buddhist "seven generations of fathers and mothers," and activities like those of collective merit performed by charitable associations (*yiyi*). All of these encouraged same-surname groups living in a particular place to strengthen their patrilineal identity. These ways of increasing the social contacts and cohesive forces between kinsmen were a prerequisite for the still nascent creation of the patrilineal descent group.

Same-surname groups came to live together in a particular place because commoners were "content in their native land and reluctant to move" (as the Chinese saying goes) and thus remained for long periods in the same area, just as the tradition of sons inheriting their father's surname emerged. Before the eleventh century, these same-surname groups did not have any formal organization or common ancestral property. The fundamental unit of livelihood

³⁹ Lai Guolong, "The diagram of the mourning system from Mawangdui," *EC* 28 (2003), pp. 52–57; Knapp, *Selfless offspring*, pp. 139–144, 155–158; Miranda Brown, *The politics of mourning in early China* (Albany, 2007), pp. 24–40; Hsing I-tien, "Qin huo Xi Han chu hejian an zhong suojian de qinshu lunli guanxi: Jiangling Zhangjiashan er si qi hao mu 'Zou yan shu' jian 180–196 kaolun, in *idem*, *Tianxia yijia: huangdi, guanliao yu shehui* (Beijing, 2011), pp. 489–539, especially 534–539.

and activity was still the household. But from the Eastern Han on, certain surnames became notable because men bearing those surnames were particularly successful in gaining official positions at the imperial court. Sets of these distinguished surnames were associated with local regions, such as the Gu, Lu, Zhu, and Zhang of Wu commandery (the area of present-day Suzhou and Hangzhou). In exceptional cases, they provided multiple generations of officials, such as the late Eastern Han Yuan of Runan, the Yang of Hongnong, and the Cui of Boling. From the Wei–Jin period on, serving as a high official at the current imperial court became a criterion for the elite *shi* status (*gaomen shizu*—“high-status families of genteel lineage”). Soon after entering the imperial court, many set up residence in the capital, and soon their influence in their native places weakened. Many other great-surname groups (*daxing*) remained active at the provincial levels, and the court would often refer to them pejoratively as “the presumptuous and forceful” (*haoqiang*), “the presumptuous and overbearing” (*baoyou*), or “the presumptuous lineages” (*haozu*). These local elites usually held a great deal of agricultural land cultivated by a considerable number of dependents. Many took up posts as subordinate functionaries with considerable local influence in the prefecture, commandery, and district offices near their homes. Because powerful, central families monopolized access to court positions, members of these provincial families of influence had difficulty obtaining important high offices that provided entrance into the elite class. In the latter part of the Southern Dynasties, upward mobility came through serving as officers on military campaigns, seeking after the emperor’s good graces, joining the entourage of a powerful official or of someone close to the emperor, or, finally, by marrying into the *shi* class. The everyday activities of commoners were still primarily centered on the individual and the household (though the scale of some households was expanding). When faced with periods of upheaval and famine, however, under the local leadership of influential persons there arose provisional activities participated in by groups of people with the same surname. But once the situation stabilized, things would again return to their original circumstances.⁴⁰ From both the North and the South at this time, genealogies

⁴⁰ Patricia Buckley Ebrey, *The aristocratic families of early imperial China: A case study of the Po-ling Ts’ui family* (Cambridge, 1978), pp. 15–33, 116; Tang Changru, “Dong Han moqi de daxing mingshi,” and “Shizu de xingcheng he shengjiang,” in *idem*, *Wei Jin Nanbeichao shilun shiyi* (Beijing, 1983), pp. 25–52, 53–63; Tang Changru, “Nanchao hanren de xingqi,” in *idem*, *Wei Jin Nanbeichao shi luncong xubian* (Beijing, 1959), pp. 93–123; Han Sheng, “Nanbeichao Sui Tang shizu xiang chengshi de qiantu yu shehui bianqian,” *Lishi yanjiu* 2003.4, pp. 49–67; Knapp, *Selfless offspring*, pp. 17–20; Mark Edward Lewis, *China between empires: The Northern and Southern Dynasties* (Cambridge, MA, 2009), pp. 126–135; Zhu Zongbin, “Shilun Wei Jin Nanbeichao de menfa zhidu,” in *idem*, *Cai bu cai zhai shixue cong gao* (Beijing, 2009), pp. 155–230; James L. Watson, “Chinese kinship reconsidered: Anthropological perspectives on historical research,” *CQ* 92 (1982), pp. 594, 597.

(*pudie*) were produced that recorded the family background, marriages, and official service of members of the *shi* class. These have developed into a specialized field of study, and today people have reconstructed the family trees of many *shi* gentlemen on the basis of biographies and tomb inscriptions.⁴¹ These family trees only show lines of descent based upon genealogies, which are primarily concerned with relationships and identity, and unfortunately cannot reveal real-life circumstances of the day.

ACTIVITIES AND ORGANIZATIONS OF COMMONERS

Commoners made a living primarily through agriculture and the weaving of hemp or silk, with some gathering, hunting, and fishing where the environs permitted. While such production was accomplished entirely within the proximity of the settlement in which they lived, the range of their activities was not limited to just this space. The district seat was probably a place that a majority of sub-township families regularly frequented. People went to purchase farming implements and seed, to sell their various agricultural products, perhaps to consult a doctor, to have their fortune told, or to seek the help of masters of the occult and so on at the government-regulated markets located in the towns. Besides all of these activities, it was here that people submitted taxes to their local authorities. The exchanges in the South were livelier and activities of these kinds more prominent, but they were normal in the North as well. A great number of the Wu strips are documents that record commoners going to the government storehouses to submit payments in rice, cloth, and cash. These texts give many vivid details about the interactions between officials and commoners within a particular district. For commoners, these markets were an important setting where they experienced imperial authority and observed shifts in the political climate.⁴²

This period was a rich and colorful time of religious activity for the common people due to the proliferation of regional temples, the spread of institutional religions such as Buddhism and Daoism, and the intermingling of traditional beliefs surviving from pre-Qin times. These religious practices also brought

⁴¹ For recent scholarship, see Chen Shuang, "Chutu muzhi suojian zhongguo pudie tan ji," *Zhongguo shi yanjiu* 2013.4, pp. 69–100.

⁴² For a general survey, see William G. Skinner, "Chinese peasants and the closed community: An open and shut case," *CSSH* 13.3 (1971), pp. 270–281; Hou Xudong, "Dong Jin Nanchao xiaonong jingji buchong xingshi chutan," *Zhongguo shi yanjiu* 1996.1, pp. 18–27; Hou, *Beichao cummin*, pp. 188–201, 209–218; Shufen Liu, "Jiankang and the commercial empire of the Southern Dynasties: Change and continuity in medieval Chinese economic history," in *Culture and power in the reconstruction of the Chinese realm*, 200–600, ed. Scott Pearce, Audrey Spiro, and Patricia Ebrey (Cambridge, MA, 2001), pp. 39, 42–49; Keith N. Knapp, "Exemplary everyman: Guo Shidao and Guo Yuanping as Confucian commoners," *AM*, 3rd series 23.1 (2010), pp. 89–95, 109–112.

forth communal activities and organizations of different kinds, revealing an aspect of commoner activities beyond their household lives.

The *she* shrine offering to the soil god, for example, had appeared in the pre-Qin period, received official support in the Han, and continued into the Six Dynasties, and its relevant organizations remained active. The origins and earliest meaning of the *she* rites are still disputed. During the Han dynasty, communities from the imperial court all the way down to the village level, and even among armies encamped on the northwest frontier and along the Great Wall, all carried out the *she* rites—usually in the second and eighth lunar months. The offerings were directed toward some natural feature such as a boulder or large tree next to which an altar was erected. From early on, the local earth spirit was associated with the god of the grain (millet), and the purpose was to pray for an abundant harvest. The costs associated with village-level *she* offerings were assumed by the participants, and after the rites were performed, partakers would share the sacrificial offerings, and make merry with drink.⁴³ Passages scattered in such works as the *Sanguo zhi*, *Shuijing zhu*, *Jing Chu suishi ji*, *Xu gaoseng zhuan*, and Six Dynasties *xiaoshuo* (“petty talk” i.e. fictional works) record *she* sacrificial activities throughout the North and South. In a calendar issued from the Northern Wei court for the years 450 and 451, discovered at Dunhuang, divisions in the second and eighth months indicate clearly the date and cyclical characters (*gan* and *zhi*) of the day for *she* sacrifices.⁴⁴ Piecing together these fragmentary records leads us to believe that in the Six Dynasties the *she* sacrifice was still an important activity whose observances were common at all levels from the court to the countryside.

At the same time, little is known about the organizations associated with the *she* sacrifices. Based on the inscription of a damaged stele discovered outside the Western Jin (265–316) capital, Luoyang, a Dangli village *she* association was active and had specific leadership positions called “shrine elder” (*shelao*), “shrine subordinate” (*sheyuan*), “shrine principal” (*shezheng*), and “shrine scribe” (*sheshi*). The names of eight individuals who held these positions within this association survive. Ordinary participants of this *she* association were called “shrine members” (*shemin*) and names of twenty-four members can be made out. Most shrine members were lower- and middle-ranked civil and military officials, but there were also commoners as well.

⁴³ John H. Chamberlayne, “The Chinese earth-shrine,” *Numen* 13.3 (1966), pp. 164–182; Moriya Mitsuo, “Sha no kenkyū,” in *idem*, *Chūgoku kodai no kazoku to kokuka* (Kyōto, 1968), pp. 250–294; Ning Ke, “Handai de she,” *Wen shi* 9 (1980), pp. 7–14, reprinted in *idem*, *Ning Ke shixue lunji* (Beijing, 1999), pp. 458–469; Xie Guihua, “Xibei Han jian suojian ci sheji kao bu,” *Jianbo yanjiu* 2004, ed. Bu Xianqun 卜憲群 and Yang Zhenhong 楊振紅 (Guilin, 2006), pp. 258–271.

⁴⁴ Gansu zang Dunhuang wenxian bianweihui, Gansu renmin chubanshe, and Gansusheng wenwuju, *Gansu zang Dunhuang wenxian* (Lanzhou, 1999), *Dun yan*, 368, text, p. 314, photo, p. 165.

These eight officers and twenty-four ordinary members came from seventeen different commanderies and princedoms within Western Jin territory: seven commanderies or princedoms had two people each; three people were from Bohai commandery; only two people from Chen commandery had the same surname, and it may be that they were related by blood. Despite their disparate geographic affiliations, this “*she* shrine association” ought to have been formed on the basis of local ties in the same village. Nevertheless, not all the residents of that village participated. The expenses of the *she* sacrifice were borne by those participants listed on the stele. Such a structure ought to share origins with the private *she* sacrifices (*sishe*) referred to in records from the final years of the Western Han.⁴⁵ By now, these shrines had already evolved into a group of a certain number of residents who had taken the initiative to organize themselves into a kind of voluntary association. It is unknown what activities these organizations were involved in beyond the *she* sacrifice. Further, it is not clear how widespread such organizations were. We do know that the spread of the Buddhist and Daoist religions generated constant attacks on traditional *she* sacrifices; nevertheless, many aspects of these new religions were appropriated from the native place *she* rites.⁴⁶ Besides the earth god, there were many local deities that were still popular throughout the North and South and each had corresponding shrines and religious professionals, such as male and female spirit mediums and temple acolytes. Commoners made offerings to these deities mostly for themselves or their family. Banquets occasionally held at shrines were primarily organized by the social elites. Such shrines were local in nature, and there were no formal groups or overall organizations. Unlike these local shrines, the spread of Buddhism and the rise of the Daoist religion led to the increase of communal activities of various kinds. Adherents began to form their own groups for the implementation of religious activities, which became a major highlight of this era.

As Buddhism spread across the North and South, Buddhist temples became commonplace. The various kinds of communal gathering associated with these temples also became a vital part of the lives of the sangha (monastic community of ordained Buddhist monks or nuns) and laity. In the courtyard of the temple, monks and nuns recited the sutras and expounded the dharma, and

⁴⁵ Ning Ke, “Ji Jin ‘Dangli lishe bei,’” *Wenwu* 1979.12, pp. 57–60; reprinted in *idem*, *Ning Ke shixue lunji* (Beijing, 1999), pp. 484–492. The author states that “the circumstances of the excavation are unknown” (p. 484), but actually the stele was excavated in 1908 from a village five *li* northeast of the ancient walls of Luoyang, Henan. See Sun Guanwen, “Beijing daxue tushuguan cang lidai shike taben caomu (er),” *Kaoguxue jikan* 8 (1994), p. 197.

⁴⁶ Jacques Gernet, *Buddhism in Chinese society: An economic history from the fifth to the tenth centuries*, trans. Franciscus Verellen (New York, 1995), pp. 262; Hao Chunwen, *Zhongguo shiqi sheyi yanjiu* (Taipei, 2006), pp. 4–12; Liu Shufen, “Xianghuo yinyuan: Beichao de Fojiao jieshe,” in *Zhongguo shi xinlun: jiceng shebui fence*, ed. Huang Kuan-chung (Taipei, 2009), pp. 234–237.

convened regular and irregular religious assemblies. Lay believers would also gather to chant the Buddhist sutras and to venerate the Buddha. Certain activities became popular throughout the land: inviting monks and nuns to recite the sutras at important times (at Buddhist festivals, at the funerals of relatives, after completing Buddhist merit-making activities, or at certain important stages in life); taking part in the widespread vegetarian religious feasts; or participating in the Feast of the Eight Prohibitions, wherein lay people would set aside a day and a night for scrupulous adherence to the eight prohibitions of Buddhism. These gatherings were for the most part open to the public, without regard to class, gender, or ethnic background.⁴⁷ Undoubtedly, over and over again these emerging collective religious activities intensified the contact and connections between believers of different backgrounds and genders, and between the sangha and the laity.⁴⁸

Some Buddhists even formed lay groups of their own accord in order to develop good karma and to seek the Buddha's protection and beneficial reward. These "charitable associations" (*yizi*), as they were called during this period, were popular throughout the North and South. In the area around present-day Shandong, there were several active groups that called themselves "dharma charities" (*fayi*). The earliest example of these, found in written records, comes from the beginning of the fifth century. By the late sixth century, they were extremely commonplace, especially within activities involving Buddhist images in the North. Participants ranged from a few people to over a thousand. Mostly, they referred to themselves as "association children" (*yizi*). Their leaders were called "association directors" (*yizhu*), supervising monks or nuns were called "association instructors" (*yishi*), and those responsible for exhortation were called "directors of conversion" (*huazhu*). These titles varied somewhat in different places. The origins of group membership were different as well: organizations could be composed of residents of a single hamlet, of a few family members from within a hamlet, of residents of several hamlets near each other, of people of a certain region with the same surname, or of believers attached to a certain temple; others were exclusive to women. Sometimes they were even organized by local officials. Participants generally included commoners, monks, nuns, and officials alike, but the particulars of each charitable association were not the same. In the regions of present-day Shandong and Shaanxi, there also were mutual associations made up of both Han and non-Han Chinese alike.

⁴⁷ For a general survey, see Kenneth K. S. Ch'en, *The Chinese transformation of Buddhism* (Princeton, 1973), pp. 240–244, 276–281; Sylvie Hureau, "Buddhist rituals," in *Early Chinese religion*, Part 2, *The Period of Division* (220–589 AD), Volume 2, ed. John Lagerway and Lü Pengzhi (Leiden, 2010), pp. 1213–1227.

⁴⁸ Ch'en, *The Chinese transformation*, p. 303; Gernet, *Buddhism in Chinese society*, p. 258.

During the Northern Dynasties, in present-day Shaanxi and Shanxi, quite a few images were made by associations that blended together Buddhist and Daoist traditions. The titles for members in this area were also somewhat distinct, but the organizational form was basically identical to the Buddhist charitable association.⁴⁹ When communal activities of a religious nature had initially emerged in the Six Dynasties, the formative groups were for the most part comparatively loose. There already are a few references to a “collective covenant” (*gongxiang yaoyue*) that was perhaps the regulations for forming an association, but it is not known how strong the bond was between these members. This sort of “covenant” (*yue*) had existed since the Western Han.

The major activities of a charitable association included making images of the Buddha, erecting and repairing sacred edifices, copying the Buddhist sutras, preparing for Buddhist activities, maintaining bridges and roads, digging wells, planting trees, providing relief for disaster victims, and so forth. These activities were likely accomplished through the contributions of all participating members. The organizing principle of the charitable association was often not according to hierarchies of age or official rank, but rather by the amount of effort and money contributed.⁵⁰ Most of these charitable associations organized around a specific activity and dissolved once the duty was completed. But there were a few that were able to persist for a very long time.⁵¹ One prominent example is an association that carried out a wide variety of tasks. In the 520s, the area of what is now Dingxing county, Hebei (seventy kilometers south of Beijing), was ravaged by war. More than ten Buddhist commoners felt compassion for the unburied remains that had no one to bury them. So the commoners formed an association, and called it “charitable” (*yi*). At first, they gathered and buried unclaimed bodies in what they called “township burials” (*xiangzang*). Later, at the township cemeteries they provided “charitable meals” (*yishi*) for refugees who were passing through as they returned home. They also established “charitable halls” (*yitang*) where they made “charitable meals” available. Later, a famous monk joined the association, and the influence of the relief activities increased. They then added medical treatment to their relief activities. Before long, they also

⁴⁹ Jiajia Wang, “Lay socio-religious associations in early medieval China” (PhD dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 2009), pp. 117–127; Xunliao Zhang, “Daoist stelae of the Northern Dynasties,” in *Early Chinese religion*, Part 2, *The Period of Division (220–589 AD)*, Volume 1, ed. John Lagerwey and Lü Pengzhi (Leiden, 2010), pp. 445, 488–508.

⁵⁰ Hou, *Beichao cunmin*, p. 292; Kate Lingley, “Patron and community in Eastern Wei Shanxi: The Gaomiaoshan cave temple *yi*-society,” *AM*, 3rd series 23.1 (2010), pp. 159–163.

⁵¹ Gernet, *Buddhism in Chinese society*, pp. 259–277; Ch'en, *The Chinese transformation*, pp. 281–284; Liu Shufen, “Art, ritual, and society: Buddhist practice in rural China during the Northern Dynasties,” *AM*, 3rd series 8.1 (1995), pp. 34–37; Hao, *Zhonggu shiqi*, pp. 67–153; Liu Shufen, “Xianghuo yinyuan,” pp. 237–272; Wang, *Lay socio-religious associations*, pp. 72–142.

obtained agricultural lands as donations from local families, thereby strengthening their available economic resources. In 557, they aided corvée laborers working on the Great Wall, and in 564 they provided for the starving victims of a flood. In all, these “charitable” relief activities continued unabated for at least forty years. Later, the association received a commendation from the Northern Qi court, erecting a stone pillar on which they engraved a panegyric, inscribed names, and recorded the course of events.⁵² Today this stone pillar still stands erect in the countryside of Dingxing county, narrating these past events for later generations.

At the beginning of the third century, believers in the Way of the Five Pecks of Rice (*Wudoumi dao*) in Hanzhong (the southern area of present-day Shaanxi) established “charity lodges” (*yishe*) along roadsides, and provided rice and meat for travelers passing through. Activities of these kinds did not occur within Daoism of the Six Dynasties.

At this time, aside from the opening of granaries to provide relief when disasters struck, local authorities rarely organized any public works intended specifically for the well-being of the commoners. Charitable associations met those needs by filling that gap. While it was because of their belief in Buddhism that people sponsored and organized good karmic works, these associations also created some opportunities for commoners to develop a reputation and to pursue higher status. To determine whether or not an individual’s status actually rose requires an examination of a longer time interval. During the Eastern Wei, the Shang, Shangguan, Lü, and Lian families, all of Ji district, Ji commandery (northwest of present-day Xinxiang city, Henan), separately mobilized their fellow villagers of the same and different surnames to undertake activities for the accumulation of good karma. In each case, the number of people who took part, how many held political office, and the ranks of those positions were all different, which indicates that there was a sense of competition among these families. From Tang dynasty sources, one sees that the families that were still the most pre-eminent locally were the Shang and Shangguan families, which during the Eastern Wei had the highest-ranking and the greatest number of members serving as officials; the Lü and Lian families were not able to ascend to their ranks.⁵³ Further, during this period, while relatives of influential *shi* gentlemen at court still resided in the countryside, one rarely sees them organizing commoners to engage in activities of these kinds. Literary sources do provide examples of *shi* gentlemen providing relief to the village community at their

⁵² Liu Shufen, “Bei Qi Biaoyixiang yi ci hui shizhu: Zhonggu Fojiao shehui jiuji de ge’an yanjiu,” *Xin shixue* 5.4 (1994), pp. 1–47.

⁵³ Hou, *Beichao cunmin*, pp. 361–362.

own expense, which surely comes under this category. Examples of local elites mobilizing commoners to engage in merit-gaining activities can also be found in various other places. Despite this, these elites were still far from having exclusive control of the villages. The broad generalization, based on very few examples, that society at its basic level was a “community of great families” (*baozu gongtongti*), such as advocated by Tanigawa Michio and others, is difficult to sustain.⁵⁴

To summarize, these communal activities and associations certainly did promote contact to an extent between the different social classes and different ethnic groups of particular locales. They undoubtedly played an active role in breaking down the strict status boundaries of this period.⁵⁵ At the same time, they reveal new trends in the communal lives of medieval commoners outside the household. Yet the cohesiveness and solidarity of these groups were not on par with the *shèyì* associations of the Tang and Five Dynasties that would emerge several centuries later, and even less comparable to the parishes of medieval Western Europe.

⁵⁴ For this interpretation, see Tanigawa, *Medieval Chinese society*, pp. 29–30.

⁵⁵ Hao, *Zhonggu shiqi*, pp. 126–130, 162–172; Liu, “Art, ritual, and society,” pp. 45–47.

PART 3

Culture, Religion, and Art

CONFUCIAN LEARNING AND INFLUENCE

Keith N. Knapp

During the Eastern Han (25–220), Confucianism had become the guiding philosophy of both governance and social life. But as political infighting, peasant rebellions, and warlordism tore apart the Han Empire, many intellectuals lost confidence in Confucianism and looked to other systems of meaning for guidance and solace. To make sense of their chaotic, dangerous, and evanescent world, some turned to *xuanxue* (Dark Learning), or to Buddhism, or to organized Daoism. Based on these changes, Western scholars have concluded that, at the end of the Eastern Han, Confucianism was passé and its influence was in steep decline.¹ If the fall of the Han state truly discredited Confucianism and educated men looked for meaning elsewhere, how, then, did Confucianism survive? Why did early medieval literati continue to view Confucianism as valuable? Admittedly, Confucianism was not important in the philosophical salons; it offered little in terms of the current understanding of ontology or metaphysics, nor did it help secure one's postmortem welfare. Nevertheless, recent Chinese and Japanese scholarship has established that, in the crucial areas of practical existence, such as government, ritual, family life, and law, Confucianism provided a wealth of guidance and support. It is in these more concrete areas of life that we see Confucianism's further intellectual enrichment and development. Far from its going into a steep decline, the Six Dynasties period witnessed the deepening entrenchment of this tradition in both state and society.

This chapter will be divided into two parts. The first will lay out the ways in which Confucianism left a lasting impression on three areas of the Six Dynasties' social world: education, examinations, and ritual. Then, to gain a sense of the major themes and diversity of Six Dynasties Confucian thought,

¹ Paul Demiéville, "Philosophy and religion from Han to Sui," in *The Cambridge history of China*, Volume 1, *The Ch'in and Han empires, 221 BC–AD 220*, ed. Denis Twitchett and John K. Fairbanks (Cambridge, 1987), pp. 808–815; and Étienne Balazs, *Chinese civilization and bureaucracy*, trans. H. M. Wright (New Haven, 1964), pp. 226–254.

the second part will discuss some of the period's major Confucian thinkers: Wang Su, Fu Xuan, Huangfu Mi, Fan Zhen, and Yan Zhitui. I have selected these figures because they addressed so many of the abiding concerns of Six Dynasties Confucians, such as ritual reform, elimination of material desires, avoidance of extravagance, protecting integrity through reclusion, and reconciling Confucianism with Buddhism and Daoism.

THE INFLUENCE OF CONFUCIANISM

Since at least the late Warring States period, Confucian scholars called themselves and were known by others as *ru*.² What *ru* originally meant has been a subject of much debate: it has been defined variously as weaklings, dance masters, and even shaman incantators.³ Western scholars have conventionally called *ru* Confucians based on their interpretation of the records where *ru* seemed to be followers of Kongzi (Confucius). In the past two decades, however, a number of researchers have questioned the validity of this translation: they do not believe that, before and during the Han dynasty, the word always stood for committed followers of the way of Kongzi; instead, they see that the *ru* were specialists who were merely learned in the *wujing* (Five Classics). Hence, they prefer to translate *ru* as “classicists” or “scholars,” or leave the word untranslated.⁴ Nevertheless, by the early medieval era, the word *ru* clearly designated Confucians; i.e., men who viewed themselves as fulfilling Kongzi's moral, ritual, and political program.⁵ Six Dynasties texts convey the word “Confucianism” through a number of terms, such as *rujiao* (the Confucian teachings), *rudao* (the way of the Confucians), *daojiao* (the teachings of the Way), *mingjiao* (the teachings of the names),⁶ *Kongjiao* (the teachings of Confucius), and *shengjiao* (the sagely teachings).⁷ In Buddhist

² Chen Lai, “‘Ru’: Xunzi's thoughts on *ru* and its significance,” *FPC* 4.2 (2009), pp. 157–158.

³ Robert Eno, *The Confucian creation of heaven: Philosophy and the defense of ritual mastery* (Albany, 1990), pp. 190–197; Chen Lai, *Gudai zongjiao yu lunli: Rujia sixiang de genyuan* (Beijing, 1996), pp. 328–354.

⁴ Michael Nylan, *The five “Confucian” classics* (New Haven, 2001), pp. 1–3; Nicholas Zufferey, *To the origins of Confucianism: The ru in pre-Qin times and during the early Han dynasty* (Bern, 2003), pp. 15–17; Mark Csikszentmihalyi, *Material virtue: Ethics and the body in early China* (Leiden, 2004), pp. 14–20.

⁵ Keith N. Knapp, “The existence of the c-word in early medieval China,” unpublished paper presented at the American Academy of Religion in San Antonio, Texas, November 2016.

⁶ Although *mingjiao* literally means “the teachings of the names,” *ming* here designates appropriate names; i.e., moral codes. In other words, through this doctrine people would learn how to behave properly. See Chen Suzhen, “The position and evolution of Ruist learning,” in *The history of Chinese civilization*, Volume 2, *Qin, Han, Wei, Jin, and the Northern and Southern Dynasties* (221 B.C.E.–581 C.E.), ed. Yuan Xingpei et al. (Cambridge, 2012), p. 229.

⁷ Li Shen, *Rujiao, Kongjiao, Shengjiao, Sanjiao chengming shuo* (Beijing, 2009). All of these terms end in the word *jiao*, which is usually translated as “teachings” or “doctrine.” Despite its secular-sounding label, *jiao* has religious connotations. Anthony C. Yu aptly describes *jiao* as authoritative instructions that are meant

apologist literature, Confucianism was often characterized as “the teachings of the Duke of Zhou and Confucius” (*Zhou Kong zhi jiao*).⁸

CLASSICAL LEARNING

Confucian scholars were primarily known and valued for their mastery of the oldest and most venerated writings, the *Wujing*: *Shijing* (*Classic of Songs*), *Shujing* (*Classic of History*), *Li ji* (*Book of Rites*), *Yijing* (*Book of Changes*), and *Chunqiu* (*Spring and Autumn Annals*). For early medieval Chinese, these texts embodied the words and actions of the virtuous sage-kings of antiquity, and thus manifested the *dao*, the moral/natural order that governed the cosmos and society. The famed literary scholar Liu Xie (465–522) stated,

The works dealing with the universal principles of the Great Trinity [Heaven, Earth, and man] are known as *jing*. By *jing* we mean an expression of the absolute or constant *dao* or principle, that great teaching which is unalterable. Therefore, the *jing* faithfully reflect Heaven and Earth, spirits and gods. They help to articulate the order of things and to set up the rules governing human affairs.⁹

These sacred works thus conveyed the most important truths of the universe. The belief that Kongzi himself edited and shaped the Five Classics added to their stature. Other texts that were nearly on a par with the *wujing* were the *Lunyu* (*Analects*) and *Xiaojing* (*Classic of Filial Piety*), both of which contained Kongzi's words; the two ancient texts on ritual, the *Yili* (*Classic on Etiquette and the Rites*) and the *Zhouli* (*The Rites of the Zhou*), as well as the three works that were viewed as supplements to the *Chunqiu*: the *Zuozhuan* (*Zuo's Commentary*), *Gongyang zhuan* (*Gongyang Commentary*), and the *Guliang zhuan* (*Guliang Commentary*). Unlike their Han dynasty counterparts, Six Dynasties *ru* were expected to be familiar with all of the classics and their commentaries. As a result, a number of scholars wrote extensive treatments of multiple scriptures. Indicative of the importance of *jingxue* (classical learning), even the foremost proponents of *xuanxue* recognized Kongzi as the greatest sage and wrote commentaries on the *Analects*, such as He Yan's (d. 249) *Lunyu jijie* (*Collected Explanations of the Analects*), Wang Bi's (226–249) *Lunyu shiyi*

to transform behavior and thought. He translates *jiao* as “teachings”/“religion.” See his *State and religion in China: Historical and textual perspectives* (Chicago, 2005), pp. 15–25.

⁸ Seng You, *Hongming ji jiaojian*, annotated by Li Xiaorong (Shanghai, 2013), pp. 150, 152, 246, and 307, as well as LS 41.584 and 51.749. The Duke of Zhou was the younger brother of King Wu, who established the Western Zhou dynasty. At the death of King Wu, the Duke of Zhou ruled the kingdom as a regent on his young nephew's behalf. Upon his nephew reaching maturity, the Duke of Zhou ceded the throne to him. It is this act of yielding that made him a hero to later Confucians; hence, in early medieval times Confucianism was often referred to as the Way of the Duke of Zhou and Confucius.

⁹ Liu Hsieh, *The literary mind and the carving of dragons*, trans. Vincent Yu-chung Shih (Taipei, 1970), p. 21.

(*Explanations of Doubts about the Analects*), and Guo Xiang's (d. 312) *Lunyu tiliie* (*A Summary of the Analects' Contents*).¹⁰ Needless to say, these men were reinterpreting the *Analects* to explicate *xuanxue* ideas; nevertheless, this indicates that they viewed Confucianism as the foundation of their own philosophy. As Charles Holcombe points out,

The Neo-Taoist metaphysical interests of third- and fourth-century Chinese gentlemen caused few if any of them to reject Confucianism. They simply superimposed their new interests as an additional and higher layer over the traditional Confucian substrate. The Confucian classics remained the foundation of all education, and Confucian virtues stood unchallenged.¹¹

CONFUCIAN EDUCATION

Of course, given the classics' status as the most consequential and revered books, they dominated the curriculum of learning. Youngsters probably started off their education with primers to learn character recognition. The most popular of these were *Jijiu pian* (*Handy Primer*) until the sixth century, and then, after that, the *Qianziwen* (*The Script of a Thousand Words*).¹² The first non-primers read were the *Xiaojing* and *Lunyu*, which were important because both were relatively easy to read and contained the words of Kongzi.¹³ After memorizing and mastering these two texts, a person gained basic literacy and a grounding in Confucian ideology. Yan Zhitui (531–591+) tells us that no matter how low a man's birth, as long as he could read these two texts, he could escape menial work and become a teacher.¹⁴ Since the number of public schools had drastically plummeted since the Han dynasty's end, most people

¹⁰ Ba Xiaojin, "Xuanxue daibiao renwu de rujia suyang yu Wei-Jin ruixue zhi chuancheng," *Tianjin shifan daxue xuebao* 2 (2012), pp. 32–36.

¹¹ Charles Holcombe, *In the shadow of the Han: Literati thought and society at the beginning of the Southern Dynasties* (Honolulu, 1994), p. 93. Please note that John Makeham argues forcefully that He Yan's *Lunyu jijie*, which he edited along with four others, reveals no significant evidence of being influenced by *xuanxue* thought. See his *Transmitters and creators: Chinese commentators and commentaries on the Analects* (Cambridge, MA, 2003), pp. 23–47.

¹² *BQS* 44.584 and *WS* 84.1851. For information on these primers, see H. C. Lee, *Education in traditional China: A history* (Leiden, 2000), pp. 432–442; Yun Qiaolei, *Zhongguo ertong wenxue yanjiu* (Taipei, 1988), pp. 327–355.

¹³ Tsai Yen-zen, "Scriptures and their popularization: The case of the *Lun-yü* and *Hsiao-ching* in the Han Dynasty," *JHEW* (*Renwen xuebao*) 18 (1998), pp. 143–156; Yoshikawa Tadao, *Rikuchō seishinshi no kenkyū* (Kyoto, 1984), pp. 548–550; and Guo Yongji, *Liuchao jiating jingxue jiaoyu yu boxue fengqi yanjiu* (Xinbei, 2013), pp. 75–105.

¹⁴ Wang Liqi, *Yanshi jiaxun jijie* (Taipei, 1982), 8.145; Teng Ssu-yü, trans., *Family instructions for the Yen clan: Yen-shih chia-hsiün* (Leiden, 1968), p. 54.

learned these texts at home;¹⁵ mothers were often their teachers; as a result, book knowledge became a desired characteristic of a potential wife.¹⁶ After mastering the basic texts, students with aptitude would then study the various classics and their commentaries.

Given the scarcity and short-lived nature of public educational institutions, one of the hallmarks of the Six Dynasties was that classical learning was often acquired and transmitted in private homes. Already in late Western Han, a master of a specific classic or commentary who lived in the capital would then pass his specialized knowledge, which was called *jiaxue*, “the family learning,” or *jiaye*, “the family vocation,” to the members of his household, who would in turn teach it to their descendants.¹⁷ The renowned Japanese expert on Six Dynasties thought Yoshikawa Tadao notes that this trend continued in the early medieval era but underwent a significant transformation: “From the second half of the Later Han through to the Six Dynasties there was a general trend for the centers of scholarship to move from the capital to the provinces, and prominent families with roots in local communities became centers of scholarship.”¹⁸ In other words, classical study was now decentralized: the interests and needs of provincial families now determined the priorities of learning. This lack of centralized control probably accounts for the many different types of learning that flourished during this era. Although most scholarly families continued to ground themselves in classical scholarship, they also added expertise in other fields of knowledge, such as medicine, historical studies, *xuanxue*, Buddhism, and so on.¹⁹

Since the foundation of education was the classics and their commentaries, Confucian scholars were in constant demand as teachers. After learning the foundational Confucian texts, such as the *Xiaojing* and *Lunyu* at home, young men would advance their education by going to other places to study with scholars who were masters of particular texts or types of learning. This phenomenon was known as *youxue* (traveling to study). Whether they were officials or not, Confucian scholars attracted scores of upper-class men who wanted access to their knowledge of the classics. When not serving in office, *ru* would frequently turn their residence into a school; “Princes, the sons of high dignitaries, future emperors, future erudites, and future functionaries of more

¹⁵ Lee, *Education in traditional China*, pp. 53–56; Chi Xiaofang, *Zhongguo gudai xiaoxue jiaoyu yanjiu* (Shanghai, 1998), pp. 19–24. There is anecdotal evidence that private village schools continued to exist, but government-sponsored elementary schools were not revived until the Northern Dynasties.

¹⁶ Beatrice Spade, “The education of women in China during the Southern Dynasties,” *JAH* 13.1 (1979), pp. 18–21.

¹⁷ Guo, *Linchao jiating jingxue*, pp. 14–35.

¹⁸ Yoshikawa Tadao, “‘Family scholarship’ during the Six Dynasties and its milieu,” *AcA* 109 (2015), p. 50.

¹⁹ Yoshikawa, “Family scholarship,” pp. 67–70.

or less importance, future recluses, and more rarely clerics” were included among their students.²⁰ Since most upper-class people during this period were educated privately, one cannot overestimate the influence of Confucian scholars who easily and often served as teachers.²¹ Private education was so common and influential that, to bolster the reputation of newly established public schools, a Northern Qi emperor banned it.²²

Of course, the basic purpose of classical learning was to prepare men for government service. Knowledge of the past and best governing practices were all found in the classics, as was historical precedent and justification for contemporary policies. A man who was not deeply versed in the classics but could read and write was merely a low-level functionary. Nevertheless, since, during the Six Dynasties, political regimes were short-lived and holding public office could be dangerous, why was there still such a demand for a classical education? Most importantly, classical training separated the upper class from the lower class. Since the classics recorded the words and deeds of the sages, they provided a comprehensive knowledge of the world.²³ Also, the classics were not just records of the past, but also repositories of sages’ fine behavior that a reader could imitate. Yan Zhitui tells us, “The books written by sages are used for teaching people. If one thoroughly studies the classical text and roughly learns the commentaries and constantly makes progress in one’s speech and conduct, one can become a perfect man.”²⁴ In other words, the classics imparted moral refinement that, in the minds of upper-class people, differentiated them from vulgar commoners.

BROAD LEARNING

A salient characteristic of Six Dynasties *ru* was their emphasis on having a broad understanding of all the classics. Confucian scholars of the Western and Eastern Han often specialized in the study of one classic and its voluminous *zhangju*, “chapter-and-verse” commentaries. Eastern Han scholars who favored *guwen* (“ancient-script”) versions of the classics, however, stressed that *ru* should have “broad learning” (*boxue*). This meant that they should be

²⁰ Valérie Lavoix, “À l’école des collines: L’enseignement des lettrés reclus sous les dynasties du Sud,” in *Éducation et instruction en Chine*, Volume 3, *Aux marges de l’orthodoxie*, ed. Cristine Nguyen Tri and Catherine Despeux (Paris, 2004), pp. 43–66.

²¹ Howard S. Galt, *A history of Chinese educational institutions*, Volume 1 (London, 1951), pp. 310–311.

²² Lee, *Education in traditional China*, p. 69.

²³ SGZ 13.422; Keith N. Knapp, “Scriptural knowledge and impeccable behavior: The continued relevance of Confucian scholars in Wei–Jin times,” in *Wei–Jin wenhua yanjiu*, ed. Ma Baoji (Zhengzhou, 2012), pp. 422–428.

²⁴ Yan Zhitui and Wang Liqi, eds., *Yanshi jiaxun jijie* (Beijing, 1991), p. 170; Teng, *Family instructions for the Yen clan*, p. 64.

knowledgeable about all of the classics and their commentaries—the *ru* should be *tongru* 通儒, “Confucian scholars who have comprehensive knowledge.”²⁵ Thus, a number of Six Dynasties *ru* wrote extensive treatments of multiple scriptures. Moreover, no longer did scholars merely champion one commentary of a particular classic; instead, they endeavored to evaluate the worthiness of different commentators on specific passages within a classic. This led to the creation of new forms of exegesis, such as *jijie*, “collected explanations”; *jizhu*, “collected commentaries”; and *yishu*, “sub-commentaries on meaning.” The *Lunyu jijie*, for example, focuses on the comments of eight different commentators on distinct passages of the *Analects*; on top of those comments are anonymous editorial observations written by the text’s five editors, the most famous of whom was He Yan.²⁶ In other words, the editors assumed that no one commentator was authoritative—each comment had to be judged on its merits. As for the “sub-commentaries on meaning,” these were texts that ostensibly explained the meaning of the commentaries,²⁷ but many scholars believe that the *yishu* began as records of lectures or lecture notes.²⁸ A number of these collected commentaries have had lasting influence on later classical scholarship, such as He Yan’s *Lunyu jijie*, Du Yu’s (222–284) *Chunqiu Zuoshi jingzhuan jijie*, Fan Ning’s (?339–401), *Chunqiu Gu Liangzhuan jijie*, and Huang Kan’s (488–545) *Lunyu yishu*.²⁹

The “broad learning” that Six Dynasties Confucians sought did not stop with the classics. A *tongru* was well read in a wide range of subjects, including the histories, the many varieties of literature, the works of pre-Qin philosophers, and even many types of arcane knowledge.³⁰ Du Yi (d. 323), for example, “was widely read in the Classics and the books of the one hundred philosophers. As for calendrics, numerology, and Apocrypha,³¹ there was not one that he had not completely exhausted.”³² Of course, Du Yi was exceptional in his knowledge of so many different types of learning. However, that contemporary historians lavished praise on him indicates the high regard

²⁵ Guo, *Liuchao jiating jingxue*, pp. 122–134.

²⁶ Makeham, *Transmitters and creators*, p. 24.

²⁷ Makeham, *Transmitters and creators*, p. 89.

²⁸ Makeham, *Transmitters and creators*, pp. 86–89; Wang Wenliu, “Shilun Liuchao ruxue de tedian,” *Lishi jiaoxue wenti* 2 (1992), p. 16.

²⁹ Liu Zhendong, *Zhongguo ruxue shi: Wei–Jin Nanbeichao juan* (Guangzhou, 1998), pp. 452–459.

³⁰ Guo, *Liuchao jiating jingxue*, pp. 134–147.

³¹ The Apocrypha refer to what are known as the *chenwei* texts. *Chen* literally means “prophetic” or “prognostic,” whereas *wei* means the transverse threads of a fabric; in other words, supplements. Hence, *chenwei* designates prognostic texts that were meant to supplement the classics. The founders of Six Dynasties regimes often utilized these texts in justifying their usurpation of the throne and then promptly banned them once firmly in control. See Lu Zongli, *Power of the words: Chen prophecy in Chinese politics AD 265–618* (Bern, 2003).

³² *JS* 91.2353.

attached to having such a breadth of learning. Many outstanding Confucian scholars were equally conversant with the Daoist classics: Fu Manrong (421–502) wrote explanatory works for the *Lunyu*, *Laozi*, and *Zhuangzi*.³³ He Yang (452–510) penned sub-commentaries on the *Book of Rites*, *Laozi*, *Zhuangzi*, and *Book of Changes*.³⁴ Yan Zhizhi (fl. 480–510) had a deep understanding of the *Laozi* and *Zhuangzi* and could engage in mysterious conversation (*xuanyan*), but he was also an expert in the *Xiaojing*, *Lunyu*, and *Sangfu pian* (Chapter on the Mourning Robes).³⁵ Numerous Confucian scholars also mastered the Apocrypha and the mantic arts, which were meant to enable them to predict the future.

IMPERIAL SCHOOLS

Given the *ru*'s extensive knowledge of the venerated classics and close association with the long-lasting Han dynasty, Six Dynasties rulers found them to be immensely valuable. Since the *ru* posited themselves as the guardians of the sacred way of Heaven, embracing Confucianism was a way by which dynastic founders demonstrated not only that they deeply valued China's long-standing and venerated imperial traditions, but also that their regimes were in accordance with Heaven's will. As a way to gain favor with the *ru*, one of the initial moves of any regime was to quickly establish an imperial university in the capital and to staff it with Confucian scholars. Each of the Three Kingdoms' founders rushed to erect a *taixue*, "imperial university": in 221 Liu Bei (r. 221–223) established one in Chengdu; in 224 Emperor Wen of the Wei (Cao Pi, r. 220–226) rebuilt the *taixue*; and in 230 Sun Quan (r. 222–252) set up his own. At the start of his reign, Emperor Wu of the Western Jin (Sima Yan, r. 265–290), established a *taixue* and staffed it with nineteen erudites (*boshi*).³⁶ By 272, the number of the university's students grew from 3,000 to 7,000. Around 278, Emperor Wu also established the *guozixue*, "School for State's Youth," which was exclusively for the sons of high officials.³⁷

Although Southern Dynasties rulers sometimes were able to establish a *taixue* immediately, at other times circumstances prevented them from doing so. When this happened, they would encourage the establishment of private academies. In the first year of his reign, Emperor Yuan (Sima Rui, r. 317–323), was able to establish a *taixue* in Jiankang (Nanjing). His successors took measures to reinvigorate the university in 337, 357, and 384.³⁸

³³ LS 48.663. ³⁴ LS 48.672. ³⁵ LS 48.671.

³⁶ *Boshi* was an official position at the imperial university to which renowned scholars were appointed. Due to their profound knowledge, they often participated in court debates about ritual matters.

³⁷ Lee, *Education in traditional China*, pp. 57–59.

³⁸ Lin Dengshun, *Wei-Jin Nanbeichao ruxue liubian zhi xingcha* (Taipei, 1996), pp. 36–37.

Nevertheless, the succeeding Liu-Song government failed to establish one. To compensate for this lack of an imperial university, Liu-Song emperors would invite famous scholars, many of whom were recluses, to set up their own private schools in the capital. In 438, Emperor Wen of the Liu-Song (Liu Yilong, r. 424–453), combined four of these schools into one: the sixueguan (“Four Academies”). Indicative of the emphasis on broad learning, each of the academies was devoted to a different type of learning: Confucian studies (*ruxue*), Dark Learning (*xuanxue*), historical studies (*shixue*), and literary studies (*wenxue*). In 442, Emperor Wen finally established an imperial university, the *guozixue*; however, it only operated for seven years. In 470, Emperor Ming of the Liu-Song (Liu Yu, r. 465–472), established another private academy called the *zongming guan*, “Pavilion of Intellect,” which also offered the same four types of learning, as well as *yinyang* studies (*yinyang xue*).³⁹ In 485, the Southern Qi government closed the *zongming guan* and was finally able to establish an imperial university, but with the death of Emperor Wu in 493 it closed.⁴⁰ It reopened in 497, but again it was disbanded a year later. In 505, Emperor Wu of the Liang (Xiao Yan, r. 502–549) created a hybrid public academy that was organized into five separate institutes called the *wuguan* (“Five Pavilions,”) each of which was organized around one of the Five Classics, rather than five different subjects.⁴¹ In 508, Emperor Wu created a *guozixue*.⁴² The primary difference between the two colleges was that the *guozixue* was meant for the scions of the upper elite, while the *wuguan* was meant to attract the talented children of the *banmen* (“cold gates” or lesser elite).⁴³

Non-Han northern emperors likewise demonstrated their esteem of Confucian learning through establishing colleges. Even during the chaotic Sixteen Kingdoms period, a number of non-Han rulers established imperial universities.⁴⁴ After unifying much of northern China, in 398 Emperor Daowu (Tuoba Gui, r. 386–409), founder of the Northern Wei, established the *Guozi taixue*, “Imperial University for State Youth” in the capital, Pingcheng. It was staffed by Erudites of the Five Classics and soon had

³⁹ Zhu Mingpan, *Nanchao Song buiyao* (Shanghai, 1984), pp. 227–230.

⁴⁰ Zhu Mingpan, *Nanchao Qi buiyao* (Shanghai, 1984), pp. 170–173; Lee, *Education in traditional China*, pp. 60–61.

⁴¹ Zhu Mingpan, *Nanchao Liang buiyao* (Shanghai, 1984), pp. 185–187, 188–189; Lee, *Education in traditional China*, p. 61.

⁴² *LS* 2.46, 48.662.

⁴³ *SS* 26.724; Keith N. Knapp (Nan Kaishi), “Liuchao Jiankang: Chuangxin gaodeng jiaoyu fuhuadi,” trans. Zhou Yin, *Nanjing xiaozhuang xueyuan xuebao* 1 (2016), p. 18; Miyazaki Ichisada, *Kyūbin hō no kenkyū: Kakyō zenshi* (Kyoto, 1956), pp. 252–358.

⁴⁴ Liu Huiqin, *Beichao ruxue jiqi lishi zuoyong* (Xi’an, 2003), pp. 28–30.

3,000 students.⁴⁵ In 426, Emperor Taiwu (Tuoba Dao, r. 424–452) built a separate campus for the *taixue*. In 445, he prohibited private education, so that the sons of nobles and ministers had no choice but to attend the imperial university. In 477, Emperor Xiaowen (Tuoba Hong, r. 471–499) created a *huangzi zhi xue* (“School for the Emperor’s Sons”); after moving the capital to Luoyang in 495, he ordered the construction of the *taixue*, *guozixue*, and *simen xiaoxue*, “Elementary School of the Four Gates.” The Northern Qi had a *taixue*, *guozixue* (which was now renamed *guozisi*), and a *simen xiaoxue*. The Northern Zhou had a *taixue*, but it also established a new college: in 567, Emperor Wu (Yuwen Yong, r. 560–78) established the *lumenxue* (“School of the Grand Gate”).⁴⁶

Perhaps even more impressive were non-Han rulers’ efforts to create public schools at the local level. In the north, a number of emperors mandated schools at the prefectural or even at the village level. In 466, Emperor Xiaowen ordered that schools should be built in each prefecture and township.⁴⁷ Some evidence suggests that this system was implemented: upon becoming the regional inspector of Western Yanzhou, Gao You (d. 499) discovered that even though the prefectures had schools, the counties did not, so he set up schools at both the county and township level.⁴⁸ Gao Mingshi believes that the northern regimes were much more active in creating local, public schools because non-Han families did not have the tradition of family learning that prominent Chinese families relied on to educate their children.⁴⁹

Teaching at institutions of higher education in the capital was crucial for Confucian scholars because it was there that they drew the ruler’s attention. Oftentimes, talented *ru* either received their advanced training at a university in the capital, or were appointed there as assistant teachers. After they had developed a reputation, rulers would then appoint these Confucian scholars from the imperial university as tutors for their sons, especially the Crown prince. Through the Confucian scholars’ lectures or tutoring, rulers and princes became aware of the vast ritual and cultural expertise that these *ru* possessed. This led to well-known *ru* becoming trusted advisers to the throne, particularly with regard to ritual matters. Thus, institutions of higher education played a critical role in providing early medieval sovereigns with a body of advisers who were Confucian scholars; in turn, it provided *ru* with a means of

⁴⁵ Lin, *Wei-Jin Nanbeichao ruxue liubian zhi shengcha*, pp. 124–125.

⁴⁶ Lee, *Education in traditional China*, pp. 65–66. For more information on the Linzhi Academy, see Albert E. Dien, “A note on imperial academies of the Northern Dynasties,” in *Proceedings of the second biennial conference International Association of Historians of Asia* (Taipei, 1962), pp. 57–69.

⁴⁷ *WS* 6.127, 84.1842. ⁴⁸ *WS* 57.1261. See Lin, *Wei Jin Nanbeichao ruxue*, pp. 132–136.

⁴⁹ Gao Mingshi, *Tangdai Dongya jiaoyuquan de xingcheng* (Taipei, 1984), pp. 170–171.

securing royal patronage.⁵⁰ In an era when so much of social and political life was ritualized and court debates often concerned questions related to the correct performance of rites, Confucian scholars' command of the Three Ritual Classics (*sanli*) made them essential guides for correct ceremonial performance and decorous behavior.

EXAMINATIONS

Historians tend to believe that the imperial civil service examinations, one of China's greatest contributions to the world, were a creation of the Sui and Tang dynasties. However, following Han dynasty precedents, civil service examinations were regularly administered and matured during the Six Dynasties period. Hence, the Sui–Tang examination system merely built upon the foundation laid in the early medieval period.

Following the Han precedent, Six Dynasties governments continued to select men for office based on the Han dynasty recommendation categories of *xiaolian*, “filial and incorrupt,” and *xiucai*, “flourishing talent.” Men who were recommended for office this way would have the privilege of going to the capital to sit for an examination; those who passed would become officials. The modern Chinese scholar Luo Xinben has shown that, during the Western Jin, being recommended in this way was still the most common way to enter office. However, beginning with the Eastern Jin and throughout the rest of the Southern Dynasties, the recommendation categories became a secondary route: only about 20 percent of bureaucrats came to office this way.⁵¹ Instead, most men were recruited into bureaucratic service through the *bizhao* (“summoning to office”) system. Through this practice, officials serving in both national and provincial offices could directly appoint men of talent as their staff.⁵² Luo believes that the recommendation system lost popularity because, once a candidate reached the capital, he would have to endure a vigorous testing process that was oftentimes supervised by the emperor or the Crown prince. The men who chose this more arduous route were mostly southerners.⁵³ Northern émigrés avoided this way of entering the bureaucracy because the government post they would gain through the recommendation system would be lower and less prestigious than that they would obtain

⁵⁰ Lee, *Education in traditional China*, p. 62; Knapp, “Scriptural knowledge and impeccable behavior,” pp. 434–442.

⁵¹ Luo Xinben, “Liang Jin Nanchao de xiucan, xiaolian chaju,” *Lishi yanjiu* 3 (1987), pp. 116–117.

⁵² Gan Huaizhen, *Huangquan, liyi yu jingdian quanshi: Zhongguo gudai zhengzhibi yanjiu* (Taipei, 2004), pp. 236–245.

⁵³ Luo, “Liang Jin Nanchao de xiucan, xiaolian chaju,” p. 119.

through the *jiupin zhongzhen* or Nine Ranks system.⁵⁴ During the Southern Dynasties, the *xiuca*i recommendation category became a much more prestigious route into government than the *xiaolian*. At this point, the men who were recommended as “flourishing talents” tended to be from high-ranking families, while those who were put forward as “filial and incorrupt” were from *hanmen* (“cold gate” or lesser elite) families.⁵⁵

The examinations required test candidates to have extensive cultural knowledge and literary ability; nevertheless, they were not always administered in the strictest manner. The test given to candidates consisted of five questions: *xiuca*i candidates had to answer all five, while *xiaolian* candidates only had to answer one. A candidate who answered none of the questions correctly failed. During the Northern Qi, a candidate who made too many written errors on his exam paper had to drink a pint of ink.⁵⁶ A biography of a Northern Qi candidate provides us with an example of all five test questions: the first concerned the ritual used when making announcements at the sacred mountain of Taishan, a second concerned seeking talent and examining the achievements of officials, a third concerned the two religions of Buddhism and Daoism, a fourth concerned the application of punishments, and a fifth concerned karmic good fortune and misfortune.⁵⁷ As these questions make clear, candidates were asked questions about policy, ritual, and culture. Sometimes the questions concerned how to correctly interpret a passage from the classics. Based on three sets of examination answers found on a 408 CE document unearthed in Turfan, Albert Dien concludes that the examinees provided perfunctory answers, but interestingly they were willing to question the classics and plumb below the surface for their passages’ meaning.⁵⁸ However, cheating on these examinations seems to have been widespread and chronic. The southern alchemist and author Ge Hong (284–363) famously noted, “Those who were put forward as *xiuca*i did not understand books and those who were recommended as *xiaolian* lived apart from their fathers.” He also complained that examinations were badly administered: candidates could obtain rough drafts of the questions beforehand, the

⁵⁴ Albert E. Dien, “Civil service examinations: Evidence from the Northwest,” in *Culture and power in the reconstitution of the Chinese realm, 200–600*, ed. Scott Pearce, Audrey Spiro, and Patricia Ebrey (Cambridge, MA, 2001), p. 101.

⁵⁵ Luo, “Liang Jin Nanchao de xiucai, xiaolian chaju,” pp. 118–122. For a specific example of a father and son who were *hanmen* being recommended as “filial and incorrupt” candidates, see Keith N. Knapp, “Exemplary everymen: Guo Shidao and Guo Yuanping as Confucian commoners,” *AM*, 3rd series 23.1 (2010), pp. 99–102.

⁵⁶ Dien, “Civil service examinations,” p. 104.

⁵⁷ Albert E. Dien, “The *xiuca*i of the Northern Qi: The case of Fan Xun,” in *Wei Jin wenhua yanjiu*, ed. Ma Baoji (Zhengzhou, 2012), p. 151.

⁵⁸ Dien, “Civil service examinations,” pp. 109–113.

examinations did not have to be taken all at one time, and there was no set examination hall.⁵⁹ Yan Zhitui likewise criticized upper-class men of the Liang dynasty for hiring men to write the answers for their tests.⁶⁰

Beginning in the late fifth century, examinations seem to have become much more important. In the records of the Southern Qi dynasty (479–502), we begin to see a few records of either students or *xiuca*i candidates who scored well on an examination and thereby gained office,⁶¹ and that imperial university students resumed taking the *mingjing* (Illuminating the Classics) examination that dated to the Han, but had long been in abeyance.⁶² During the Liang dynasty, the number of reported cases in which men gained office through their examination success increased greatly.⁶³ Indeed, one of the purposes of the Liang dynasty's *wuguan* academy was to award government posts to students who passed the *mingjing* examination.⁶⁴ However, after passing the examination, how high an office one obtained also depended on social ranking.⁶⁵ In the North, reports of men obtaining office through passing examinations only begin to appear in the Northern Zhou.⁶⁶ Hence, the late Six Dynasties witnessed an increased use of tests to select qualified officials, thus providing a foundation for the Sui–Tang civil service examinations.

RITUAL

Another area of the Six Dynasties in which Confucianism had an immense impact was ritual. The importance of ritual in the lives of premodern Chinese cannot be overstated: it guided one's behavior toward family members, neighbors, and superiors; and was used to structure social activities, regulate emotions, reinforce hierarchical social order, mitigate natural disasters, and legitimate rulers and regimes. As a result, Six Dynasties rulers strived to faithfully carry out state religious ceremonies that were set out in Confucian texts.

It was not enough for rulers to establish educational institutions. They also endeavored to show their veneration of Confucianism through the performance of the *shidian*, "Sacrifice for the First Teacher," which was initially

⁵⁹ Albert E. Dien (Ding Aibo), "Zaoqi zhongguo jiankang diqu xiucai kaoshi de fazhan jiqi gongxian," trans. Bi Yun, *Nanjing xiaozhuang xueyuan xuebao* 1 (2016), p. 111.

⁶⁰ Dien, "Civil service examinations," p. 101. ⁶¹ Zhu, *Nanchao Qi huiyao*, p. 391.

⁶² Zhu, *Nanchao Qi huiyao*, p. 392; on the Han origins of this examination, see Lee, *Education in traditional China*, pp. 115–117.

⁶³ Zhu, *Nanchao Liang huiyao*, pp. 424–425, 445–446.

⁶⁴ Zhu, *Nanchao Liang huiyao*, pp. 188–189. ⁶⁵ Miyazaki, *Kyūbin hō no kenkyū*, pp. 358–359.

⁶⁶ BS 64.2289, 93.3095.

performed during the Han dynasty when emperors occasionally visited Qufu, Confucius' hometown.⁶⁷ When Emperor Ming visited Qufu in 172, he performed a sacrifice to Kongzi and his seventy-two disciples, and entered a lecture hall, where he ordered the Crown prince to expound on the classics.⁶⁸ In 59 CE, Emperor Ming decreed that government schools should all perform the *xiang yinjiu*, "Village Libation Ceremony"; at the same time, they should offer a dog in sacrifice to the Duke of Zhou and Confucius.⁶⁹ Six Dynasties sovereigns innovatively combined these two elements: either a young emperor himself or the Crown prince would expound upon a classic, then he would visit the imperial university to perform a sacrifice to Kongzi. The earliest such act was in 244 when the thirteen-year-old Emperor Shaodi (Cao Fang, r. 239–254) lectured on the *Shujing* and ordered his Chamberlain for Ceremonials (*taichang*) to perform a large beast sacrifice (*tailaosì*) to Kongzi in the Hall of Learning.⁷⁰ In 267, Emperor Yuan decreed that a sacrifice of the three large livestock should be offered to Kongzi four times a year, both in the region of Lu and at the *taixue*.⁷¹

By the Northern and Southern Dynasties period (317–589), performing the *shidian* ritual became a common occurrence. During the Eastern Jin dynasty, six different Crown princes and young emperors performed the *shidian* ceremony at the *taixue*.⁷² According to the Japanese scholar Kogachi Ryūichi, at this time the ritual had already reached its mature form.⁷³ From this point on, the *shidian* ritual became regular court practice throughout the imperial period.⁷⁴ One should note that early medieval rulers made a number of changes to the ritual: (1) by placing the cult at the *taixue*, they centralized the rite and made it more regular; (2) the focus of the cult shifted—Kongzi, not the Duke of Zhou, was the primary recipient of the sacrifice; and (3) that the ritual took place at the *taixue* underscored the close relationship between learning, Confucianism, and the court.

Emperors who founded or sought to reinvigorate a dynasty invested much time and effort in establishing and correcting court ritual. An indication of the respect for court ritual is apparent in that no Six Dynasties emperor felt worthy enough to perform the vaunted *fengshan* sacrifices.⁷⁵ Instead, emperors

⁶⁷ John K. Shryock, *The origin and development of the state cult of Confucius* (New York, 1966), pp. 100–101.

⁶⁸ HHS 2.118. ⁶⁹ HHS, "Liyi shang," p. 3108. ⁷⁰ SGZ 4.120. ⁷¹ JS 19.599.

⁷² Thomas A. Wilson, "Ritualizing Confucius/Kongzi: The family and state cults of the sage of culture in imperial China," in *idem*, *On sacred grounds: Culture, society, politics, and the formation of the cult of Confucius* (Cambridge, MA, 2002), p. 74.

⁷³ Kogachi Ryūichi, *Chūgoku chūsei no gakujiutsū* (Tokyo, 2006), pp. 116–126.

⁷⁴ Li Shen, *Shidian Kongzi wenxian yu tushuo* (Beijing, 2012); and Kogachi, *Chūgoku chūsei no gakujiutsū*, pp. 138–168.

⁷⁵ Chen Shuguo, "State religious ceremonies," in *Early Chinese religion*, Part 2, *The Period of Division* (220–589 AD), Volume 1, ed. John Lagerwey and Lü Pengzhi (Leiden, 2010), p. 70. The *Fengshan*

invested their energy in performing the grand suburban sacrifices (*jiaosi*), which Confucian reformers established during the Eastern Han.⁷⁶ The most important suburban sacrifice was dedicated to *Haotian shangdi* (August Heaven the Emperor on High); it took place in the first month on a round altar in the capital's southern suburb. Its corresponding ritual was the suburban sacrifice for earthly deities, which took place on a square altar in the northern suburb. It was believed that performance of these rites indicated the dynasty's receipt of the Heavenly Mandate. After the Three Kingdoms period, nearly all of the dynastic founders, as well as successors whose reigns were lengthy, personally carried out the suburban sacrifice to Heaven.⁷⁷ Non-Han rulers adopted the Confucian suburban sacrifices; however, they also performed their own unique sacrifice to Heaven, which took place during the fourth lunar month in the western suburb. This rite was practiced continuously until Emperor Xiaowen moved the Northern Wei capital to Luoyang. The Japanese scholar Kaneko Shūichi notes that up until that time, Northern Wei emperors performed the western suburb sacrifice in the fourth month, while the northern and southern suburb sacrifices were merely carried out by high officials.⁷⁸

At that time, rulers generally adopted the ancestral sacrifices specified in Confucian texts, which entailed worshipping seven generations at the imperial ancestral temple, and annually performing the Four Seasonal Sacrifices (*sishi ji*). This ritual program was only established and practiced in earnest starting in the first century CE. Nevertheless, contrary to *ru* prescriptions, the seasonal sacrifices were often performed at tomb shrines rather than at the imperial ancestral temple.⁷⁹ Although the rulers of the Three Kingdoms performed haphazardly, or outright neglected, the Confucian ancestral rites, the emperors of the Western and Eastern Jin as well as those of the Southern Dynasties by and large practiced them assiduously. Court officials assumed that emperors would personally take part in the ceremonies and judged their performance based on prescriptions in *ru* texts. Their rituals, however, were not always entirely in line with Confucian precepts; while Jin and Southern Dynasties

rites were the most significant sacrifices to Heaven and Earth that could only take place at one of the five holy mountains and only by the most accomplished emperors. In the history of imperial China, only seven emperors performed these rites.

⁷⁶ Marianne Bujard, "State and local cults in Han religion," in *Early Chinese religion*, Part 1, *Shang through Han (1250 BC–220 AD)*, ed. John Lagerwey and Marc Kalinowski, Volume 2 (Leiden, 2009), pp. 777–781, 790–796.

⁷⁷ Chen, "State religious ceremonies," pp. 70–94. Also see Kaneko Shūichi, *Chūgoku kodai kōtei saishi no kenkyū* (Tokyo, 2006), pp. 41–57, 215–308.

⁷⁸ Kaneko Shūichi, *Kodai Chūgoku to kōtei saishi* (Tokyo, 2001), pp. 160–162.

⁷⁹ Keith N. Knapp, "Borrowing legitimacy from the dead: The Confucianization of ancestor worship," in *Early Chinese religion*, Part 2, ed. Lagerwey and Lü, Volume 1, pp. 149–156.

rulers often acknowledged the ideal of worshipping seven generations of ancestors, they frequently could not bear removing earlier ancestral tablets from the temple, and, moreover, they sometimes included a female ancestor within the seven generations.⁸⁰ Northern rulers, on the other hand, were much more reluctant to relinquish their tribal methods of ancestral worship. Unlike the *ru* ancestral sacrifices, the Northern Wei rites had no set time, were performed by officials rather than the emperor himself, took place in shrines established in important areas along the northern frontier, and included horses among their sacrificial animals. It was only through Emperor Xiaowen's efforts that the Confucian ancestral rites became the standard practice of the Northern Wei.⁸¹ Among the educated elite, adherence to the Four Seasonal Sacrifices was widespread. Ge Hong, so he tells us, despite having never made offerings to popular deities, by means of only performing the Four Seasonal Sacrifices, had never suffered catastrophes.⁸²

The Confucian mourning rites had an even greater impact on the ritual life of China's upper class than did the ancestral rites. The three-year mourning rites became the ritual practice of China's elite in the late first century CE; moreover, it was only during the Western Jin (265–317) that officials were required to perform them.⁸³ During the Jin, officials were impeached not because they failed to perform the three-year rites, but because they performed them in what appeared to be a slightly defective manner. The charges of such "mistakes" were so questionable that they often occasioned a court debate over the matter.⁸⁴ Performing mourning rites correctly became so highly valued that a sizable number of works on the subject were generated, especially in the South. The Japanese scholar Kishima Fumio estimates that from the Jin through the Chen dynasty, depending on the era, one-third to one-fifth of all works devoted to classical scholarship concerned the mourning rites. Indeed, later scholarship never matched in quantity or quality the Six Dynasties works on these rites.⁸⁵ Kishima underscores that the majority of the treatises were less explications of what the classics said and more manuals

⁸⁰ Knapp, "Borrowing legitimacy from the dead," pp. 156–169; Guo Shanbing, *Zhongguo gudai diwang zongmiao lizhi yanjiu* (Beijing, 2007), pp. 279–307; Kaneko, *Chūgoku kodai kōtei saishi no kenkyū*, pp. 31–35, 221–266.

⁸¹ Knapp, "Borrowing legitimacy from the dead," pp. 169–173; Guo, *Zhongguo gudai diwang zongmiao*, pp. 308–354; Kaneko, *Chūgoku kodai kōtei saishi no kenkyū*, pp. 36–40, 267–368.

⁸² *Baopuzi neipian jiaoshi*, ed. Wang Ming (Beijing, 1985), p. 173; Knapp, "Borrowing legitimacy from the dead," pp. 178–179.

⁸³ Knapp, *Selfless offspring: Filial children and social order in medieval China* (Honolulu, 2005), pp. 155–157.

⁸⁴ Kamiya Noriko, "Shin jidai ni okeru irei shingi," *Tōyō gakuō* 67.3–4 (1986), pp. 49–80; Fujikawa Masakazu, *Gishin jidai ni okeru mofuku rei no kenkyū* (Tokyo, 1961), p. 5.

⁸⁵ Kishima Fumio, "Rikuchō zenki no kō to mofuku: reigaku no mokuteki—kinō-shohō," in *Chūgoku kodai reisei kenkyū*, ed. Kominami Ichirō (Kyoto, 1995), pp. 366–377.

that were meant to be used in performing the rites.⁸⁶ The reason why the Confucian mourning rites became so important in the Six Dynasties was no doubt because they strengthened kinship ties by calling attention to one's place within the family and reaffirming his/her ties to other family members.⁸⁷ The noteworthy intentional violation of *ru* mourning precepts by nonconformists, such as Ruan Ji (210–263) and Wang Rong (234–305), underscores the standardization of the Confucian three-year mourning rites.

Without a doubt, Confucianism played a commanding role in ritual life. The state cults dedicated to heavenly and earthly deities, which provided a large measure of legitimacy to the government, were entirely based on the classics and on interpretive works by Han Confucian scholars such as Dong Zhongshu (179–104 BCE) and Zheng Xuan (127–200). The same could be said of ancestral sacrifices that were performed not only by the imperial family, but by the educated elite as well. Finally, the upper class fully embraced and universally practiced the Confucian three-year mourning rites. As John Lagerwey notes, "In short, the collapse of the Han synthesis was not total. It had given to China its basic and enduring religious ideology and practice, amply justifying the traditional notion that the Chinese state was Confucian (though not the post-Jesuit idea that Confucianism is not a religion)."⁸⁸

THE MAJOR THINKERS OF SIX DYNASTIES CONFUCIANISM

The previous section provided a sense of the significance of Confucianism during the Six Dynasties period, but exactly what ideas and programs did Confucian advocates of this period champion? Who were the major Confucian thinkers and what issues did they promote? I have chosen to discuss the writings of Wang Su, Fu Xuan, Huangfu Mi, Fan Zhen, and Yan Zhitui because of their great influence upon their contemporaries, and because so many issues they raised, such as ritual reform, the nature of reclusion, the place of extravagance, and the survival of the soul after death, were of major import to Six Dynasties intellectuals.

Wang Su

One of the Six Dynasties' most important Confucian authors was Wang Su (195–256) who made seminal contributions to ritual theory and practice. His

⁸⁶ Kishima, "Rikuchō zenki no kō to mofuku," pp. 367–400, 451–453.

⁸⁷ Knapp, *Selfless offspring*, p. 158; Kishima, "Rikuchō zenki no kō to mofuku," pp. 400–415.

⁸⁸ John Lagerwey, "Introduction," in *Early Chinese religion*, Part 2, *The Period of Division* (220–589 AD), Volume 1, ed. Lagerwey and Lü, pp. 1, 2.

father, Wang Lang (d. 228), was a famed scholar who eventually served Emperor Wen of the Wei (Cao Pi, r. 220–226) as the Minister of Works.⁸⁹ By the late 220s, Wang Su was appointed to a number of offices that allowed him to advise the emperor. Wang later secured his political future by allying himself with Sima Yi (179–251), a relationship formalized by marrying his daughter to Sima Yi's son Sima Zhao (211–265). His grandson, Sima Yan (236–290), became the founding emperor of the Western Jin.⁹⁰ Most of Wang's extant memorials to the throne concern ritual reforms.

Wang's long-lasting fame and significance came from his interpretation of the rites, which markedly differed from that of Zheng Xuan (127–200), the Eastern Han's foremost interpreter of the classics. Even though both men's scholarship was grounded in the commentaries written by Jia Kui (30–101) and Ma Rong (79–166), Wang disagreed with much of Zheng's writings. One major divergence was their view of *tian* (Heaven or sky). Based on information from the Apocrypha, Zheng Xuan maintained that there were Six Heavens (*liutian*); a supreme deity, *Haotian shangdi* (August Heaven the Emperor on High), who was sacrificed to at the Round Hill (*yuanqiu*) during the Winter Solstice; and the Five Celestial Emperors (*wutiandi*), who were sacrificed to at the Suburban Sacrifice (*jiaosi*) in the first month.⁹¹ In stark contrast, Wang Su emphasized that there was just one Heaven and only one sacrifice to it, the Suburban Sacrifice, which was dedicated to that single Heaven.⁹² A Chinese scholar, Qiao Xiuyan, cogently notes that the differences between Zheng and Wang's interpretations are because Zheng, who never served in office, was attempting to explain all of the contradictions within the ritual classics, while Wang was merely trying to fulfill his duty to fashion a ritual program that could actually be implemented.⁹³

Indeed, in a number of ways, Wang's efforts were an attempt to rationalize and simplify ritual practice. One means by which he did so was by combining sacrifices, such as equating the Round Hill with the Suburban Sacrifice. In

⁸⁹ Howard L. Goodman, *Ts'ao P'i transcendent: The political culture of dynasty-founding in China at the end of the Han* (Seattle, 1998), pp. 156–159.

⁹⁰ For discussions on Wang Su's life, see Hao Hong, *Wei Jin ruxue xinlun: yi Wang Su he Wangxue wei taolun de zhongxin* (Beijing, 2011), pp. 37–48; Robert Kramers, *K'ung tzu jia yu: The school sayings of Confucius* (Leiden, 1950), pp. 54–90; Howard L. Goodman, "Chinese polymaths: The Tung-kuan, Taoist dissent, and technical skills," *AM*, 3rd series 18.1 (2005), pp. 138–141.

⁹¹ Watanabe Yoshihiro, "Sacrifices to Heaven in the Han and the theory of the Six Heavens," *AcA* 98 (2010), pp. 43–75; Ikeda Shūzō, "Cheng Hsuan's theory of the Six Heavens and ritual scholarship in the Han," *ibid.*, pp. 77–98.

⁹² For discussions of Wang Su's differences with Zheng Xuan, see Shi Yingyong, *Zheng Xuan tongxue ji Zheng Wang zhi zheng yanjiu* (Chengdu, 2007), pp. 374–379; Li Dunqing, "Zheng Xuan, Wang Su xueshuo yingxiang xia de Wei Jin jiaosi lizhi," *Hunan renwen keji xueyuan xuebao* 1 (2013), pp. 115–119; and Qiao Xiuyan, "Lun Zheng Wang lishuo yitong," *Beida shixue* 15 (2010), pp. 9–11.

⁹³ Qiao Xiuyan, "Lun Zheng Wang," pp. 12–17.

a similar manner, Wang argued that the three-year mourning period (*sannian zhi sang*) was actually only twenty-five months long, rather than twenty-seven as advocated by Zheng Xuan. He reasoned that, since the *tan* sacrifice, which marked the end of the three-year mourning rites, took place in the same month as the *daxiang* (Great Auspicious Sacrifice), which marked the end of the second year of mourning, the two ceremonies could be combined. The Japanese scholar Fujikawa Masakazu contends that Wang advocated only mourning for twenty-five months because it was the common practice of those who performed this ritual.⁹⁴ At the same time, Wang was also attempting to rationalize Confucian ritual. As noted earlier, Zheng Xuan often employed the Apocrypha to interpret the classics; in contrast, Wang studiously avoided them. For him, Confucius was a human sage rather than a deity; moreover, his vision of *tian* (Heaven or sky), which was deeply influenced by Daoist texts, was one devoid of human attributes.⁹⁵ The Japanese scholar Watanabe Yoshihiro contends that Wang wanted to understand the classics through the conception of *li* (principle, pattern, reason), and that his pragmatic conception of the state rites frequently prevailed throughout the Southern Dynasties, and was later adopted by the Tang and Northern Song governments.⁹⁶

Fu Xuan

Perhaps the most significant Confucian thinker of the entire period was Fu Xuan (217–278). More than any other man, Fu most fully articulated the Confucian outlook that would come to characterize the era. He came from a family dedicated to public service and held a number of important offices under both the Wei and the Western Jin regimes. Due to Fu's propensity to criticize others and remonstrate, combined with his uncompromising attitude, Fu was appropriately given the posthumous name of *gang* 剛, "Unyielding." He was also a prolific author and poet, and is best known for his major prose work, the monumental *Fuzi* (*Master Fu*), which was several hundred fascicles long.⁹⁷

The heart of Fu's program for improving the world in which he lived was moral in nature. He believed that people instinctively wanted to do good, but they also hankered after glory and profit. Hence, a ruler can only make certain that the people follow their better inclinations by inculcating Confucian

⁹⁴ Fujikawa, *Gishin jidai ni okeru mofuku rei*, pp. 99–128.

⁹⁵ Li Zhonghua, *Zhongguo ruxue shi: Wei Jin Nanbeichao juan* (Beijing, 2011), pp. 374, 389–392.

⁹⁶ Watanabe Yoshihiro, "Ō Shuku no saiten shisō," in *idem*, *Seishin "jukyō kokka" to kizokusei* (Tokyo, 2010), pp. 416, 419.

⁹⁷ Jordan D. Paper, *The Fu-tzu: A post-Han Confucian text* (Leiden, 1987).

values through education. Other schools of thought, Fu believed, produced faulty doctrines because they merely played upon people's greed and fear, which could only result in strife and chaos.⁹⁸ Part of this moral education, according to Fu, must come from the ruler himself. Like Confucians before him, Fu contended that societal transformation would be a top-down affair in which the ruler first rectifies his heart (*zhengxin*), i.e. practices self-cultivation, thereby setting an example for everyone below him.⁹⁹ But how exactly was a ruler supposed to rectify his heart? Here Fu's ideas vary from classical Confucian prescriptions. One does so by following the Daoist ideals of minimizing desires and being content with what one has (*zhizu*).¹⁰⁰ If a ruler fails to curtail his desires, his demands will be limitless. To fulfill their ruler's demands, the people will abandon agriculture to either engage in commerce or produce useless, luxury items. After abandoning agriculture, increasing extravagance leads to chaos in which the four social classes (scholars, farmers, artisans, and merchants) lose their distinction.¹⁰¹ Social chaos such as this easily leads to violence and ultimately the fall of dynasties. To prevent this downward spiral, the ruler should restrict the merchant class and encourage agriculture.¹⁰²

Borrowing from Legalist doctrine, Fu Xuan places great stress on the priority of *gong* ("public or communal") interests over *si* ("private or selfish") ones and the importance of rewards and punishments in ruling the people. For Fu, the essence of government consists of the ruler discarding selfish desires (*siyu*) in an effort to establish public mindfulness (*gongxin*). In other words, all that he undertakes should be done for the good of the community rather than for himself. To truly realize the public good the sovereign must be free of biases: he must have no favorites while also maintaining fairness in administering the law.¹⁰³ Fu believed that showing favorites opened the door to corruption because people would perceive that the ruler was only approachable through bribery. Similarly, if officials assumed that flatterers monopolized the ruler's attention, they would no longer be willing to remonstrate. Fu opined that the Qin only lasted two generations because its rulers had favorites, indulged their private desires, and refused to listen to criticism.¹⁰⁴ Fu also thought that governance must rely on rewarding the meritorious while

⁹⁸ Liu Zhili, *Fuzi pingzhu* (Tianjin, 2010), pp. 55–57; and Lin Jiaosheng, "Du Shu Fu Xuan yu Wei Jin de ruxue renshenglun," *Huaqiao daxue xuebao* (*zhixue shehuike xueban*) 4 (1998), pp. 91–92.

⁹⁹ Liu, *Fuzi pingzhu*, pp. 26–27; Paper, *The Fu-tzu*, pp. 42–43.

¹⁰⁰ Liu, *Fuzi pingzhu*, p. 74; Li, *Zhongguo ruxue shi*, pp. 85–88.

¹⁰¹ Liu, *Fuzi pingzhu*, pp. 17–25; Paper, *The Fu-tzu*, pp. 61–64.

¹⁰² Liu, *Fuzi pingzhu*, p. 45; Paper, *The Fu-tzu*, pp. 56–57.

¹⁰³ Liu, *Fuzi pingzhu*, p. 67. This is my own translation. For a slightly different one see Paper, *The Fu-tzu*, p. 47.

¹⁰⁴ Liu, *Fuzi pingzhu*, p. 68; Paper, *The Fu-tzu*, p. 50.

punishing evildoers. In order for rewards to be effective, they must be given to the deserving no matter their social class; for punishments to be efficacious, they must be meted out no matter the criminal's pedigree or relationship to the ruler.¹⁰⁵ Here, Fu tightly intertwines Confucian and Legalist ideas: if rewards and punishments are to bring about positive change, Confucian rites and teachings have to prevail throughout society. However, Confucian rites and teachings can only come into being if the sovereign rids himself of private interests and devotes himself solely to public betterment.

Huangfu Mi

A Confucian who offered a divergent vision of how to live and improve society was the famed recluse Huangfu Mi (215–282). His ancestors were renowned for both their military exploits and their classical learning.¹⁰⁶ An accomplished writer, Huangfu penned works of many different genres: histories, geographies, medical treatises, essays, and two autobiographies.¹⁰⁷ But what brought him fame was his consistent refusal to serve in office. After denying the repeated summons of the de facto ruler, Sima Zhao (211–265), Huangfu explained in detail his refusal in an essay entitled “Essay on Rejecting Advice” (*Shiquanlun*).¹⁰⁸ He argues that a truly enlightened sovereign recognizes that by nature there are both worthy men who serve in office, and others who hide themselves away to protect their integrity. These two types of worthies function just like *yin* and *yang*: each is necessary for a state to work well.¹⁰⁹

Through his writings, Huangfu demonstrated that recluses were moral exemplars whose behavior enhanced the conduct of all they encountered. For him, the best way to cultivate moral excellence is to refuse public office, where it was all too easy to sully one's moral character. Indeed, one can do the work of Confucianism without being an official. According to the Japanese scholar Niwa Taiko, Huangfu asserts that reclusion is neither a protest against the nature of the times nor a criticism of the reigning government; rather it is a means by which one perfects himself, while positively transforming local society. Thus, in parallel with the official at court, the recluse in the

¹⁰⁵ Liu, *Fuzi pingzhu*, p. 82; Paper, *The Fu-tzu*, p. 66.

¹⁰⁶ Dominik Declercq, *Writing against the state: Political rhetorics in third and fourth century China* (Leiden, 1998), pp. 161–164; Niwa Taiko, “Kōhu Hitsu to kōshi den,” *Nagoya daigaku bungakubu kenkyū ronshū* (*Shigaku*) 50 (1970), pp. 49–51.

¹⁰⁷ For a list of his works, see Keith N. Knapp, “Heaven and death according to Huangfu Mi, a third-century Confucian,” *EMC* 6 (2000), p. 3, n. 10.

¹⁰⁸ Declercq, *Writing against the state*, pp. 191–203.

¹⁰⁹ *JS* 51.1409–1410; I have modified Declercq's translation. See his *Writing against the state*, pp. 173–174.

countryside creates social harmony.¹¹⁰ Huangfu's *Gaoshi zhuan* (*Biographies of High-Minded Gentlemen*) makes explicit how recluses create moral order.¹¹¹ All of the men included within the work embody the ethos of *qing* (purity), which combines the Mohist emphasis on frugality and the Daoist stress on lessening desires with a Confucian commitment to social action. Pure men are uncontaminated by the temptations of the vulgar world; they shun office-holding, avoid profit-making ventures, live in relative poverty, refuse charity, and donate any personal wealth to the less fortunate.¹¹²

For Huangfu reclusion was also a means to avoid a sudden death. This interpretation of reclusion differed substantially from traditional Confucian understanding, in which one merely avoided court service if a ruler was immoral or the Way was not in effect. In Huangfu's mind, nothing was more important than living: one should not die in pursuit of wealth and fame. Indeed, many of the *Gaoshi zhuan*'s accounts are about men who were able to avert disaster exactly because they refused to serve in office. Huangfu plainly borrows this line of reasoning from Daoist writings; it is no surprise, then, that many famous Daoists, such as Laozi and Zhuang Zhou, appear in the pages of the *Gaoshi zhuan*.¹¹³ Huangfu's commitment to Daoist ideas is also evident in his *Duzhong lun* (*Essay on the Ultimate End*), which explains how he is to be buried. Like Zhuangzi, he regards death as a natural process; therefore, Huangfu requests that his body not be coffined because this would slow down the decaying of his flesh. In a Confucian twist, though, he asks to be buried with the *Xiaojing* (*Classic of Filial Piety*), so that he can show the spirits that he has been filial in life.¹¹⁴

¹¹⁰ Niwa, "Kōhu Hitsu to kōshi den," p. 63; Alan J. Berkowitz, "Social and cultural dimensions of reclusion in early medieval China," in *Philosophy and religion in early medieval China*, ed. Alan K. L. Chan and Yuet-Keung Lo (Albany, 2010), pp. 297–298, 306–337; and Keith N. Knapp, "Think globally act locally: Confucian engagement during chaotic times," *JRP* 67.3 (2014), pp. 131–134.

¹¹¹ For a translation of the *Gaoshi zhuan*'s preface and some of its accounts, see Alan Berkowitz, "Huangfu Mi, preface to and biographies from *Accounts of high-minded men*," in *Hawai'i reader in traditional Chinese culture*, ed. Victor H. Mair, Nancy S. Steinhardt, and Paul R. Goldin (Honolulu, 2005), pp. 242–250; and *idem*, "Biographies of recluses: Huangfu Mi's *Accounts of high-minded men*," in *Early medieval China: A sourcebook*, ed. Wendy Swartz et al. (New York, 2014), pp. 333–349. See also *idem*, *Patterns of disengagement: The practice and portrayal of reclusion in early medieval China* (Stanford, 2000), pp. 153–160; Wei Ming'an, "Huangfu Mi 'Gaoshi zhuan' chutan," *Lanzhou daxue xuebao* 4 (1982), pp. 1–13; and Pu Qiuzheng, "Huangfu Mi 'Gaoshizhuan' shulüe," *Xibei shida xuebao* 1 (1992), pp. 35–41.

¹¹² For a discussion of this ethos, see Knapp, "Exemplary everymen," pp. 97–99; *idem*, "Think globally act locally," pp. 143–150; Kan Huai-chen, "Purifying the world: A political discourse in the Later Han," in *Interpretation and intellectual change: Chinese hermeneutics in historical perspective*, ed. Ching-I Tu (New Brunswick, 2005), pp. 81–92.

¹¹³ Wei, "Huangfu Mi 'Gaoshi zhuan'," pp. 2–3; Pu, "Huangfu Mi 'Gaoshi zhuan' shulüe," p. 37.

¹¹⁴ Knapp, "Heaven and death," pp. 15–18. For a complete translation of his "Duzhong lun," see Keith N. Knapp, "Confucian views of the supernatural," in *Early medieval China: A sourcebook*, ed. Swartz et al., pp. 647–649.

Fan Zhen

One of the most formidable challenges that Confucianism faced during the Six Dynasties period was the competition posed by Buddhism, which quickly made inroads into both the lettered elite and the unlettered masses. In counterreaction, a number of Confucian critics of this imported Indian religion emerged; none was more sophisticated and threatening than Fan Zhen (450?–515). Fan hailed from a genteel family that had fallen on hard times. In spite of that he was able to study with and gain the favor of the famous Confucian recluse Liu Huan (d. 489). During the Yongming period (483–493), Fan became a client of Prince Xiao Ziliang (460–494) and a friend of Xiao Yan (464–549), who later founded the Liang dynasty. Although Fan held a number of high offices, his career often suffered due to his forthright and determined opposition to Buddhism.¹¹⁵

Fan Zhen's essay *Shenmie lun* ("Essay on the Destruction of the Spirit") not only made him famous, but also caused an uproar in both the Southern Qi and Liang courts.¹¹⁶ The work came about after his devout Buddhist patron Xiao Ziliang questioned how Fan could explain social stratification without a belief in karma. Fan replied that one's social condition was merely based on luck; it had nothing to do with karma. He then wrote the *Shenmie lun* to explain his reasoning. Of course, in doing so he was taking part in a long running debate about the nature of one's spirit or soul.¹¹⁷ His treatise caused an uproar because it attacked the premise underlying the popular Buddhist notions of transmigration, karma, and pure lands. That is because if there were no conscious entity that survived death, then these notions made no sense.¹¹⁸ Since the Chinese found Buddhism compelling precisely because of these ideas, Fan's criticism was particularly troubling. In response, Xiao summoned a number of monks together to convince Fan of his error. Perhaps stemming from this debate, Sengyou's (445–518) *Hongmingji* contains two essays that

¹¹⁵ For his biography, see *LS* 48.664–671; *NS* 57.1420–1422; as well as Étienne Balazs, "The first Chinese materialist," in *idem*, *Chinese civilization and bureaucracy*, pp. 255–260; Chen Yuanhui, *Fan Zhen de wushen lun de sixiang* (Wuhan, 1957); and Aloysius Chang, "Fan Chen and his 'Treatise on the destruction of the soul,'" *CC* 14.4 (1973), pp. 2–3.

¹¹⁶ The text of this essay is included in Fan's biography (see *LS* 48.665–670).

¹¹⁷ The best discussion in English of this debate is Yuet Keung Lo, "The destiny of the 'shen' (soul) and the genesis of early medieval Confucian metaphysics (221–587 A.D.)," (PhD dissertation, University of Michigan, 1991). Also see W. Pachow, "The controversy over the immortality of the soul in Chinese Buddhism," *JOS* 16.1–2 (1978), pp. 21–38; and Walter Liebenthal, "The immortality of the soul in Chinese thought," *MN* 8 (1952), pp. 327–397.

¹¹⁸ Li Weidong, "Fan Zhen 'Shenmie lun' zhi yanjiu," *Huagang wenke xuebao* 18 (1991), p. 61.

attempt to debunk Fan's position.¹¹⁹ Again in 507, Xiao Yan issued an edict asking that the assembled officials refute Fan's argument. The *Hongmingji*'s tenth chapter consists entirely of the text of this edict and of the sixty-two replies from princes and officials.¹²⁰

The *Shenmie lun* consists of a hypothetical series of questions and answers. The questioners are probably Fan's critics, whereas the answers reflect his own position. Within this framework, Fan asserts that one's spirit or soul (*shen*) is the same as one's bodily frame (*xing*); thus, if the frame perishes, so does the spirit or soul. To support this assertion, Fan employs the *xuanxue* concepts of *ti* (body) and *yong* (function), although he substitutes the word *zhi* (substance) for *ti*. He argues that one's physical body is the substance, while the spirit or soul is merely its function. Without the physical body, the spirit or soul cannot exist.¹²¹ Much of the essay's remainder comprises counterarguments to various objections to his theory. For example, when asked about the existence of ancestors, he notes, echoing Xunzi, that ancestral rites are merely educational.¹²²

The overt anti-Buddhist nature of the *Shenmie lun* becomes apparent in its final section. There Fan argues that Buddhism threatens the country's welfare. Because of a fear of Hell and a desire for Heaven, some people become Buddhist monks rather than literati or soldiers. The country's wealth is dissipated on erecting monasteries, crafting images, and supporting lazy monks. He further states that Buddhism makes people so selfish about their spiritual welfare that they neglect their kin and forget the needy.¹²³ Here we again see the idea of *qing* or purity at play—one should avoid serving his own self-interests. Although some Confucians embraced Buddhism, Fan is representative of *ru* who viewed the foreign religion as a threat to state and society.¹²⁴ The two debates provoked by his famous essay certainly prove its significance.

Yan Zhitui

The life of Yan Zhitui (531–591+) represents the dangers that Six Dynasties literati faced. He was born into a distinguished family known for its expertise

¹¹⁹ Balazs, "The first Chinese materialist," pp. 264–265; Sengyou and Daoxuan, *Hongmingji*, *Guang Hongmingji* (Shanghai, 1991), *juan* 9; and Zheng Jiliang, *Wei Jin Nanbeichao xingjin shenmie huo xingjin shen bu mie de sixiang lunzheng* (Taipei, 2002), pp. 412–438.

¹²⁰ *Hongmingji* 10.61–70; Balazs, "The first Chinese materialist," p. 265.

¹²¹ Lo, "The destiny of the 'shen'," pp. 202–205.

¹²² Ming-Wood Liu, "Fan Chen's treatise on the destructibility of the spirit and its Buddhist critics," *PEW* 37.4 (1987), pp. 41–42; Zheng, *Wei Jin Nanbeichao xingjin shenmie*, pp. 413, 429–430.

¹²³ Balazs, "The first Chinese materialist," p. 275. Zheng, *Wei Jin Nanbeichao xingjin shenmie*, pp. 388–390.

¹²⁴ For a summary of Confucian critiques of Buddhism during the Six Dynasties, see Kenneth Ch'en, "Anti-Buddhist propaganda during the Nan-ch'ao," *HJAS* 15.1–2 (1952), pp. 173–192.

in classical learning. Left fatherless at a tender age, Yan was raised by an indulgent elder brother. Yan began his career as a Liang official under the patronage of Prince Xiao Yi (508–555), the seventh son of Emperor Wu. In 550 Yan was captured by Hou Jing (503–552), the northern general and defector, who had successfully taken the capital and imprisoned Emperor Wu. Upon Hou Jing's defeat, Yan returned to Jiangling, where Xiao Yi proclaimed himself emperor (Liang Yuandi, r. 552–555). It was here that Yan was given high posts. In 554, however, the Western Wei captured Jiangling; thereupon, Yan was once again a captive and was forcibly moved to Chang'an. After making a harrowing escape in the hope of making his way south to serve the surviving Liang yet again, he reached the Northern Qi capital, Ye. Unfortunately by that time, the Chen dynasty had replaced the Liang. Yan had no choice but to remain in the Northern Qi capital of Ye, where he filled a series of important posts. In 577, the Northern Zhou defeated the Northern Qi; once again, Yan was returned to Chang'an as a captive. When the Sui replaced the Northern Zhou, the court appointed him to a number of literary posts. In sum, he was taken captive three times, served four regimes, and lived in southern, northwestern, and northeastern China. Within each circumstance, Yan was well respected for his wide learning: he was an accomplished poet, writer, historian, and lexicographer.¹²⁵

The work Yan Zhitui is best known for is his *Yanshi jiaxun* (*The Family Instructions of Mr. Yan*). The *Yanshi jiaxun* is the earliest surviving book-length and most famous *jiaxun* (family instructions). It is a wide-ranging work in which Yan instructs his descendants how they should best live their lives and maintain the family's status.¹²⁶ For the study of Confucianism, the *Yanshi jiaxun* is essential because it illuminates the degree to which *ru* values were deeply embedded in upper-class conceptions of family. It also indicates how Yan Zhitui accommodated his Buddhist beliefs with his Confucian values.

Without a doubt, one of the essential messages of the *Yanshi jiaxun* is the paramount importance of education. For a well-born man, nothing could be of greater concern. Book learning accomplishes wonders: it improves conduct, helps with understanding the everyday world, and safeguards elite standing.¹²⁷ Moreover, well-to-do men must read all types of books, so that they can acquire practical knowledge, such as that concerning agriculture,

¹²⁵ For an account of Yan Zhitui's life and works, see Albert E. Dien, *Pei Ch'i shu 45: Biography of Yen Chih-t'ui* (Frankfurt am Main and Munich, 1976). Also see You Yazi, *Yan Zhitui jiqi Jiaxun zhi yanjiu* (Taipei, 2005), pp. 49–78. For his biography in the dynastic histories, see *BQS* 45.617–626; *BS* 83.2794–2796.

¹²⁶ Zhu Mingxun, *Zhongguo jiaxun shi lungao* (Chengdu, 2008), pp. 85–86.

¹²⁷ Wang, *Yanshi jiaxun jijie*, pp. 160–161; Teng, *Family instructions for the Yen clan*, pp. 59–60.

commerce, warfare, and law.¹²⁸ For Yan, literacy is also helpful in another sense: in times of social turmoil, it is a skill with which one can always earn a living and achieve social recognition. When the Liang regime fell, Yan poignantly notes, many grandees who had never applied themselves to learning ended up as farmers or grooms. Yan Zhitui clearly understands that for a family to retain its privileged status, descendants need to maintain a high level of literacy and an ability to write in a number of styles.¹²⁹

Like Fu Xuan, Yan Zhitui advocates the Daoist notion of *zhizu* (being content with what one has); indeed, Yan dedicates an entire chapter of his family instructions to spelling out with much greater specificity what this state of being entails. He urges his descendants to be moderate in their wants, while warning them that an overabundance of either power or wealth will lead the family to certain ruin. He tells his descendants that they should have no more than middling wealth, which will sustain their material needs, while preventing them from engaging in what we would call conspicuous consumption.¹³⁰ By rejecting extravagance and embracing charity, they will avoid the enmity of others. As for office-holding, Yan says his descendants should only strive to be mid-level officials. That way, even though their salary will be sufficient to cover their expenses, it will not be so high as to attract the envy of others. Even though Yan was well aware of the many risks of being an official, unlike Huangfu Mi he still wanted his descendants to assume public office because it was only by this means that the family could maintain its status and avoid ruin.¹³¹

Whereas Fan Zhen vigorously criticized Buddhism, Yan Zhitui warmly embraced it. The sixteenth chapter of the *Yanshi jiaxun*, “Returning the Heart” (*Guixin pian*), is devoted to the subject of Buddhism.¹³² The Buddhist author Daoxuan (596–667) found this chapter so compelling that he included it in his *Guang Hongmingji*, whereas later Confucians found it so jarring that they refused to classify the *Yanshi jiaxun* as a Confucian work.¹³³ In this chapter, Yan elevates Buddhism above Confucianism, by saying that the latter is merely the

¹²⁸ Wang, *Yanshi jiaxun jijie*, pp. 290–299; Albert E. Dien, “Custom and society: The family instructions of Mr. Yan,” in *Early medieval China: A sourcebook*, ed. Wendy Swartz et al. (New York, 2014), pp. 502–504.

¹²⁹ Dien, “Yen Chih-t’ui (531–591+): A Buddho-Confucian,” in *Confucian personalities*, ed. Arthur Wright and Denis Twitchett (Stanford, 1962), pp. 45–49; and his “A sixth-century father’s advice on literature: Comments on chapter nine of the *Yanshi jiaxun*,” *AM*, 3rd series 13.1 (2000), pp. 65–66, 79–82.

¹³⁰ Wang, *Yanshi jiaxun jijie*, p. 317; I have somewhat modified Albert E. Dien’s translation. See his “The family instructions of Mr. Yan,” *CEA* 8 (1995), p. 505.

¹³¹ Dien, “Yen Chih-t’ui,” pp. 44–64.

¹³² Utsunomiya Kiyoyoshi believes that this chapter was written within the last years of his life when he was serving the Sui dynasty. See his “Gan-shi kakun kishinhen oboegaki,” in *idem*, *Cbūgoku kodai chūsei shi kenkyū* (Tokyo, 1977), pp. 483–486.

¹³³ *Hongmingji*, *Guang Hongmingji* 3.110–11. In regard to later Confucian criticism of this chapter, see Teng, *Family instructions for the Yen clan*, p. 138, n.3.

outer teaching, while Buddhism is the inner (i.e., superior) teaching.¹³⁴ Without the aid of the Buddhist doctrine of karma, Yan asks, how can one explain the premature death of Confucius' beloved disciple Yan Hui? For Yan, Confucianism merely provides the guidelines one should follow in this world, while Buddhism holds the keys to one's postmortem welfare.

Yan Zhitui even asserts that Confucianism and Buddhism are largely the same, only concluding that the latter is more profound. According to Yan, the two teachings were originally nearly the same but gradually became different, yet the two still share a number of similarities. He notes that Confucianism's five central virtues correspond to the Buddhist Five Precepts; thus, by realizing the Confucian virtues, one also accumulates good karma. Yan notes that, if one can develop a heart that is filled with sincerity and filialty, or embody benevolence and wisdom in his person, then there is no need to become a monk. Yan made these points through the compilation of two works: "Instructions Concerning Warnings against Killing" (*Jieshaxun*) and the "Monograph about Ghosts with Grievances" (*Yuanhun zhi*). The *Jieshaxun* maintains that Confucianism too abhorred killing, hence the precept "The gentleman does not enter the kitchen." Yan then provides a number of anecdotes about historical people who suffered retribution for killing animals or mutilating humans.¹³⁵ The *Yuanhun zhi* features stories from classical works and the dynastic histories in which the ghost of someone who was wrongfully killed takes revenge on his murderer.¹³⁶ According to another Japanese scholar, this work confirmed that Confucians also believed that all evildoers would be supernaturally punished; further, Yan also told his descendants that they need not lead a secular life, but could acquire good rebirths through upholding the Buddhist precepts and chanting sutras.¹³⁷ The American scholar Albert Dien, on the other hand, believes that, rather than being Buddhist propaganda, the *Yuanhun zhi* is better seen as a didactic work that, similar to the *Yanshi jiaxun*, emphasizes the importance of social morality.¹³⁸

CONCLUSION

In the Six Dynasties period, even though Confucianism no longer dominated intellectual discourse, it had much to offer both state and society. The singular fact that the education everyone received was Confucian guaranteed the

¹³⁴ Wang, *Yanshi jiaxun jijie*, p. 339; Teng, *Family instructions for the Yen clan*, p. 138.

¹³⁵ *Guang Hongmingji* 26.305. Also see Teng, *Family instructions for the Yen clan*, pp. 148–151.

¹³⁶ Alvin P. Cohen, *Tales of vengeful souls: A sixth century collection of Chinese avenging ghost stories* (Taipei, 1982).

¹³⁷ Katsumura Tetsuya, "Gan-shi kakun 'kishinhen' to 'Enkon shi' o megutte," *Tōyōshi kenkyū* 26.3 (1967), pp. 108–113.

¹³⁸ Albert E. Dien, "The Yüan-hun chih (Accounts of ghosts with grievances): A sixth-century collection of stories," in *Wen-lin: Studies in the Chinese humanities*, ed. Tse-tsung Chow (Madison, 1968), pp. 211–228.

tradition's continued significance. Through their vast knowledge of the ancient scriptures and other books, *rū* had a profound knowledge of precedents, institutions, and rituals; as a result, every court needed their services. Confucian rituals were equally indispensable, especially for the state, because they conveyed dynastic legitimacy. Performing the Confucian rites indicated a regime's continuance of the venerated imperial tradition of the long-lived Han dynasty. Consequently, many emperors, particularly founding dynasts, devoted much attention to performing these rites. Confucian rituals also legitimated the social position and strengthened the extended families of the upper class.

Despite the uniformity of their education, *rū* thinkers often differed with each other, meaning that a Confucian orthodoxy was nonexistent. Wang Su avoided, if not despised, the Apocrypha that enjoyed so much favor during the Eastern Han. Nonetheless, Six Dynasties rulers and Confucian scholars often preferred the ritual theories of Zheng Xuan, which drew heavily upon the Apocrypha. Fan Zhen advocated a thorough materialism in which the soul was entrapped within the body. Yan Zhitui, on the other hand, boldly stated that one's spirit (*shen*) survives death. Fan Zhen opposed Buddhism and intellectually challenged its advocates; in contrast, Yan Zhitui perceived no conflict between Confucianism and Buddhism.

Despite such divergent views, Confucian thinkers of this era shared many commonalities. They were all deeply concerned with moral issues; nothing was more critical than improving oneself and one's community. Even though Huangfu Mi advocated reclusion, he did not want *rū* eremites to isolate themselves. Whether through charitable giving or by merely setting an example, he believed that recluses should endeavor to improve their local community. One more common feature is a stress on purity. Ironically, men who are selected for office should be those, such as recluses, who do not want to serve in office. That is because these men are pure, i.e., they are uncorrupted by desire for fame or fortune. Another key theme is being content with what one has, meaning that the desire for fame, wealth, and fortune only leads to an early death. Extravagance breeds envy and hatred, which endangers one's family's welfare.

One last striking feature of this era's Confucians is their willingness to incorporate the doctrines of other traditions, and even embrace other religions. As long as a doctrine served the Confucian goals of morally bettering oneself and one's community, its origins did not matter. In some cases, as seen with Yan Zhitui, a *rū* could even view another religion as superior to Confucianism. This ideological flexibility came about because many Six Dynasties Confucians viewed other traditions as complementary to their own. They realized that Confucianism is meant to regulate the here and now; i.e., the family, community, and state; however, it does have its limitations. As a result, they looked to other traditions for answers about the afterlife and metaphysics.

QINGTAN AND XUANXUE

Yuet Keung Lo

Qingtán and *xuanxue* are two terms unique to the intellectual history of the Six Dynasties period. The former is usually translated as “pure talk,” “pure conversation,” or “pure discourse” while the latter, previously translated as neo-Taoism, is now rendered as “Dark Learning.” Many intellectual historians consider them synonymous terms that characterize the dominant trend of philosophical thinking of the era.¹ This, however, is problematic because, as far as extant sources show, the first appearances of the two terms were separated by nearly 250 years, and their fluid meanings evolved over time. Essentializing *qingtan* and *xuanxue* is not useful in helping us understand the intellectual landscape of early medieval China. As a mode of intellectual discourse, *qingtan* in its development became intimately related to *xuanxue*, which sometimes constituted the substance of pure conversation, but it would be misleading to identify the contents of pure conversation exclusively as Dark Learning.² An occasion for pure conversation, for instance, could include a variety of topics such as the relation between language and truth, historiography, and judgment of historical figures.³ Furthermore, despite their importance to our understanding of early medieval Chinese thought, the exact meanings of *qingtan* and *xuanxue* are seldom clarified.⁴ This chapter traces the evolution of *qingtan* and *xuanxue*, differentiates their changing denotations and

¹ See, for example, Hou Wailu et al., *Zhongguo sixiang tongshi*, Volume 3 (Beijing, 1958), 26.

² Yet, according to the *Shishuo xinyu* (SSXY) 2.70, already as early as the fourth century, Wang Xizhi (303–361) complained to Xie An (320–385) that vacuous talk (*xutan*) was harmful to political governance. Disagreeing, Xie identified “vacuous talk” as “pure words” (*qingyan*). See *Shishuo xinyu jianshu*, comp. Liu Yiqing (403–444), ed. Yu Jiaxi (Beijing, 1983), p. 129; Richard Mather, trans., *Shih-shuo hsin-yü: A new account of tales of the world, by Liu I-ch'ing with commentary by Liu Chün, translated with an introduction* (Minneapolis, 1976), pp. 63–64.

³ See SSXY 2.23, 85; Mather, *Shih-shuo hsin-yü*, 42.

⁴ It should be noted that the term *qingtan* actually does not appear in the SSXY, the most comprehensive anthology on cultural practices and various customs in early medieval China, or its definitive commentary by Liu Xiaobiao (462–521). The term actually used is *qingyan*, “clear words or speech” or *xutan*, “vacuous talk.” See SSXY 2.70, cited above.

connotations, and demonstrates how they became intertwined in their historical circumstances. It also discusses some of the basic concerns of *xuanxue* philosophy.

THE INTELLECTUAL SCENE

The troubled final years of the Later Han and the tumultuous events that followed had a significant impact on the social and institutional fabric of that period. Understandably, it was also a time marked by a weakening of the intellectual and philosophical structure that had served the state well during the preceding several centuries. Speculative thought, fed by the political turmoil but spurred also by new perceptions, some based on traditional Daoist texts and others from Buddhism newly arrived in China, led to the creation of a wholly new conception of the world and man's place in it. Thinkers like He Yan (d. 249) and Wang Bi (226–249), and even the outrageous lifestyles of the Seven Sages of the Bamboo Grove (*Zhulin qixian*), marked an era that is one of the very significant and formative periods in Chinese philosophical enquiry.⁵

As an increasing number of the intellectuals in the later years of the Han were becoming disenchanted with the court, the Imperial Academy became a convenient forum for those enrolled there to engage regularly in criticisms against the ever more corrupt court politics, perhaps at the expense of their formal studies. Conversations were so much in vogue that one student complained that the Imperial Academy was not intended to be a place for people to wander around and engage in extracurricular conversation.⁶ The criticisms of the students were then called *qingyi* (pure criticism) because current politics were deemed corrupt.⁷ Against the turbid waters of the situation at the court, the critically minded and morally motivated educated elite, the students and others as well, formed what was termed a clear and pure current (*qinglin*).⁸ Such “pure criticisms” eventually led to the court eunuchs’ repeated

⁵ HHS 76.2547. Paul Demiéville, “Philosophy and religion from Han to Sui,” in *The Cambridge history of China*, Volume 1, *The Ch'in and Han empires*, 221 B.C.–A.D. 220, ed. Denis Twitchett and Michael Loewe (London, 1986), pp. 808–872, deals with this same period under discussion, and provides important background information. See also Michael Nylan, “Classics without canonization: Learning and authority in Qin and Han,” in *Early Chinese religion*, Part 1, *Shang through Han (1250 BC–220 AD)*, ed. John Lagerwey and Marc Kalinowski, Volume 2 (Leiden, 2009), pp. 721–776.

⁶ HHS 76.2481.

⁷ In Han political rhetoric the imperial court was compared to the source of a river and its transformative influence beyond its physical confines was considered its tributaries. Hence, when court politics was enlightened, its positive influence would be considered “clear and pure tributaries” (*qinglin*). See HHS 22.1073, 54.1765.

⁸ SGZ 65.1456.

persecutions of those engaging in such censure, and two notorious wide-scale purges that were known as the Great Proscription (*danggu*) took place in 166 and 169.

In Han times, character assessment had formed the basis of the recruitment of officials from local jurisdictions for final endorsement by the central government. Discussions about court politics in the late Han would have involved judgments about the people under criticism leading to a more incisive awareness of criteria by which to make such judgments. Guo Tai (128–169), the moral and spiritual leader of the Imperial Academy, is described as having acumen in recognizing a person's character and abilities, and his biography records twelve cases of his prediction about the future prospects of people he met based on the strengths and weaknesses he recognized in them.⁹ Indeed, character reading was unusually popular in the second century, and Xu Shao (c. 153–198), who enjoyed the same esteem as Guo Tai in character reading, was particularly respected for ranking people. He and his younger cousin Xu Jing (d. 222) turned character evaluation into a regular practice, ranking people routinely and even changing their rankings every month.¹⁰ But the regularization of character reading as a formal discipline was given the most elegant expression in Liu Shao's (fl. early third century) monumental work *Renwu zhi* (*Treatises on Personalities*), one that established categories based on human capabilities and character assessments.¹¹

Besides political criticisms and character assessments, intellectual and scholastic debates consumed the creative energies of the students at the Imperial Academy. As Ying-shih Yu has noted, "it had already become an established practice for intellectuals to discuss Taoist philosophic topics in their daily conversations."¹² But the witty repartee characteristic of pure

⁹ HHS 68.2227–2231. According to Ge Hong (283–343), Guo Tai engaged in "pure conversations" in the alleyways since neither the Han ruler nor the society was amenable to reform. Although the term *qingtan* was used, it may be anachronistic as it is likely that Ge Hong only described Guo's activities retrospectively in the diction of his own time; *Baopuzi waipian jiaofan*, ed. Yang Mingzhao, Volume 2 (Beijing, 1991), p. 472. See also He Shuzhen, ed., *Xinbian Baopuzi* (Taipei, 2002), Chapter 46, "Zheng Guo," p. 879; Jay Sailey, *The master who embraces simplicity: A study of the philosopher Ko Hung*, A.D. 283–343 (San Francisco, 1978), p. 233.

¹⁰ HHS 68.2234. Character assessment might have inspired the classification of historical figures into nine grades in the *Hanshu*, which in turn reinforced the practice of character assessment in the Later Han and later times.

¹¹ SGZ 21.619. There were other works on character reading from the late second and early third centuries. For instance, Lu Yu's (187–257) *Jiuzhou renshi lun* (*Personages in the Nine Continents*) in one scroll was lost in the late sixth century. See SS 34.1004. But the *Renwuzhi* appears to be the only work that offers a systematic and philosophical analysis of human capabilities and personalities. For this work, see John K. Shryock, trans., *The study of human abilities: The jen wu chih of Liu Shao* (New Haven, 1937).

¹² Yu Ying-shih, "Individualism and the neo-Taoist movement in Wei-Chin China," in *Individualism and holism: Studies in Confucian and Taoist values*, ed. Donald Munro (Ann Arbor, 1985), pp. 130–131.

conversation at that academy also won the hearts of the elite, if it was not already a fashion.¹³ Yet spontaneous verbal exchanges inspired by existential concerns were still judged unfavorably against written commentaries on Confucian classics. Popularity in new intellectual ventures had yet to threaten the established scholasticism. A controversial Hongdu Gate School of learning advocated by some court officials such as Cai Yong (132–192) and a few eunuchs called for new conceptions of literature and “technical” arts, like calligraphy, painting, and music, which began to gain some currency in the late second century.¹⁴ While these ideas met with much resistance and were condemned, yet in spirit the Hongdu Gate School was in tune with the critical attitude of nonconformist Confucian scholars toward classicist learning. The Imperial Academy students’ ad hoc criticisms of political figures developing into such a formal study may also be expressed as a transition from what is termed “pure conversation” (*qingtán*) into *qingyi* in the early third century.¹⁵ Even as character reading became a regular topic in social gatherings of the day, *qingtán* as a form of intellectual debate took on a definite shape.

QINGTAN

Qingtán is usually translated as “pure talk,” “pure conversation,” or “pure discourse,” though “elevated discourse”—that is, *qing* in contrast to *zhuo*, the mundane—may also be considered.¹⁶ The term “conversation” may give modern readers the impression that it was casual, carefree, and witty chitchat,

¹³ See, for instance, the clever remark of the ten-year-old Kong Rong (153–208) at the home of Li Ying (110–169) who was considered by the students of the Imperial Academy as the “exemplar for all under Heaven.” The quick-witted boy won the admiration of the entire audience. *HHS* 70.2261.

¹⁴ See David R. Knechtges, “Court culture in the late Eastern Han: The case of the Hongdu Gate school,” in *Interpretation and literature in early medieval China*, ed. Alan K. Chan and Yuet-Keung Lo (Albany, 2011), pp. 9–40.

¹⁵ On the supposed filiation between *qingyi* and *qingtán*, see Demiéville, “Philosophy and religion from Han to Sui,” p. 828, n. 60.

¹⁶ Patricia Ebrey’s *Cambridge illustrated history of China* has a chapter on the Six Dynasties period called “Buddhism, aristocracy, and alien rulers: The age of division,” but it does not mention *qingtán* or *xuanxue*. The best study of the concept of *qingtán* and its practices is Tang Yiming’s *Wei Jin qingtán* (Taipei, 1992). Liu Guijie, in his “Qingtán yu Fojiao,” *Hua-Kang Foxuebao xuebao* 7 (1984), pp. 287–299, defines *qingtán* as “pure theoretical debates or profound discussions of the Wei-Jin period.” Étienne Balazs, in his *Chinese civilization and bureaucracy: Variations on a theme*, trans. H. M. Wright, ed. Arthur F. Wright (New Haven, 1964), p. 230, translates the term as “pure talk,” while Erik Zürcher in his *The Buddhist conquest of China: The spread and adaptation of Buddhism in early medieval China* (Leiden, 1972), p. 93, and Yu Ying-shih in his “Individualism and the Neo-Taoist movement,” p. 130, both render it as “pure conversation.” The discussion of the meaning of *qing* in these contexts by Keith N. Knapp, “Exemplary everymen: Guo Shidao and Guo Yuanping as Confucian commoners,” *Asia Major*, 3rd series 23.1 (2010), pp. 97–99, is quite convincing.

but this is far from the truth.¹⁷ In reality, pure conversation was a rigorous intellectual exercise that demanded considerable mental concentration and physical energy. Debate usually became tremendously intense and could extend over long hours on end; merely engaging in it required rigorous intellectual training. Yin Hao (d. 356) complained that if he did not study the *Laozi* for only three days, his tongue would become stiff.¹⁸ Tellingly, Zhi Dun (314–366) once compared playing chess to “talking with hands” (*shoutan*),¹⁹ the *tan* he referenced, of course, being pure conversation, then as much a fashion as chess. As such, pure conversation was mentally and physically grueling²⁰ such that in one case Wei Jie (286–312) is said to have died of exhaustion as a result of a pure conversation that lasted through the night.²¹

Chronologically, the development of pure conversation may be classified into three major periods: Wei–Western Jin; Eastern Jin–Song; and the entire Southern Dynasties. In the first period, pure conversation was closely connected to politics and reflected the participants’ attitude toward court politics as well as their way to defend their political stance. In the second, pure conversation began to part ways with politics and tended toward disputations in speech or in writing, and in the final period pure conversation had completely evolved into an intellectual exercise and social pastime that displayed and sustained the participants’ class prestige and cultural status.²²

As pure conversation assumed a standard form and became a social pastime, it usually took place at a private residence. While the host was typically an aristocratic scholar, his guests were not limited to people of similar background; they could range from a begging monk from the Western Regions²³ to even a young boy.²⁴ Women, however, did not seem to play any part in pure conversation, even though the *Shishuo xinyu* contained the witty sayings and

¹⁷ Demiéville, “Philosophy and religion from Han to Sui,” p. 828, characterizes these sessions, in part, as being in the style of Mallarmé’s afternoon gatherings, a “pastime of the intellectual unemployed.”

¹⁸ SSXY 4.63, p. 242; Mather, *Shih-shuo hsin-yü*, pp. 124–125.

¹⁹ SSXY 21.10, p. 720; Mather, *Shih-shuo hsin-yü*, p. 367. For an example of such chess-like mind games, see SSXY 4.51, p. 234; Mather, *Shih-shuo hsin-yü*, p. 118.

²⁰ See SSXY 4.11, pp. 174–175; Mather, *Shih-shuo hsin-yü*, p. 97, where we are told that Wang Yan admitted that he was too tired to even receive a guest after he had been engaged in pure conversation the previous day.

²¹ SSXY 4.20, p. 210; Mather, *Shih-shuo hsin-yü*, p. 102.

²² This periodization is proposed by Yu Ying-shih. See his “Wang Sengqian ‘Jiezi shu’ yu Nanchao qingtian kaobian,” in *idem*, *Lishi renwu kaobian* (Guilin, 2006), pp. 38–39. Yu’s periodization is modified from Chen Yinke, who divided the development of pure conversation into two periods only, namely the first two in Yu’s scheme. See Chen Yinke, “Tao Yuanming zhi sixiang yu qingtian zhi guanxi,” in *idem*, *Jinmingguan congkao chubian* (Shanghai, 1982), p. 194. Further nuanced differentiation within this broad periodization can be made; see Tang Yiming, *Wei Jin qingtian*, pp. 169–330.

²³ SSXY 4.47, pp. 231–232; Mather, *Shih-shuo hsin-yü*, p. 116.

²⁴ SSXY 4.39, p. 227; Mather, *Shih-shuo hsin-yü*, p. 94.

insightful observations of women.²⁵ Invitations to these events were not required. Thus an uninvited guest could promote himself by demonstrating his learning and verbal talent to a host of high social standing and political influence.²⁶ An impressive performance in pure conversation entailed not only familiarity with popular topics in this intellectual game,²⁷ but also excellent debating skills and erudition, particularly when discussing the *Laozi*, *Zhuangzi*, the *Book of Changes* (*Yijing*), and their selected commentaries—collectively called *sanxuan*, the “three works on the mysteries [of the Dao].” As noted above, pure conversation was evaluated on style and substance. Typically, judgments were made on the basis of *ci* (rhetoric) and *li* (coherence or truth), *lizhi* (“ramifications of truth”) or *liyuan* (“source of truth”). A pure conversationalist may excel in displaying his rhetoric but not in grasping the truth, or vice versa.²⁸ That is to say, substantively, his argument should be cogent and coherent (*lizhong*, literally “hitting the truth”) with regard to the subject matter, while stylistically his rhetoric should be lucid (*ciyu*)²⁹ and well-ordered (*citiao*).³⁰ However, lucidity and orderliness may be achieved with an eloquent and succinct manner,³¹ or in an elaborate and elegant fashion.³² The speaker’s comportment was also important; his mannerisms had to be graceful and his voice preferably melodious.³³

There is a rare glimpse of the requirements for participation in such debate that was included in a sharp critique by the fifth-century father Wang Sengqian (426–485) in a letter to his indolent and rash son. After holding

²⁵ Indeed, Chapter 19, “Xianyuan” (“Worthy Beauties”) of the *SSXY* is entirely devoted to worthy women of notable qualities.

²⁶ *SSXY* 4.53, pp. 235–236; Mather, *Shih-shuo hsin-yü*, p. 119. See also *SSXY* 4.6; Mather, *Shih-shuo hsin-yü*, p. 95.

²⁷ *SSXY* 4.60, p. 240; Mather, *Shih-shuo hsin-yü*, p. 123.

²⁸ The original meaning of *li* as the striations of jade generates the notions of order and coherence. The unique structure of each piece of jade lies in its *li*, which indeed binds it together. Microcosmically, *li* is the inherent structure of jade, and macrocosmically it signifies its overall pattern. Metaphorically, *li* may refer to the imperceptible yet unified mysteries of the universe and its inherent ways of functioning, as well as its manifestations in the human world. The concept of *li* first appeared, but was not widely used, in the Warring States period, but beginning with Wang Bi it was accorded special significance in understanding the mysteries of the universe and the workings of human affairs. As such, *li* was understood to be embedded in each one of the myriad things and made its existence possible in the first place. To understand the *li* of something is to comprehend what it is, namely the truth about it. Even though He Yan was highly regarded as a pioneer in pure conversation, some considered him only good at rhetoric and not astute enough to comprehend the truth. See Pei Songzhi’s commentary in *SGZ* 29.821.

²⁹ *SSXY* 4.22, p. 212; Mather, *Shih-shuo hsin-yü*, p. 103.

³⁰ *SSXY* 4.28, pp. 217–218; Mather, *Shih-shuo hsin-yü*, pp. 106–107.

³¹ *SSXY* 4.16, p. 205; Mather, *Shih-shuo hsin-yü*, p. 99, and Liu Xiaobiao’s annotation to *SSXY* 8.133, p. 488; Mather, p. 242.

³² *SSXY* 4.28, pp. 217–218; Mather, *Shih-shuo hsin-yü*, pp. 106–117.

³³ *SSXY* 9.48, p. 527; Mather, *Shih-shuo hsin-yü*, p. 262.

up the example of Dong Zhongshu (179–104 BCE), the renowned Confucian literatus who devoted his life to scholarship, he continues,

You have read only about five feet each of the scrolls of the *Laozi* and the *Yijing*. You neither know what Wang Bi nor He Yan have to say, nor the differences between the commentaries of Ma (Rong, 79–166) and Zheng (Xuan), nor (Wang Bi's *Laozi*) *zhi*(*lie*) and (*Zhouyi*) *li*(*lie*). And yet you have already picked up the fly-whisk and styled yourself as a Conversationalist (*tanshi*). Nothing is more dangerous than this. Suppose Prefect Yuan (Can, 420–477) asks you to talk about the *Yijing*, Palace Secretary Xie (Zhuang, 421–466) challenges you to a discussion on the *Zhuangzi*, or Mr. Zhang (Xu, 433?–490?) questions you about the *Laozi*, can you answer by admitting that you have not read them? Pure Conversation is like a game of archery; the player must always be aware of the marks already hit by others. A player who knows nothing about them simply loses the game.

According to Yu Ying-shih, this clearly shows that by the middle of the fifth century, “pure conversation” had arrived at a formal institutionalized format.³⁴

The format of such debates can only be inferred indirectly since we have no transcript of an actual competition, but we may see highly stylized depictions of such “pure conversations” in murals in the Dunhuang caves, illustrating in quite idealized form the debate between Vimalakirti, the very wise and eloquent layman, and the bodhisattva Manjuśrī, who had dared to participate. As the chief proponent, Vimalakirti holds the chowri whisk, the symbol of the presenter, and makes his argument. His opponent then offers objections (*nan*) and the debate continues until one or the other party concedes defeat.

Such discussions were seen as highly significant, not just philosophically but socially as well. Cao Xi's (?–249) admonition was meant to be taken to heart: “When good and bad are not distinguished, disordering what is real then results. When friends just repeat each other, defeat is sure to follow. In discoursing one takes standing with reality to be elevated (*qing*), one should not take being excessively obstructive (*nan*) to be of value.”³⁵ This advice given by Cao Xi was well chosen and specific, but how well it was observed in practice is unknown.

The historian Fan Ye (398–446) observed that the influence of Confucian teaching waned at the end of the Han and in the opening years of the post-Han period as the predominant pedantic Confucian scholasticism lost favor. Yet this turn of the intellectual climate was premised on Confucian values of political governance and communitarian welfare. Such practical concerns took on new urgency and were voiced in new commentaries on Confucian and

³⁴ *NQS* 33.598. The translation is largely by Yu Ying-shih in his “Individualism and the neo-Taoist movement,” p. 142. For a detailed study of the dating of Wang Sengqian's letter to his eldest son and some issues related to pure conversation, see Yu Ying-shih, “Wang Sengqian 'Jiezi shu,’” pp. 21–40.

³⁵ *YWLJ* 22.402. *Nan* refers to the objections and difficulties raised by the listeners to the presentation.

Daoist classics such as the *Analects* (*Lunyu*), the *Book of Changes*, the *Laozi*, and the *Zhuangzi*. On the surface, the rising interest in these texts outside the Confucian canon (with the exception of the *Changes*) belied the attempt of scholars to find new textual platforms to articulate new ideas about metaphysical profundities and political governance even though they did not necessarily mean to jettison existing values in the official commentaries on the Confucian classics. Yet this new vogue was perceived by others as a pernicious and perhaps even as a subversive influence.³⁶ Cao Rui, Emperor Ming of the Wei (r. 226–239), issued an edict in 230 that condemned the “insubstantial and flashy” style of scholarship in the recruitment of civil officials.³⁷ He Yan, a leading exponent of this new intellectual discourse, and other like-minded courtiers, were dismissed or demoted because they were considered guilty of that “insubstantial and flashy” learning and behavior.³⁸ The earlier arrogation of the Han regime by Cao Cao (155–220) and his descendants had demoralized many public-spirited scholars, and again with the usurpation of the short-lived Cao-Wei regime (220–265) itself by Sima Yi (179–251) and his family, the new cycle of political persecution terrorized intellectuals who sought to extricate themselves from politics. With public service being questioned as a worthy pursuit for a conscientious scholar, the meaning of an individual’s life began to change. Many literati chose to hide in reclusion, while some attempted to seek physical immortality.³⁹

In fact, one may observe such tendencies already operative even in the final years of the Han dynasty. Ma Rong, a leading Confucian classicist mentioned above, openly confessed, “The individual life of man is indeed more to be cherished than the entire world. It is not in accord with the teaching of *Laozi* and *Zhuangzi* to risk my priceless life on account of a negligible moral point.”⁴⁰ This underscores not only Ma’s moral dilemma but also that personal welfare now took precedence over public service. The third century’s rapid dynastic changes, deceitful moral pretensions, and ruthless political persecutions no doubt intensified this paradigm shift. Zhongchang Tong (179–220) was even more categorical when he said,

Calming my spirit in my private chamber, I contemplate the mysterious void spoken of by Laozi. Breathing in the refined and harmonious energy, I seek to emulate the Perfect Man (described in the *Zhuangzi*) . . . Carefree above the world, I look askance at all that between

³⁶ HHS 76.2547. ³⁷ SGZ 97.769. ³⁸ SGZ 9.283.

³⁹ See Alan Berkowitz, *Patterns of disengagement: The practice and portrayal of reclusion in early medieval China* (Stanford, 2000); also his “Social and cultural dimensions of reclusion in early medieval China,” in *Philosophy and religion in early medieval China*, ed. Alan K. Chan and Yuet-Keung Lo (Albany, 2010), pp. 291–318.

⁴⁰ HHS 60A, p. 1953. The translation is from Yu, “Individualism and the neo-Taoist movement,” p. 125.

Heaven and Earth. Declining the burden of lifting up the world, I preserve my life for good.⁴¹

Clearly, he wanted to embody the “mysterious void” (*xuanxu*) advocated in the *Laozi* and *Zhuangzi* as he understood it. Lao–Zhuang philosophy offered a timely avenue to estrange oneself from the precarious world when even “people who did not have an average intelligence realized that the Han Empire was going to collapse.”⁴² Ma Rong and Zhongchang Tong were not so much concerned with noetic complexities or epistemology in Lao–Zhuang philosophy as with practical advice guiding them to a peaceful life of self-fulfillment. Gradually, the fundamental importance of the individual came to the forefront of intellectuals’ consciousness and eventually led to what Yu Ying-shih called “the discovery of the individual.”⁴³ In fact, an intense reflection on the meaning of life as well as the critical scrutiny of the validity of destiny and retribution spread across social strata, as evidenced in popular ballads, songs, and poetry from the late second and early third centuries. Even eminent political figures such as Cao Cao were also keen on the search for the meaning of life.

One reaction to the increasingly sharply divided intellectual disputes, as well as the penchant toward individuality, was the phenomenon known as the Seven Sages of the Bamboo Grove. These were a small group of men from the Wei and Western Jin periods who are believed to have pursued a lifestyle modeled on the Daoist philosophy of spontaneity current in third-century China.⁴⁴ Some of them publicly defied Confucian social norms and propriety, and openly scorned the government whose legitimacy was grounded on alleged Confucian moral authority. In approximate chronological order, the Seven Sages are: Shan Tao (205–283), Ruan Ji (210–263), Xiang Xiu (227–272), Liu Ling (c.221–300), Ji Kang (223–262), Ruan Xian (nephew of Ruan Ji, d. after 274), and Wang Rong (233–305). As a group, the Seven Sages were not so famous for their philosophical achievements as for their iconoclastic behavior. As an example, perhaps their most notable controversy did not begin as a philosophical debate; rather, it was sparked off by the contemptuous Ruan Ji’s and Ji Kang’s defiance of the Confucian moral norms and ritual teachings (*lijiao*). On the basis of their genuine spontaneous feelings, they triggered a fierce debate on the teaching of names (*mingjiao*) and

⁴¹ HHS 49.1644.

⁴² HHS 79b.2589. There was a general sense of pessimism at the end of the Han that the world faced a serious collapse. For a discussion, see Yuet Keung Lo, “Destiny and retribution in early medieval China,” in *Philosophy and religion in early medieval China*, ed. Chan and Lo, pp. 319–356.

⁴³ Yu, “Individualism and the neo-Taoist movement,” pp. 125–129.

⁴⁴ See Richard B. Mather, “The controversy over conformity and naturalness during the Six Dynasties,” *HR* 9.2–3 (1969–1970), pp. 160–180.

naturalness (*ziran*) that persisted till the end of the fourth century. Strictly speaking, only Ruan Ji, Xiang Xiu, and Ji Kang wrote on philosophical issues and Xiang Xiu was the only one who composed a commentary on the *Zhuangzi*. Of the numerous treatises by Ji Kang, only two—"Sound Has Neither Sorrow nor Joy" (*Sheng wu ai le lun*) and "Discourse about Nourishing Life" (*Yang sheng lun*)—made a lasting impression. Wang Rong took a leading role in the debates during the Eastern Jin but is not remembered for any philosophical contribution. In terms of their life choices, Shan Tao, Xiang Xiu, and Wang Rong co-operated with the Jin regime. Ruan Ji and Ji Kang were political nonconformists; the former lived a lonely life full of agony, anxiety, and fear while the latter eventually was executed on a trumped-up charge of insolence and contempt for the powers that be. Ruan Xian, on Shan Tao's recommendation, served at the Jin court but consistently flouted Confucian social norms and eventually was demoted and dismissed. Liu Ling was notorious for excessive drinking, which apparently was a mere ruse to avoid political difficulties. Thus seen, the Seven Sages constituted a heterogeneous group with diverse interests and even conflicting aspirations. While they made few contributions to the ongoing philosophical controversies, they were seen as representative of one possible orientation in those troubled times and, strangely, would become the theme of brick murals even in royal tombs.⁴⁵

For some intellectuals, matters of apolitical interests emerged with a vengeance in private conversations. In a famous exchange between He Yan and his junior, Wang Bi, the senior expressed his admiration of the young prodigy for his ability to fathom the mysteries of the boundary between Heaven and man.⁴⁶ About the same time, Fu Gu (209–255) and Xun Can (209?–238?) often engaged in heated intellectual debates and ended up in such a deadlock that Pei Hui (fl. 230–249) was compelled to iron out their differences. Of note here is that Fu was skilled in arguing about theoretical issues dealing with the veritable world while Xun aspired to discuss abstruse profundities.⁴⁷ Clearly, philosophical debates took center stage on these occasions and the role of a mediator was a new and notable phenomenon in pure conversation. As pure conversation gradually developed into a social practice in the Western Jin, conversation topics also began to shift from realpolitik and character assessment toward non-pragmatic concerns and

⁴⁵ Audrey Spiro, *Contemplating the ancients: Aesthetics and social issues in early Chinese portraiture* (Berkeley, 1990), pp. 153–177; Albert E. Dien, *Six Dynasties civilization* (New Haven, 2007), p. 176 and *passim*. For a discussion of Xiang Xiu's philosophy based on all the fragments of his *Hidden meanings of the Zhuangzi* and the philosophy of Ruan Ji and Ji Kang, see my chapter on "The Seven Worthies of the Bamboo Grove," in *Dao companion to Daoist philosophy*, ed. Xiaogan Liu (Berlin, 2014), pp. 425–447.

⁴⁶ SSXY 4.7, p. 198; Mather, *Shih-shuo hsin-yü*, pp. 95–96.

⁴⁷ SSXY 4.9, p. 200; Mather, *Shih-shuo hsin-yü*, pp. 96–97. Gu is also pronounced Jia.

philosophical issues. Topics such as the nature of the sage (whether he has emotions), the nature of language and its relation to meaning (whether language is adequate in expressing ideas), the essence of sound (whether or not sound intrinsically has emotions), the theory of human nature, the possibility of physical immortality, and many others dominated philosophical discourse. Although *qingtan* continued to be practiced until the end of the sixth century in South China, few new topics other than Buddhist matters were introduced after the Western Jin regime was forced to flee to the south in 317.⁴⁸ The interpretation of the idea of *xiaoyao* (spiritual freedom) in the *Zhuangzi*, as advanced by the monk Zhi Dun in the Eastern Jin, was one rare example;⁴⁹ other relatively novel topics were actually derived from earlier issues debated in the Wei-Jin period. For instance, Wang Xiu's (c.335–358) *Xianren lun* (*On Worthy People*) was derived from the discussion of the nature of the sage, and Yin Rong's *Xiang bujin yi lun* (*Discourse on the Inadequacy of an Image in Fully Articulating Meaning*) from that about the inadequacy of language to express ideas.⁵⁰ As cited above, in the late 470s Wang Sengqian admonished his son that the basic training for pure conversation included not only a good knowledge of the *Book of Changes*, the *Laozi*, and the *Zhuangzi*, but also their various commentaries, such as those of He Yan and Wang Bi, the theories of the relation between capacity and inborn nature, and the thesis that sound inherently has neither joy nor sorrow.⁵¹ Evidently, the range of topics for pure conversation had standardized over time as new issues were not deemed important or interesting enough to be included in the conversationalist's stock-in-trade; in this sense it may be argued that pure conversation had become more formal, and consequently that its creative vitality was diminished. Indeed, figures notable for original insights in pure conversation were lacking toward the end of the Eastern Jin.

While a conversationalist might prepare his conversation in advance, it was not intended to be a written discourse. Although some of these issues in pure conversations eventually found their way into formal writing, many more

⁴⁸ See, for instance, SSXY 4.30, p. 219; Mather, *Shih-shuo hsin-yü*, p. 108, where Zhi Dun debated issues in the *Lesser Version of the Prajñāparamitā* with a monk coming from the north. The issues, however, were not specified. Yin Hao (303–356), a recognized master of pure conversation in the Eastern Jin, expended considerable energy in studying Buddhist scriptures. See SSXY 4.23, p. 214; Mather, *Shih-shuo hsin-yü*, pp. 104–105; SSXY 4.43, p. 229; Mather, *Shih-shuo hsin-yü*, pp. 114–115; SSXY 4.50, p. 234; Mather, *Shih-shuo hsin-yü*, pp. 50–51; and SSXY 4.59, p. 240; Mather, *Shih-shuo hsin-yü*, p. 123.

⁴⁹ The *Baima lun* (*Treatise on the White Horse*) by the famous logician Gongsun Long from the pre-Qin period was featured in pure conversation in the Eastern Jin but it is not clear if that was not also the case in the Western Jin. See SSXY 4.24, p. 216; Mather, *Shih-shuo hsin-yü*, p. 105.

⁵⁰ Yin Rong also composed the *Daxian xu yi lun* (*A Great Worthy Needs [the Learning of] the Book of Changes*).

⁵¹ For a detailed study of the dating of Wang Sengqian's letter to his eldest son and some issues related to pure conversation, see Yu, "Wang Sengqian 'Jiezi shu'," pp. 21–40.

apparently were only debated in the privacy of the host's residence.⁵² For instance, Wang Yan (256–311), one of the leaders in pure conversation in the Western Jin, was not known for any written treatises, nor did he leave any. For this reason, participants in pure conversation were called *tanshi* (scholars with conversational skills) or *tanke* (guests engaging in pure conversation), as opposed to *wenren* (literary personages).⁵³ Occasionally, interpretations of various issues in the *Book of Changes*, the *Laozi*, and the *Zhuangzi* were fiercely challenged.⁵⁴ The competing views of the idea of *xiaoyao* is a good case in point. However, the Confucian classics, with the exception of the *Book of Changes*, were hardly on the agenda.

XUAN AND XUANXUE

Xuanxue is a term now used for a wide range of philosophical and intellectual enquiries that were popular in early medieval China. Its development is usually divided into four periods: (1) the Zhengshi period (240–249) when it was initially advocated by He Yan and Wang Bi, (2) the period represented by the Seven Sages of the Bamboo Grove, (3) the Western Jin period (265–316), and (4) the Eastern Jin period (317–420). While the periodization may vary and the characterization of *xuanxue* as a well-ordered and continuous philosophical development is questionable, a remaining fundamental question is its scope; like *qingtan*, it is usually not well defined. Tang Yongtong, a pioneer in *xuanxue* studies, defined it decades ago as the study of ontology with its focus on the analysis of nonbeing and being.⁵⁵ This is a valid description as far as it goes, but it would exclude the investigation of many other philosophical issues, such as the nature of the sage, which Tang himself analyzed in a separate study of *xuanxue*.⁵⁶ *Xuanxue* included a wide range of issues beyond purely philosophical ones, and even within philosophical bounds, its concerns were not confined to ontology alone.⁵⁷

⁵² Zhi Dun's view on *xiaoyao* is a case in point. He challenged Guo Xiang's influential interpretation of *xiaoyao* and defended his own in pure conversation, but also committed it to an essay called *Xiaoyao lun*, the abstract of which is still extant. See Liu Xiaobiao's annotation to SSXY 4.32, 220; Mather, *Shib-shuo hsin-yü*, pp. 109–110.

⁵³ Yue Guang (d. 304), for instance, excelled in pure conversation but was not well versed in composition. See his biography in *JS* 43.1244.

⁵⁴ SSXY 4.10, p. 201; Mather, *Shib-shuo hsin-yü*, p. 97. In this case, He Yan was completely awed by Wang Bi's interpretation of the *Laozi* and could not manage to defend his own.

⁵⁵ See his "Wei Jin xuanxue liubie lüelun," in *idem*, *Tang Yongtong xueshu lunwen ji* (Beijing, 1983), pp. 241, 242.

⁵⁶ Tang Yongtong, "Wang Bi shengren you qingyi shi," in *idem*, *Tang Yongtong xueshu lunwen ji*, pp. 254–263.

⁵⁷ The relation between capacity and nature, for instance, was an important topic for the discussion on *xuan* and it was not pertinent to ontology. See SSXY 4.60, p. 240; Mather, *Shib-shuo hsin-yü*, p. 123; and Alan

The *locus classicus* of *xuan* is found in the first chapter in the *Laozi*, where it denotes the manifestations of Dao in its two ontological modes of being and nonbeing. Inasmuch as *xuan* is the myriad mysteries of the Dao, it is pluralistic, diverse, and manifests itself in the fluid world of multiplicity.

Those who engaged in discussing *xuan* in early medieval China often engaged in a wide range of topics, but their aim always was to gain an understanding of the intrinsic truth in question, what they called *li* (truth or coherence), or *xuanli* (the profound or mysterious truth). Although *xuan* was predominantly philosophical in nature, it was not restricted to the explorations found in the *Laozi*, *Zhuangzi*, and *Book of Changes*, the “three works of the mysteries of the Dao.”⁵⁸ *Xuanli* was believed to be immanent in all things, and so, for instance, the question was raised why the famed pre-Qin logician Hui Shi, in his five cartloads of books, “had not a word that entered into the mystery [of the Dao]”; that is, despite his erudition and supposed comprehension of the Dao.⁵⁹ Similarly, Huan Wen (312–373), at a lecture on the canonical *Book of the Rites*, said, “at times there are things he says which enter the recesses of the mind, and it’s then that I feel within a few inches of the ‘Gate of Mysteries (*xuanmen*).”⁶⁰ These remarks clearly show that there was an expectation that the world around one held answers to one’s deepest questions.

Those words and writings that did pass muster were called *xuanyan* (words concerning profundity)⁶¹ and *xuanlun* (discourses on profundity),⁶² and they represented the fashionable pursuit of scholars and literati to converse on mysterious profundities (*tanxuan*).⁶³ It is in this way that pure conversation and those subjects thought of as *xuan* in the broad sense became intertwined. As mentioned, one of the goals of pure conversation was to fathom the “source

K. L. Chan, “Zhong Hui’s *Laozi Commentary* and the debate on capacity and nature in third-century China,” *EC* 28 (2003), pp. 101–159. By ontology, we refer to the branch of knowledge that investigates the nature, essential properties, and relations of being.

⁵⁸ SXXY 4.16, p. 205; Mather, *Shih-shuo hsin-yü*, p. 99. In fact, *xuan* is not even necessarily related to the mundane. See SXXY 2.23, p. 85; Mather, *Shih-shuo hsin-yü*, p. 42, where Wang Yan and Wang Rong (one of the Seven Sages of the Bamboo Grove) discussed the statesman Ji Zha of the Chunqiu period, and they considered their discussions to be *xuanzhu* (“profound”).

⁵⁹ SXXY 4.58, pp. 239–240; Mather, *Shih-shuo hsin-yü*, pp. 122–123. The answer was that his subtler points were not transmitted.

⁶⁰ SXXY 2.64, p. 123; Mather, *Shih-shuo hsin-yü*, p. 61. The response was that the text of the *Book of Rites* was simply a functional one used as a textbook in the academy.

⁶¹ SXXY 3.18, p. 182; Mather, *Shih-shuo hsin-yü*, p. 89.

⁶² SXXY 4.60, p. 240; Mather, *Shih-shuo hsin-yü*, p. 123.

⁶³ SXXY 14.8, p. 611. Alan Chan correctly observes that “*xuanxue* in a general sense encompasses a broad range of philosophical positions and does not represent a monolithic movement or ‘school’.” See his introduction to Chan and Lo, *Philosophy and religion in early medieval China*, p. 2. But the term *xuanxue* itself in this general sense perhaps had not yet come into use.

of truth” or the “ramifications of truth.” Thus, while the exploration of *xuan* was often featured in pure conversation, it is not identical to pure conversation as the latter covers a much wider range of issues beyond philosophical discussions.

Even within the narrower *xuan* range of issues there was a complex cluster of philosophical, moral, and political issues that exerted its influence on the world of literature and art in early medieval China and beyond. Perhaps most intellectually challenging, the discussion centered on *xuan* blazed a path in trying to grapple with the nature of existence itself. As Tang Yongtong demonstrated decades ago, a paradigm shift from cosmology or cosmogony to ontology took place in the early third century, when the Han was being replaced by the Cao-Wei regime.⁶⁴ According to Tang, in the Han, inspired by the metaphysics in the *Laozi*, the *Book of Changes*, and *yinyang* cosmology in particular, musings about the origin of the universe and the genesis of the “myriad things” were not uncommon, beginning with Yang Xiong (53 BCE–18 CE), the compiler of the *Taixuan* (*The Grand Mystery*), written in the style of the *Book of Changes*. But the theorizing in the Han basically pertained to cosmology or cosmogony; that is, the creation of the world. In contrast, the study of the *xuan* in its deepest sense was fundamentally more focused on ontology or theories of being. For instance, Zhang Heng (78–139), an astronomer, mathematician, and inventor, spoke of *xuan* thus: “*Xuan* belongs to the category of the formless and it is the root of self-so (*ziran*). It was created in the Grand Beginning and there was nothing that preceded it” (*xuanzhe, wuxing zhi lei, ziran zhi gen. Zuo yu taishi, mo zhi yu xian* 玄者，無形之類，自然之根。作於太始，莫之與先).⁶⁵ Clearly, Zhang was interested in tracing the origin of all things; his view in effect represented the Han dynasty reading of the *Laozi*. The key concepts in his formulation all came from the Daoist classic, and its first chapter in particular.

About a century later, when Wang Bi interpreted the same passage in the *Laozi*, he said, “*Xuan* is the dark void; it is whence ‘beginning’ and ‘mother’ originate. It is ineffable and unnamable. Thus it cannot be expressed in words; its analogous name is *xuan*” (*xuanzhe, mingmo wuyou ye. Shi mu zhi suo chu ye. Buke de er ming, gu buke yan, tongming yue xuan* 玄者，冥默無有也。始、母之所出也。不可得而名，故不可言，同名曰玄).⁶⁶ Wang emphasized

⁶⁴ Tang, “Wei Jin xuanxue liubie luelun,” p. 233.

⁶⁵ Zhang Heng, “*Xuan tu*,” in *Taiping yulan* 1.5a, p. 132a. The term *ziran* occurs a number of times in *Laozi*’s *Daodejing* (17, 23, 25, 51). Wing-Cheuk Chan translates *ziran* as “It is so by virtue of its own”; see his “On Heidegger’s interpretation of Aristotle: A Chinese perspective,” *JCP* 32.4 (2005), pp. 539–557.

⁶⁶ See Wang Bi’s commentary to the first chapter of the *Laozi* in Lou Yulie’s annotated edition, *Wang Bi ji jiaosbi*, Volume 1 (Beijing, 1980), p. 2. On Wang Bi’s commentary, the following might be consulted: Ariane Rump and Wing-tsit Chan, trans., *Commentary on the Lao Tzu by Wang Pi* (Honolulu, 1979);

the ineffable, mysterious nothingness of *xuan*, which yet is the intrinsic nature of all things. Hence, he added, “Dao gives rise to and completes all things with formlessness and namelessness; [the world and all in it] come into being and become complete without knowing how it is so. This is the mystery compounded (*xuan zhi you xuan* 玄之又玄).”⁶⁷ “Not knowing how it is so” is what *xuan* is about, that which concerns the ontology of all things, rather than “the root of self-so” as Zhang Heng understood it in cosmogonic terms. He Yan, in his *Dao lun* (*Discourse on the Dao*) and *Wuming lun* (*Discourse on the Nameless*), also argued that the nothingness of the Dao actually reflects its ontological completeness that does not admit of distinctions.⁶⁸ Its later fully fledged development notwithstanding, those who sought to understand these processes never lost their fundamental interest in existence itself and the nature of things.

In Wang Bi’s ontological thinking, nonbeing or nothingness and the multitudinous objects of this world constitute a one–many relationship, with the former being the substance (*ti*) and the latter its functions or manifestations (*yong*). The pair, one and many, form an ontological holism, as do substance and functions. “Many” and “functions” have specific labeling names, but “one” and “substance” are nameless. “Many” and “functions” operate in the human world in a “dark” way; they are profound mysteries to be unraveled. Still, nothing in the world of myriad functions exists by accident because each thing has an inherent coherence or principle (*li*) that makes it what it is; each thing coheres for what it is and sustains itself by virtue of its unique coherence. The totality of individual coherences constitutes the Dao, which is not confined to any of them, thus Dao is “one” and nameless; it is, in *Laozi*’s parlance, “the mystery compounded” that is the

Rudolf G. Wagner, *A Chinese reading of the Daodejing: Wang Bi’s commentary on the Laozi with critical text and translation* (Albany, 2003); and Richard John Lynn, *The Classic of the Way and Virtue: A new translation of Laozi as interpreted by Wang Bi* (New York, 2004).

⁶⁷ Lou, *Wang Bi ji jiaosbi*, Volume 1, p. 1. In his *Laozi zhilie*, Wang Bi explicitly said that Dao and *xuan* are simply different ways to describe that which is Being. In terms of its wondrous manifestations, he said it is called *xuan*; in terms of its being the origin of the myriad things, it is called Dao. See Lou, *Wang Bi ji jiaosbi*, Volume 1, p. 197.

⁶⁸ For an insightful analysis of He Yan’s two discourses, see Alan K. L. Chan, “Sage, nature and the logic of namelessness,” in *Philosophy and religion in early medieval China*, ed. Chan and Lo, pp. 23–52. Similarly, Xiahou Xuan (209–254), who was the de facto leader of “pure conversation” in his time and who was well regarded even during the Jin dynasty, contended that “Heaven and Earth regulate themselves by being what they are and the sage functions by being what he is. The Dao is being what it is. The Dao itself is nameless, so Laozi said ‘to give it a makeshift name’ . . . Only when it is nameless can it give a name to everything under Heaven. Yet, is it really about names?” This passage is cited in He Yan’s *Wuming lun*, which in turn is quoted in Zhang Zhan’s commentary on the *Liezi*; see Yang Bojun, *Liezi jishi* (Beijing, 1985), p. 121.

“substance” as it can be identified in specific functions yet cannot be pinned down in specificities.⁶⁹

While Xiahou Xuan (209–254), He Yan, Wang Bi, and other like-minded *xuanxue* thinkers collectively precipitated a philosophical transition from cosmogony to ontology in the Zhengshi period, they nevertheless remained very much interested in embodying Dao on a personal level. Specifically, the issue of sagehood loomed large in their philosophic consciousness. For Wang Bi, while the sage embodies nonbeing, he, like everyone else, has emotions such as pleasure and anger, sorrow and joy. He only differs from the ordinary individual in that he possesses spirit-like perspicacity (*shenming*) which enables him to embody harmony and thus to attain the state of nonbeing, allowing him to be free of any bias, partiality, or artificiality. He is capable of responding to things without the burdens such defects impose on ordinary people.⁷⁰ The sage, then, in Wang Bi’s understanding, “lets emotions be in accord with principles or coherence” (*yi qing cong li* 以情從理). On the other hand, while He Yan and many others, including Zhong Hui (225–264), agreed with Wang Bi that the sage is not prone or predisposed to such defects, still, they insisted, it is so precisely because he is free of emotions. No doubt the debate about the nature of sagehood had ethical implications, but for us, since it was unprecedented in Chinese history, it is worth considering why it captured so much interest in *xuan* debates during the Wei–Jin transition.

The focus on the sage rather than on the ordinary person in the debate is critical as it suggests that the fundamental concern at issue was not moral self-cultivation in general but the art of rulership instead.⁷¹ After all, the sage is in fact the wise ruler in both Confucian and Daoist traditions. As the *Daodejing* put it, “The sage has no constant mind; he takes the minds of the common people to be his mind. The good I will take as good; the not-good I will also take as good.” In his commentary Wang Bi said, “[The sage] always acts on the principle of going along. In each (the good and not good), he will go along

⁶⁹ Brook Ziporyn offers a rigorous analysis of Wang Bi’s novel idea of *li* as “mini-Dao” (“the distinctive individual principles of things”) which is consistent with but not identical to my view. See his “*Li* in Wang Bi and Guo Xiang: Coherence in the dark,” in *Philosophy and religion in early medieval China*, ed. Chan and Lo, pp. 97–134.

⁷⁰ Pei Songzhi’s (372–451) commentary to SGZ 28.795. Wang Bi is also recorded as saying, “Although [the sage has spirit-like] perspicacity that is sufficient to ferret out extreme subtleties and obscurities, he cannot get rid of his inborn nature.” See Pei’s commentary to SGZ 28.796.

⁷¹ Emotions as such became highly regarded in the Eastern Jin as a personal attribute and were deemed one of the essences of cultivated humanity. See, for example, SSXY 17.4, p. 638; Mather, *Shih-shuo hsün-yü*, p. 324, where Wang Rong, one of the Seven Sages of the Bamboo Grove, said in his grief over his son’s death, “A sage forgets his feelings; the lowest beings aren’t even capable of having feelings. But the place where feelings are most concentrated is precisely among people like ourselves.” The translation is that of Mather.

with their respective function such that no good will be lost.”⁷² Clearly, the sage does have emotions but he would not let them be such a hindrance that his rulership would become a burden to him. In rulership, each situation that calls for the sage’s attention is a challenge to his ability to embody nonbeing. Successful embodiment means that he, by virtue of his spirit-like perspicacity, will not be trapped or blindfolded by any specific factional or personal interest. The reason why the sage would not be thus weighed down is that, as he embodies the substance that is nonbeing, he is thus able to avoid partiality to any specific function or course of action that is the manifestation of the substance. Any particular situation has its own principle or coherence and the sage must “let his emotions follow it.” So understood, the debate over whether or not the sage has emotions in fact had profound political implications in the early third century. Little wonder that Wang Bi artfully inscribed his political vision in his *Commentary on the Book of Changes*.⁷³ The sage acts; he does not merely meditate or contemplate. For Wang Bi and Guo Xiang later, therefore, Confucius ranks supreme as the sage, even over Laozi or Zhuangzi, because he pursued an active career.⁷⁴

The truly outstanding *xuanxue* thinker in the Western Jin was Guo Xiang (d. 312), the redactor of our present edition of the *Zhuangzi*. A contemporary of the Seven Sages, he was known for his eloquence and philosophic talents, which were considered second only to those of Wang Bi. His philosophy in the commentary on the *Zhuangzi* attributed to him was so widely influential through early medieval times that “Confucianism and Mohism were spurned and Daoist teaching became popular.”⁷⁵

The commentary on the *Zhuangzi* by Xiang Xiu and Guo Xiang and their concept of *dubua* (lone transformation) addressed ontology more directly. Thus, in contrast to Wang Bi’s thesis, the one–many and substance–function relationships are not applicable to Guo Xiang’s ontology since he focuses on the plurality and diversity of beings (*you* 有) as self-creating, self-generating, and self-sufficient holisms. Guo was interested only in the “many” and the “functions”; the unifying and foundational “one” or “substance” have no place in his ontology. For the ruling principle in his ontology of beings Guo posited the traditional term “self-so” (*ziran*); that is, what exists in itself, which

⁷² Lou Yulie, *Wang Bi ji jiaoshi*, Volume 1, p. 129.

⁷³ For a discussion of Wang Bi’s political philosophy embedded in his *Commentary on the Book of Changes*, see Tze-ki Hon, “Hexagrams and politics: Wang Bi’s political philosophy in the *Zhouyi zhu*,” in *Philosophy and religion in early medieval China*, ed. Chan and Lo, pp. 71–95; also Richard John Lynn, *The Classic of Changes: A new translation of the I Ching as interpreted by Wang Bi* (New York, 1994).

⁷⁴ SSXY 4.8, 199; Mather, *Shih-shuo hsin-yü*, p. 96. See also Tang Yongtong, “Xiang Guo yi zhi Zhuang Zhou yu Kongzi,” in *idem*, *Tang Yongtong xueshu lunwen ji*, pp. 280–287.

⁷⁵ JS 49.1374.

determines the autogeny and self-becoming of each individual thing. Ontologically, each thing is a “mystery” in itself given its “nature” (*xing* 性), but this mystery is not static as it evolves in the process of becoming, during which other things will inevitably be implicated. All these other things, of course, also follow their own individual or principle of self-becoming. In reality, then, we have an incredibly intricate, complex labyrinthine network of intertwined relationships among human beings, as well as the emerging circumstances in which they happen to find themselves.⁷⁶ Thus, how a thing will turn out and what it turns out to be is a “compounded mystery,” as it will eventually merge mysteriously (*xuanming* 玄冥) with whatever may become intertwined with its destiny (*ming*) of becoming.⁷⁷ However mysterious this process may be, there is always a coherence embedded in it which is unique to each individual thing.⁷⁸ In terms of praxis, this guiding principle is self-becoming but the specific consequences it helps to mold and create and thus define a thing are unpredictable.⁷⁹ The outcome or final product, therefore, is called “mysterious union” (*xuanming*).

Guo Xiang’s ontology has profound implications for ethics. He was keen on finding a practical philosophy to guide his life and those of many others at a time when a ruthless and murderous regime had come to power and dissident intellectuals were often mercilessly victimized. Change (*bianhua*) and cyclic conversion (*fanfu*) constitute a recurrent theme and provide a frightful and alarming backdrop to Guo Xiang’s ontological thinking.⁸⁰ Metaphysics aside, Guo Xiang wanted a feasible blueprint for response and action. While Wang Bi’s ontology may appear to be formalistic and structuralistic, it emphasized the critical importance of timing (*shi* 時) in the human realm, thus making his philosophy dynamic and practical as well—his interpretation of the sixty hexagrams in the *Book of Changes* offers a classic example of action in concrete circumstances. It is precisely the multifarious scenarios of real life that demand our response and action. The plenitude of principles inherent in each particular circumstance offer us much-needed guidelines, so that our appropriate action will be conducive to effecting satisfying and secure “coherence” to each challenging situation we encounter. Ultimately, then, Wang Bi and Guo Xiang shared a common concern in negotiating treacherous situations in a dangerous era.

Guo Xiang contributed two important philosophical issues to both *xuanxue* and pure conversation: first the mutual compatibility of the Confucian

⁷⁶ Guo Qingfan, *Zhuangzi jishi*, Volume 1 (Beijing, 2004), pp. 111–112.

⁷⁷ Guo Qingfan, *Zhuangzi jishi*, Volume 1, pp. 257, 268.

⁷⁸ Guo Qingfan, *Zhuangzi jishi*, Volume 1, p. 270.

⁷⁹ Guo Qingfan, *Zhuangzi jishi*, Volume 1, p. 270.

⁸⁰ See, for instance, Guo Qingfan, *Zhuangzi jishi*, Volume 1, p. 270.

teachings of names with the Daoist value of naturalness, and second the notion of *xiaoyao*; that is, self-fulfillment as it was presented in the *Zhuangzi*. On the first, he averred, "Humaneness and righteousness are man's emotive nature; they should be simply accepted as such, and one would be unnecessarily concerned if one thought otherwise."⁸¹ As for the second, even though the social status of individuals may differ, so long as they can be at ease by honoring their inborn nature, doing what is within their capabilities, and fulfilling their natural allotment, they can be equally carefree. How can one decide which is the superior of the two?⁸² Hence, he concluded that Confucian morality and Daoist naturalness were fully compatible. After all, morality itself cannot be differentiated into grades of excellence.⁸³

Guo's views dominated the intellectual world until Zhi Dun offered his Buddhist-inspired interpretation of *xiaoyao*. For Zhi Dun, *xiaoyao* concerns the "mind of the Perfect Man" (*zhiren zhi xin* 至人之心). If it simply means having one's wishes and desires gratified (*shixing* 適性), even if they are part of our inborn nature, then self-fulfillment actually would reduce us to a life of mindless self-gratification.⁸⁴ This new interpretation of the meaning of *xiaoyao*, however, was a strained one. It is representative of the increasing rarity of fresh topics in the Eastern Jin, and symbolic of the poverty of *xuanxue* and pure conversation in that period.⁸⁵ That Zhi Dun was a Buddhist monk was also telling as indigenous Chinese philosophical thinking appeared to lack fresh insights, and any new visions and novel inspiration had to come from outside the native traditions. And in fact, important breakthroughs in Chinese Buddhist thought were in the making; Kumārajīva's disciple Daosheng (355–434) was already paving the way for adapting Buddhism to the Chinese.⁸⁶

Even if *xuanxue* began to lose its vigor as a creative philosophy after the Eastern Jin, the ripple effects it had produced continued to gain momentum. Wang Bi's investigation of ontology led to a bifurcated recognition of being as substance and function, and eventually a metaphysical schema of transcendence and phenomena was firmly established within the Chinese philosophical lexicon. Early medieval commentaries on the *Analects* gradually adopted such a metaphysical vision in rereading what Confucius had actually handed down

⁸¹ Guo Qingfan, *Zhuangzi jishi*, Volume 1, p. 318. ⁸² Guo Qingfan, *Zhuangzi jishi*, Volume 1, p. 1.

⁸³ For a more in-depth analysis of Guo Xiang's philosophy, see Brook Ziporyn, *The penumbra unbound: The neo-Taoist philosophy of Guo Xiang* (Albany, 2003); also his "Li in Wang Bi and Guo Xiang," cited above.

⁸⁴ See Zhi Dun's *Xiaoyao lun*, cited in Liu Xiao's annotation to SSXY 4.32; Mather, *Shih-shuo hsün-yü*, pp. 109–110.

⁸⁵ For a study of Zhi Dun, see Charles Holcombe, *In the shadow of the Han: Literati thought and society at the beginning of the Southern Dynasties* (Honolulu, 1994).

⁸⁶ Young-ho Kim, *Tao-seng's commentary on the Lotus Sutra: A study and translation* (Albany, 1990), pp. 112–126.

to posterity. Huang Kan's (488–545) *Subcommentaries on the Analects*, for example, orchestrated such a grandiose symphony of Confucian and *xuanxue* resonances with a distinctly Buddhist overtone.⁸⁷ Most importantly, a new Confucian metaphysics was created which would exert a fundamental impact on neo-Confucianist thought centuries later. Meanwhile, Guo Xiang's idea of lone transformation through self-creation in a thoroughly self-fulfilled holism heightened the Chinese awareness of immanence. Future studies will show that just such *xuanxue* ideas of immanence facilitated the Chinese understanding of Buddhist enlightenment, and that in a direction to which Daosheng had already pointed. The far-reaching impact of *xuanxue* was not confined to philosophy alone; its profound influence on poetry and aesthetics, for instance, cannot be overemphasized.⁸⁸ Its numerous other traces await further studies in the future.

⁸⁷ Yuet Keung Lo, "Negotiating boundaries: Huang Kan's (488–545) early medieval Confucian metaphysics," in *Imagining boundaries: Changing Confucian doctrines, texts, and hermeneutics*, ed. Kai-wing Chow, On-cho Ng, and John B. Henderson (Albany, 1999), pp. 57–83.

⁸⁸ For an excellent study, see Xiao Chi, *Xuanzhi yu shixing* (Taipei, 2011).

CHAPTER 24

BUDDHISM

John Kieschnick

During the Han, preceding the Six Dynasties period, the picture of Buddhism that scholars have pieced together in recent decades remains peculiar and puzzling, in many respects decidedly different from Chinese Buddhism of later periods. As near as we can tell from what fragmentary evidence we have, the monastic community in the Han was composed primarily of foreign monks, surrounded by small groups of otherwise unknown Chinese. “Monasteries” were mostly ordinary homes that had been donated by devotees, no different in structure and appearance than any other grand house. Translations were carried out independently by monks, seemingly working on their own, far removed from more sophisticated Chinese literary circles. The scriptures they chose to translate, while fascinating both for the style of translation and for what they reflect about the Buddhist community in China and the state of Buddhism outside China, had little impact on subsequent Chinese Buddhist history and were, for the most part, seldom read. At court, Buddhism was of little consequence but was mentioned in passing for its “gentle offerings” of fruit, incense and flowers in place of animal sacrifice; by the end of the Han even the emperor made offerings to Buddhist images, but associated them with the Yellow Emperor and Laozi (Huang–Lao). Buddhism at the Han court was conspicuously uncontroversial, provoking no angry memorials from indignant officials either on the ground of doctrine or of state policy. Finally, in the countryside, the scant evidence we have is punctuated by oddities: wine served at a Buddhist ritual, images of Buddhas in tombs in positions reserved for apotropaic charms, emaciated Buddha figures nestled beneath a scene of plenty on funerary vessels.¹

¹ Erik Zürcher, “Han Buddhism and the Western Region,” in *Thought and law in Qin and Han China*, ed. Wilt L. Idema and Erik Zürcher (Leiden, 1990), pp. 158–182; Jan Nattier, *A guide to the earliest Chinese Buddhist translations* (Tokyo, 2008); and the twelve essays edited by Max Deeg in the special edition devoted to early Chinese Buddhist translations in *JIAS* 31.1–2 (2008). For examples of research on the evidence from tombs and art, see Wu Hung, “Buddhist elements in early Chinese art (2nd and 3rd

By the end of the sixth century, at the close of our period, none of this was true. Foreign monks continued to play a significant role, particularly in translation, but most monks (and, from the fourth century, nuns as well) were now Chinese, including even members of prominent families. Monasteries, centered in this period on the stupa, and supported by a thriving and diverse monastic economy, were expected to enforce rigid standards for what had become a widely recognized, distinctive vocation. Translation of Buddhist scriptures was almost always carried out by teams of translators, each member fulfilling a distinct function and always sponsored by the state. Texts were polished by accomplished Chinese literati, well versed in Chinese belles lettres and supported by careful, sophisticated reflection on the inherent pitfalls of translation. The works they translated in this period included the bulk of what would remain the most popular scriptures—the *Lotus Sutra* (Sanskrit: *Saddharma Puṇḍarīka Sūtra*), the *Diamond Sutra* (Sanskrit: *Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra*), the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa Sūtra*—to this day. With grave consequences for Buddhism's fortunes in China, monks and ministers at court hotly debated the value of Buddhist doctrine and the merits of the monastic community. And in the countryside, Buddhist devotion fell into standard, enduring patterns, with Buddhas disappearing from tombs and instead staking out a place above ground both in cave sites and as individual statues, bearing inscriptions revealing that devotees from all walks of life understood and acted on Buddhist doctrines of merit and rebirth.

This is not to say that Buddhism was static in the centuries that followed the Six Dynasties period—the formation of Buddhist lineages and schools of thought (*zong*), the rise of Chan, the emergence of a network of sacred Buddhist mountains and other pilgrimage sites, the standardization of Chinese Buddhist liturgy, and the translation and composition of hundreds of texts all occurred long after the founding of the Sui. But for all of the political and social chaos of the era, and despite the common perception from the tenth century on that the Tang dynasty was the golden age of Chinese Buddhism, it was during the early medieval period that Buddhism was fully incorporated into Chinese culture; it is here that we can best grasp the foundations of the Chinese tradition of Buddhist thought, practice, and institutions.

Just why Buddhism was so successful during this era is probably too complex to ever answer convincingly. Perhaps the fall of the Han and the subsequent political and social chaos led to a loss of faith in early ideologies

centuries AD), *AA* 47.3–4 (1986), pp. 263–303, 305–352; and Stanley K. Abe, *Ordinary images* (Chicago, 2002).

and a new receptiveness to foreign ideas.² Perhaps Buddhism's popularity owed to the fact that it was strongest in areas in which Chinese religion had been weakest—it provided a detailed explanation of life after death and of how to negotiate one's way through it; guidelines for a professional clergy devoted to the religious life; and elaborate, expansive forms of devotion. But one could just as easily argue the opposite: Buddhism succeeded in China *despite* the political and social chaos that should have inhibited the spread of monasticism, which depends on a steady source of support for its survival. It succeeded *despite* the fact that in style and content it was in many ways radically different from anything the Chinese had seen before. Perhaps again the success of Buddhism was simply the result of sustained contact between Chinese and foreigners who were devoted to a fundamentally evangelistic religion—the legacy of the military conquests of the Han that brought the two predominant civilizations of ancient Asia together for the first time. In this short chapter, I cannot promise to resolve the knotty question of *why* Buddhism succeeded in establishing a foothold in Chinese culture; while pinpointing the reasons for the success of Buddhism in the Period of Division remains elusive, it is clear that the story of its rise is a key episode not just for the history of the period, but for Chinese history more generally. Here I can only hope to suggest the contours of this story, outlining the main dynamics at work in state policy, in the monasteries, and in Buddhist devotion.³

BUDDHISM AT COURT

According to a legend popular from the beginning of our period up to the twentieth century, the Emperor Ming of the Han brought the first Buddhist scriptures and monks to China by imperial order after dreaming about a golden, flying deity, later identified as the Buddha. This is how Chinese writers thought Buddhism *should* have come to China, sanctioned by an imperial act proceeding from the highest reaches of the court down and out to the rest of Chinese society, while always closely monitored and in line with official state policy. In fact, Buddhism seems to have slipped into court life gradually, haphazardly, with little fanfare. Owing to the open, polytheistic nature of Chinese religion, members of the imperial family and court officials

² Tang Yongtong, *Han Wei liang Jin Nanbeichao Fojiao shi* (Beijing, 2011), p. 43.

³ For a more detailed, if dated, survey, see the first half of Kenneth Ch'en's *Buddhism in China: A historical survey* (Princeton, 1964). Erik Zürcher's *The Buddhist conquest of China: The spread and adaptation of Buddhism in early medieval China* (Leiden, 2007), focusing on the formation of what he terms "gentry Buddhism" up to 420, remains the best survey of the period covered. Tsukamoto Zenryū, *A history of early Chinese Buddhism: From its introduction to the death of Hui-yüan*, trans. Leon Hurvitz (Tokyo, 1985), covers the same period but with greater detail, especially for the key monks Dao'an and Huiyuan.

could easily incorporate Buddhist figures and doctrines into their religious repertoire without fear of censure or contradiction. But when the interests of the professional Buddhist sangha, or the demands of Buddhist doctrines, such as the prohibition on killing, came into conflict with imperial interests, the court quickly erupted with controversy, conflict, and violence.

The dynamics of state policy towards Buddhism—in particular the fluctuation between support, suspicion, and persecution—remained remarkably consistent through close to 2,000 years of Buddhist history. The basic patterns of imperial policy, including the typical exceptions, all appear in dramatic episodes between the fourth and sixth centuries (we only begin to see a picture of Buddhism at court with any detail from the early fourth century). The standard treatment of Buddhism at court was one of cautious engagement bordering often on indifference. In their personal devotions, the emperor, his family, and the officials who served him were for the most part free to follow whatever religious doctrines and practices they chose. Indeed, one of the earliest references to Buddhism in China reveals that the emperor himself made offerings to the Buddha.⁴ Monks were called upon to perform rituals on the emperor's birthday and, on occasion, to bring rain or exorcize baleful stars. But in the realm of state ritual, Buddhism was seldom more than a curious sideshow. The emperor was required to carry out regular animal sacrifice to various deities and to his ancestors in a tradition with strong roots reaching back to the Shang. During the Six Dynasties period, great debates raged at court over how these rituals were to be performed and to whom. But Buddhist offerings—which never included animal sacrifice and which court officials defined precisely by their rejection of blood sacrifice—were largely irrelevant to these discussions.⁵ Debate over how the state should address the presence of Buddhism focused instead on a problem new to the Chinese polity: the existence of a large, coherent group of dedicated religious professionals. The problem was not only that monks were exempted from corvée labor, military service and taxes, but that (from the perspective of exasperated court ministers) monks produced nothing of value: no crops, no goods, no children. More than this, in state policy, with its relentless emphasis on obedience, hierarchy, and order, Buddhist monks were difficult to place; many kept no fixed residence, wandering from one region to the next—indeed promising young

⁴ HHS 30b.1082; Zürcher, *Buddhist conquest of China*, pp. 36–37.

⁵ Terry F. Kleeman, "Licentious cults and bloody rituals: Sacrifice, reciprocity, and violence in traditional China," *AM*, 3rd series 7.1 (1994), pp. 185–211; Chen Shuguo, "State religious ceremonies," in *Early Chinese religion*, Part 2, *The Period of Division (220–589 AD)*, Volume 1, ed. John Lagerwey and Lü Pengzhi (Leiden, 2010), pp. 53–142; and Keith N. Knapp, "Borrowing legitimacy from the dead: The Confucianization of ancestral worship," in *Early Chinese religion*, Part 2, ed. Lagerwey and Lü, Volume 1, pp. 143–192.

monks were expected to travel widely as part of their training. Their loyalty was suspect—one of the most visible controversies at court was over the question whether or not monks should be allowed to persist in their special exemption from the requirement to bow to the emperor. And from the beginning of Buddhism in China to modern times, in the eyes of high officials, Buddhist monks were always associated with the foreign, the strange, and the potentially disruptive.

In general, then, whether in the early medieval period, or in later imperial history, the state at once regulated Buddhism through restrictions on the sangha, and at the same time promoted it, through patronage of Buddhist projects, including the construction of monasteries and monumental Buddhist art—most notably for this period at the caves of Yungang and Longmen—and the translation of Buddhist scriptures. While politics no doubt played at least some role in every act at court, support for Buddhism, whether from the emperor, his family, or other figures at court, was almost always an effort to accrue “merit,” most commonly to assist in securing a favorable future rebirth of members of the donor’s family—usually his or her parents. Only rarely in Chinese history did any emperor openly reject the practice of providing support for such Buddhist endeavors and actively persecute the sangha as a whole. And only rarely did emperors go beyond merit-making activities to support Buddhism *at the expense* of rival teachings.⁶

One remarkable case of just such an exception was the reign of Xiao Yan, Emperor Wu of the Liang (r. 502–549), hailed in later Buddhist historiography as a righteous ruler in the model of the great Buddhist king Aśoka, and perhaps the only ruler in Chinese history deserving the title of “Buddhist emperor.” The depth of Emperor Wu’s personal commitment to Buddhism was unprecedented among previous rulers, and unmatched by those who followed. He composed commentaries on Buddhist scriptures and lectured on Buddhist doctrines. If the *Liangshu* (*History of the Liang*) and statements attributed to Emperor Wu himself are to be believed, after receiving the “bodhisattva precepts,” he lived a life of celibacy, vegetarianism and restraint, shunning even music as an expression of his renunciation of worldly pleasures. He actively promoted Buddhist endeavors, supporting an elite group of monks in and around the court to translate and compile a variety of Buddhist texts, and funding the construction and maintenance of major monasteries, famously “ransoming” himself to a monastery to be redeemed

⁶ On Emperor Wu’s Buddhist policies, see Andreas Janousch, “The emperor as bodhisattva: The bodhisattva ordination and ritual assemblies of Emperor Wu of the Liang dynasty,” in *State and court ritual in China*, ed. J. P. McDermott (Cambridge, 1999), pp. 112–149; and Yan Shangwen, *Liang Wudi* (Taipei, 1999).

by funds from the state treasury. Emperor Wu championed reform to the sangha to bring it in line with an ideal of pious austerity—insisting, for instance, that monks maintain a vegetarian diet. At the same time, he reaped the political benefits of his special connection to Buddhism, basking in the epithet “bodhisattva emperor” with the added authority this association brought his rule.

In the broad sweep of Chinese Buddhist history, this easy mix of personal belief, political expedience, and routine state policy was more the rule than the exception. Before Emperor Wu, Tuoba Jun, Emperor Wencheng of the Northern Wei, not only employed Buddhist ritual and doctrine to support his reign, as had Emperor Wu of the Liang, but also encouraged the direct identification of the emperor with a Buddha.⁷ Later, Yang Jian, Emperor Wen of the Sui in the sixth century, and Empress Wu Zetian of the Tang in the seventh made even more aggressive efforts to employ Buddhism to solidify their reign. Similarly, other emperors before and after the Liang were at least as lavish in their support of Buddhist translation and construction projects.

The most striking of all of Emperor Wu’s acts was not that he supported Buddhism, associated closely with monks, or embraced Buddhist doctrines; it was instead that he allowed his Buddhist proclivities to impede aspects of non-Buddhist religion, both launching a persecution of Daoism, and, uniquely in Chinese history, banning animal sacrifice from imperial ritual.⁸

Conversely, the Northern Dynasties saw two of the most devastating state-sponsored attacks on Buddhism, setting precedent for the subsequent persecutions in the Tang and the Five Dynasties periods. These two assaults on Buddhist objects and institutions were launched by Tuoba Dao, Emperor Taiwu of the Northern Wei (r. 424–452), and Yuwen Yong, yet another Emperor Wu, of the Zhou (r. 560–578). Influenced in part by the Daoist Kou Qianzhi and the official Cui Hao, Emperor Taiwu ordered the first large-scale suppression of Buddhism in China. In 444 and 446, imperial edicts ordered Buddhist images destroyed, scriptures burnt, and monks defrocked or executed. The rhetoric of the edicts explains the persecution as a necessary measure to address a corrupt and seditious sangha, while histories of Buddhism—beginning with the sixth-century *Shi Lao zhi*—attribute the

⁷ Scott Pearce, “A king’s two bodies: The Northern Wei emperor Wencheng and representations of the power of his monarchy,” *FHC* 7.1 (2012), pp. 90–105.

⁸ Evidence for emperor Wu’s persecution of Daoism is slight, but enough to suggest that the persecution did in fact take place. See Michel Strickman, “A Taoist confirmation of Liang Wu Ti’s suppression of Taoism,” *JAOS* 98.4 (1978), pp. 467–475. For his banning of blood sacrifice, see *LS* 2.57; *NS* 6.196; *SS* 7.134; and Knapp, “Borrowing legitimacy from the dead,” pp. 168–169.

persecution to Daoist influence at court and monastic malfeasance.⁹ But these explanations miss the mark: it took more than religious persuasion or moral outrage to convince the emperor to depart so radically from a tradition of cautious tolerance of Buddhism. Modern scholarship has emphasized that the persecution was motivated by a conglomeration of interests, including economic concerns—Buddhist images made of precious metals were confiscated for the state coffers and officials had long bemoaned the presence of monks as useless leeches on society. Perhaps most important of all were political considerations, including Emperor Taiwu's desperate need to fill out his army with more conscripts and the fear of links between Buddhism and his enemies.¹⁰

Subsequent persecutions of Buddhism—most famously under emperors Wu of the Zhou (r. 561–578), Wuzong of the Tang (r. 840–846) and Shizong of the Later Zhou (r. 954–959)—were driven by a similar mixture of motivations and employed similar, heated rhetoric condemning the moral character of the sangha in their memorials. But in all of these cases, the persecutions were relatively short-lived and followed, with the death of the emperor who instigated them, by astonishingly rapid restorations of monks, monasteries, images, and scriptures—testimony to the extent to which Buddhism had become woven into the fabric of Chinese society.

Aside from the remarkable exceptions of one reign each in the Liang, Northern Wei, and Northern Zhou, in general, Buddhism did not impinge on matters of state regardless of the personal beliefs of the imperial family and high officials: emperors continued to sanction animal sacrifice, launch wars, and order executions. This is not to say that the official attitude towards Buddhism at court was entirely indifferent. Beyond state policy, from early on literati (often connected through court activities) expressed intense curiosity about Buddhist beliefs, practices, and doctrines. In works like the *Mouzi libuo lun*, the *Feng fa yao*, and the *Weishu* (*History of the Northern Wei*) monograph on Buddhism and Daoism, they attempted to grasp the fundamentals of Buddhist doctrine and to narrate the history of the arrival and growth of

⁹ The *Shi Lao zhi* is a monograph dealing with Buddhism and Daoism included in the *Weishu* (*The History of the Northern Wei*). It is the only monograph on the two religions in a dynastic history. See Leon Hurvitz, "Treatise on Buddhism and Taoism," in Seichi Mizuno and Toshio Nagahiro, *Yun-kang: The Buddhist cave-temples of the fifth century A.D. in North China*, Volume 16 (Kyoto, 1956), pp. 64–69.

¹⁰ Xiang Yannan, "Bei Wei Taiwu miefu yuanyin kaobian," *Beijing shifan daxue xuebao* (*sheke ban*) 2 (1984), pp. 50–59, 30. Kenneth Chen, "On some factors responsible for the anti-Buddhist persecution under the Pei-ch'ao," *HJAS* 17.1–2 (1954), pp. 261–273. Liu Shufen, "Ethnicity and the suppression of Buddhism in fifth-century North China: The background and significance of the Gaiwu rebellion," *AM*, 3rd series 15.1 (2002), pp. 1–22.

Buddhism in China.¹¹ The *Shishuo xinyu* is filled with accounts of figures like the fourth-century official Yin Hao who, after his political career ended in exile, spent his final years reading sutras and querying local monks on passages he could not understand.¹² Nor were lay Buddhists simply bystanders, content to understand the basics of Buddhist doctrine and describe its history. We should not be misled by the compelling picture presented in monastic history of a Buddhism led entirely by talented, energetic monks; the great works of Buddhist history before the twentieth century were almost all composed by monks who, not surprisingly, placed eminent monks at the center of their stories. While it is true that, compared to monks, laymen composed relatively few commentaries or doctrinal works, they regularly participated in translation projects and often engaged monks in doctrinal debate, perhaps more in this period than at any other time. It should not surprise us that literati played a vital role in Buddhist intellectual life given that most leading monastic exegetes themselves came from a literati background. They continued to crave the company and respect of their secular counterparts, steeped as they were in the same classics—the *Book of Poetry*, the *Zhuangzi* etc.—and shared similar literary ideals.¹³

The court provided one of the most public and productive forums for discussion between literati, monks, and the imperial family about Buddhist ideas and practices, even when they did not impinge directly on matters of state. In memorials, edicts, letters, and essays, monks, officials, and the emperor debated whether monks should be required to bow before the emperor like everyone else, or whether their unique position placed them beyond secular authority. Erupting first in 340 and remaining a topic that monks and their critics returned to repeatedly in the following centuries, this controversy was a “matter of state,” if only symbolically, but other debates, further removed from politics, were just as heated.¹⁴ At the end of the fifth and in the early sixth centuries, in arguments again preserved largely in letters and essays, defenders of Buddhism argued for the continued existence of an

¹¹ All of these works have been translated. John P. Keenan, *How Master Mou removes our doubts: A reader-response study and translation of the Mou-tzu Li-huo lun* (Albany, 1994); Fengfa yao (“Essentials of Religion”) in Zürcher, *Buddhist conquest of China*, pp. 164–176; and Hurvitz, “Treatise on Buddhism and Taoism.”

¹² Richard Mather, trans., *Shih-shuo Hsin-yü: A new account of tales of the world* (Minneapolis, 1976), p. 123.

¹³ John Kieschnick, *The eminent monk: Buddhist ideals in medieval Chinese biography* (Honolulu, 1997).

¹⁴ The two most prominent iterations of the debate over monastic bowing took place in 340 and 402, treated, respectively, in Zürcher, *Buddhist conquest of China*, pp. 106–108, 160–163, 231–239, 254–259; and Leon Hurvitz, “‘Render unto Caesar’ in early Chinese Buddhism: Hui-yüan’s treatise on the exemption of the Buddhist clergy from the requirements of civil etiquette,” in *Liebenthal Festschrift (Sino-Indian Studies 5, [3–4])*, ed. K. Roy (Santineketan, 1957), pp. 80–114.

individual spirit after death, while their detractors—most famously the official Fan Zhen—denied the existence of an immortal spirit.¹⁵ These discussions often took place along networks formed by court ties. Fan Zhen's famous essay originated in discussions he had with Prince Xiao Ziliang and provoked responses by court luminaries like Shen Yue and Emperor Wu of the Liang.¹⁶

Similarly, sixth-century debates over whether monks should maintain a strict vegetarian diet, or simply avoid eating the flesh of animals slaughtered expressly for them, originated in conversation, letters, and essays. These exchanges took place between monks and laymen with court connections and culminated in a series of debates and lectures attended by large crowds in the palace, presided over by the emperor.¹⁷

Finally, while away from court Buddhists and Daoists borrowed freely from each other, when at court, under the harsh light of public scrutiny and with claims over limited resources at stake, they debated with each other in vitriolic exchanges with at times far-reaching implications.¹⁸ Both the persecution of Daoism under Emperor Wu of the Liang and the persecution of Buddhism under Emperor Taiwu of the Northern Wei were inspired at least in part by Buddhist–Daoist competition at court. That being said, even during times of greatest tension, the general tendency towards accommodation of diverse religious traditions is not absent: Emperor Wu of the Liang supported the prominent Daoist Tao Hongjing, and in the Northern Wei the Daoist Kou Qianzhi argued against the most extreme proposals for violent persecution of Buddhism.¹⁹

MONASTICISM

Before the entrance of Buddhism, there was nothing in China resembling the monastic institution: celibate communities of like-minded men and women devoted to the performance of ritual, the study and dissemination of religious

¹⁵ Fan Zhen's essay is translated in Étienne Balazs, *Chinese civilization and bureaucracy*, trans. H. M. Wright (New Haven, 1964), pp. 266–276; and discussed in Ming-Wood Liu, "Fan Chen's 'Treatise on the destructibility of the spirit' and its Buddhist critics," *PEW* 37.4 (1987), pp. 402–428.

¹⁶ Richard B. Mather, *The poet Shen Yüeh (441–513): The reticent marquis* (Princeton, 1988), pp. 140–151.

¹⁷ John Kieschnick, "Buddhist vegetarianism in China," in *Of tripod and palate: Food, politics, and religion in traditional China*, ed. Roel Sterckx (New York, 2005), pp. 186–212.

¹⁸ Christine Mollier, *Buddhism and Taoism face to face: Scripture, ritual, and iconographic exchange in medieval China* (Honolulu, 2008); Livia Kohn, *Laughing at the Tao: Debates among Buddhists and Taoists in medieval China* (Princeton, 1995).

¹⁹ Tang, *Han Wei Liang Jin Nanbeichao Fojiao shi*, pp. 356–357; Strickmann, "A Taoist confirmation of Liang Wu Ti's suppression of Taoism," pp. 468–469.

doctrines, and self-cultivation.²⁰ Patronage from the laity and revenue from monastic services and enterprises were essential for the success of this ideal of dedicated religious professionals living in communities with at least symbolic isolation from secular pursuits. Chief among all monastic resources was land. Over time, prestigious monasteries acquired large tracts of land in donations from the state and from prominent families. But unlike families, monasteries were free from the vagaries of sexual reproduction, profligate sons, and division of land between fractious offspring. Large monasteries, steadily increasing their carefully managed holdings, often endured for centuries. Overseen by long lineages of abbots, monasteries were committed to a twofold ideal that accepted corporate wealth as necessary for the propagation of Buddhism but encouraged personal austerity among its individual members, a combination that assured economic stability even in times of unrest. In fact, in the North even the state turned to monasteries as stable centers for the collection of grain in a policy described in the *Weishu* monograph on Buddhism and Daoism as follows:

[The monk] Tanyao petitioned that the households of Pingqi and those of the people who could yearly convey sixty “hu” of grain and present them to the clerical officials constitute sangha-households, and their grain be designated sangha-grain, to be used in lean years to relieve the famine-stricken people. He also requested that those of the people who committed grave crimes, as well as the public slaves, be constituted Buddha-households, to serve the temples as sweepers and sprinklers, and also manage the fields and transport the grain. Gaozong granted all these requests. Thereafter sangha-households and sangha-grain and temple-households were to be found everywhere in the prefectures and garrisons.²¹

As explained here, assigning peasants to monastic land was not so much an act of piety as it was a practical policy decision. The effect, however, was to reinforce a tradition of monasteries deriving revenue from the renting of farmland, a practice that remained the primary source of economic support for monasticism in China right up until the land reforms of the early twentieth century. In addition, monasteries also constructed and maintained mills and, from at least the fifth century, provided pawnbroking services.²² Although we do not have evidence of payment for ritual services at this time, judging from later periods, we can safely assume that this too was a source of income for

²⁰ For a survey of monasticism from the second to seventh centuries, see John Kieschnick, “Buddhist monasticism in early medieval China,” in *Early Chinese religion*, Part 2, *The Period of Division* (220–589 AD), Volume 1, ed. Lagerwey and Lü, pp. 545–574; and Yifa, *The origins of Buddhist monastic codes in China* (Honolulu, 2002).

²¹ WS 114.3039. Translation from Hurvitz, “Treatise on Buddhism and Taoism,” p. 73, with minor changes. Discussed in Jacques Gernet, *Buddhism in Chinese society: An economic history from the fifth to the tenth centuries*, trans. Franciscus Verellen (New York, 1995), pp. 99–106.

²² Gernet, *Buddhism in Chinese society*, pp. 142–144; Yang Lien-sheng, “Buddhist monasteries and four money-raising institutions in Chinese history,” *HJAS* 13 (1950), pp. 174–191.

monasteries. All of this indicates that by the mid-fifth century, monasteries played a major role in both the economic and the spiritual life of all segments of society from peasants to the emperor himself, helping to explain both the flourishing of Buddhist monasticism in times of imperial favor, and the rapidity with which monasteries recovered after even the most severe persecutions.

The monastic ideal that these economic arrangements were intended to support was a safe, regulated environment of a harmonious, dignified communal life conducive to self-cultivation and ritual. But to implement this ideal required an unusual commitment to order in every aspect of daily life. For this reason, in the fourth and fifth centuries, a major concern of monastic leaders in China was to secure comprehensive sets of monastic regulations from India to ensure the proper performance of ritual and the strict regulation of everyday monastic life. From early on, Chinese Buddhists knew that different sets of monastic regulations transmitted in separate traditions existed in India, and that each contained rules for ordination and other ceremonies, extensive lists of proper and improper behavior and how to punish infractions of the rules, and accounts of how and why the Buddha established these rules and procedures. But early Chinese monks did not immediately have access to these texts.

Dao'an (312–385), the greatest monk of his generation, formulated rules for his own monasteries, at the same time lamenting the lack of more complete regulations. Faxian (337–422), the first of a series of Chinese monks who traveled to India and left behind a record of his journey, left China with the express intent of bringing back a full set of monastic regulations, which he did in 414.²³ By the early fifth century, the two sets of monastic regulations that were to have the greatest influence in China—the Sarvāstivāda vinaya and the Dharmaguptaka vinaya—had been translated and widely distributed.

Just as the monastic regulations established a separate rule for monks and nuns, the emergence of distinctive monastic architecture established a separate space. As in later periods, monasteries largely followed non-Buddhist Chinese architecture in design—a natural development considering that the first monasteries and many later monasteries were estates donated by wealthy patrons. Unlike later periods, however, monasteries in early medieval times centered on stupas, often located in the middle of a walled courtyard.²⁴ As for

²³ There are several translations of Faxian's work, including by Rongxi Li, "The journey of the Eminent Monk Faxian," in *idem*, *Lives of great monks and nuns* (Berkeley, 2002), pp. 155–214; and by Max Deeg, who provides extensive commentary and discussion in his *Das Gaoseng-Faxian-Zhuan als religions-geschichtliche Quelle* (Wiesbaden, 2005).

²⁴ Li Yuqun, "Classification, layout, and iconography of Buddhist cave temples and monasteries," in *Early Chinese religion*, Part 2, Volume 1, ed. Lagerwey and Lü, pp. 575–738.

the activity inside monasteries, we glean some information about daily life from biographies of monks and regulations imposed by leaders of particular monasteries: elite monks at least regularly engaged in the recitation of scripture, veneration of images and stupas, and meditation. Monasteries also encouraged literacy and study, and we have many accounts of monks known for their ability to preach, explain, and write about Buddhist doctrine.

Indeed the rapid development of Buddhist doctrine makes this one of the most intellectually exciting periods in Chinese Buddhist history. Monastic libraries were among the best in China, and the opportunity for study, discussion, and writing attracted some of the best minds of the era to take the tonsure. More than in any other period, intellectual interests among Buddhists during the Period of Division were driven by the introduction and translation of Buddhist scriptures from abroad. These writings, ranging from short texts to books that were longer than anything the Chinese had produced, arrived in a seemingly inexhaustible river of words. From the perspective of modern scholarship, the order in which Buddhist scriptures appeared in China—at least in the early period—bears little relation to the order in which they were composed in India. Some Mahayana texts, which we know to have appeared relatively late in India, appeared before texts like the *Āgamas* (collections of early Buddhist scriptures) or the monastic regulations that were composed before them. Modern scholars bring order to this great body of writing in part by arranging them chronologically and attempting to determine which grew out of which. But Chinese Buddhists did not have this luxury, assuming as they did that all works translated from Indian originals that claimed to represent the word of the Buddha were in fact spoken by the Buddha himself.

From early on, Chinese monks puzzled over the seeming inconsistencies in the scriptures. Zhi Dun (314–366), who lived at a time in which the center of attention both for doctrinally inclined monks and for lay Buddhists was the *Perfection of Wisdom* (*Prajñāpāramitā*) literature, composed a text attempting to adjudicate between two translations of the *Perfection of Wisdom* sutra, one short and one long.²⁵ Dao'an compiled the first annotated catalog of Buddhist scriptures, in which he carefully noted translators, dates, and length of scriptures in an attempt to bring order to the confusing array of translations available in monastic libraries in his day. It was only later in the great systematizing works of monks like Zhiyi (538–597), Jizang (549–623), and Fazang (643–712) that the most important sutras were identified and placed

²⁵ Only the preface of this work survives: “Da xiao pin duibi yaochao xu,” in *Chusanrang ji ji*, T. 2145, 55.55a–56c.

on a timeline of the life of the Buddha, based on the capacities of his audience, in a technique that came to be known as “doctrinal classification” (*panjiao*).

Even more than scriptures already available, it was the potential for new translations to transform the Buddhist doctrinal landscape that made this such a vital period in the development of Buddhist thought. Monks of the day seem to have been well aware that, even with their well-stocked libraries and meticulous catalogues, they possessed only a fraction of the Buddha’s teachings available in India. Recall that Dao’an lamented the lack of full sets of the monastic regulations. And new scriptures introducing new deities, new stories, and new ideas only served to reinforce the recognition that more were still waiting to be discovered. The dynamics at work resemble the history of Daoist thought during the period, except that instead of new revelations of scriptures—the *Taiping Scripture*, the revelations of Zhang Daoling, the Shangqing and Lingbao scriptures—it was new translations—the *Perfection of Wisdom*, the “Three Treatises” of Nāgārjuna, the *Nirvāṇasūtra*—that inspired reflection, debate, and interpretation.

For all of his erudition, Dao’an did not, as far as we can tell, ever learn any Sanskrit. As he pieced together works available to him and searched for new translations from other parts of China, one senses Dao’an’s frustration in having access to only a small portion of the larger corpus of Buddhist writings he knew existed. It was not just works on the monastic regulations that he craved, but scriptures of other sorts as well. “The first fascicle is missing from the *Scripture of Progressive Preparation*.²⁶ I hope that through causes and conditions and with the assistance of the other world, we might quickly recover it.” Similarly, he laments that Dharmarakṣa’s translation of the *Scripture of Radiant Praise*²⁷ was “for some reason kept in Liangzhou [in the far northwest], and did not circulate in the world.”²⁸ Once settled in Chang’an in 378, after a lifetime of repeated moves provoked by political instability, Dao’an devoted the final eight years of his life to organizing translation teams guided by foreign monks. His teams focused primarily on the monastic regulations, but also *abhidharma* texts and sutras from the Āgamas, all pursuits that drew Dao’an’s attention away from his previous preoccupation with the *Perfection of Wisdom* literature.

Kumārajīva (334–413), generally regarded as the greatest translator in Buddhist history, solidified the position of the foreign translator as the driving force behind the development of Buddhist thought in China. It was not just the volume of his work—some seventy-four translations in all—but their quality. Many of his most influential translations—the *Lotus Sutra*, and the

²⁶ *Jianbei jing* (Skt. *Daśabhūmikasūtra*), T. 285, 10.458a–497b.

²⁷ *Guang zan jing* (Skt. *Pañcaviṃśati-sāhasrikā-prajñāparamitā*), T. 222.8.147a–216b.

²⁸ Zürcher, *Buddhist conquest of China*, pp. 196–197.

Vimalakīrtinirdeśa Sūtra—had been translated previously, but after Kumārajīva, it was his translations that people read. Moreover, new works that Kumārajīva translated—in particular the *Chengshi lun* and the “Three Treatises” (*San lun*)—occupied monastic thinkers for a generation.²⁹ For the history of Buddhist thought, Kumārajīva is as important for the monks he taught as for his translation. Interestingly, while he trained disciples, including the four prominent monks Daosheng, Sengrui, Sengzhao, and Daorong known to the tradition as the “four sages” and all authors of influential doctrinal works, Kumārajīva also contributed to the education of Dao’an’s most prominent disciple, Huiyuan, in a series of letters: “the only exchange of philosophical arguments in a correspondence between a Chinese and a foreigner, at least down to the end of the Ming.”³⁰ The letters, composed in the early years of the fifth century and involving a string of knotty doctrinal issues—in particular the Buddha nature and the *dharmakāya* (the Buddha as eternal principle)—were themselves inspired by one of Kumārajīva’s translations at Chang’an, the *Da zhi du lun* (T. 1509)—which Huiyuan received in the South.

Soon after Kumārajīva’s death, it was the appearance of yet another, massive, scripture, the *Nirvāṇasūtra*, that ignited new debates and controversies in the monasteries, signaling a shift away from the *Perfection of Wisdom* literature, which had dominated Buddhist doctrinal discussion for over a century. First translated by Faxian in 418, it was the second translation of the *Nirvāṇasūtra*, by Dharmakṣema in 421, that had the biggest impact, in both the North and the South. This text prompted discussion on the Buddha nature and the possibility of sudden enlightenment—two concepts that were to play an important role in the Tang in the development of Chan Buddhism.³¹

As important as the reception of the new translations was the process of translation itself. Our knowledge of the translation of Buddhist scriptures into Chinese begins with An Shigao, the first translator for whom we have a name, and continued up to the eleventh century when the wellspring of Buddhist texts in India finally ran dry. Almost all of these texts were translated under official auspices, meaning that they were both funded and overseen by the state. For this reason, texts were translated in monasteries near major political

²⁹ *Chengshi lun*, T. 1646, 32.239a–373b; and the *Zhong lun*, T. 1564, 30.1a–39c; *Shi er men lun*, T. 1568, 30.159a–167c; and the *Bai lun*, T. 1569, 30.167c–182a.

³⁰ The first reference to the “four sages” is at *Beishan lu* 9, T. 2113, 52.627c. The letters are preserved as *Daseng da yi zhang*, T. 1856, 45.122b–143b. See Richard H. Robinson, *Early Mādhyamika in India and China* (Delhi, 1976), pp. 108–109, 191–195; and Rudolph G. Wagner, “The original structure of the correspondence between Shih Hui-yüan and Kumārajīva,” *HJAS* 31 (1971), pp. 28–48.

³¹ Chen, *Buddhism in China*, pp. 113–116. Tang, *Han Wei liang Jin Nanbeichao Fojiao shi*, pp. 431–514, 598–604.

centers such as Chang'an, Luoyang, and Jiankang. They were translated by teams of translators, in which different men assumed distinct responsibility: one in charge of reciting the text, either from a manuscript or from memory; another in charge of the initial translation; one to write down the translation; another to verify the accuracy of the translation; yet another to polish the Chinese; and so on. The division of labor varied from one translation center to another, but almost always involved at least one person in the initial draft translation and one or more to polish the Chinese. Translations were usually carried out before an audience, and involved not just the translation of the text, but explanation of its significance as well. This combination of state support and group translation proved remarkably effective over the course of close to a millennium of Buddhist translation in China in what amounts to what is perhaps the greatest translation project in the history of the world, certainly before the modern era.³²

While one way of interpreting Buddhist thought in China at this time is as a series of responses to new scriptures, determining why certain scriptures were translated is a more complicated question than it might at first seem. We cannot assume that translators were simply following Indian trends. In fact, it is possible that foreign monks appeared in China with, for instance Mahayana scriptures, precisely because these texts were *not* popular at home; that is, they came to China in search of an audience.³³ Or they may have been responding to demand in China—this is certainly the case with the translations of the monastic regulations. Just as important as translators' agendas or audience demand were the vagaries of textual transmission. At times translators no doubt simply translated whatever texts happened to be at hand. In other words, while it is *relatively* easy to trace the life of a scripture once it was translated into Chinese, understanding why it was chosen for translation or what its position was outside China prior to translation is much more difficult to ascertain.

A standard way of summarizing Chinese Buddhist thought for the period is to consider the first 200 years or so of Chinese Buddhism a misguided obsession with parallels between the Buddhist doctrine of emptiness in the *Perfection of Wisdom* scriptures and the ideas at the heart of the indigenous Chinese

³² Sylvie Hureau, "Translations, apocrypha, and the emergence of the Buddhist canon," in *Early Chinese Religion*, Part 2, Volume 2, ed. Lagerwey and Lü, pp. 741–774; Daniel Boucher, "Buddhist translation procedures in third-century China: A study of Dharmarakṣa and his translation idiom" (PhD dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 1996); and Cao Shibang (Tso Sze-bong), *Zhongguo Fojiao yijing shi lunji* (Taipei, 1992).

³³ Daniel Boucher, "Dharmarakṣa and the transmission of Buddhism to China," *AM*, 3rd series 19 (2006), pp. 13–37.

branch of thought known as *xuanxue*, or “Dark Learning.”³⁴ According to this scheme, the period of the search for parallels was superseded by a period of attempts to understand Buddhist thought on its own terms, beginning with Dao'an's call for a rejection of a distinctively Chinese understanding of Buddhist doctrine, and culminating with Huiyuan—especially in his correspondence with Kumārajīva. This periodization is useful at a high level of generalization, as long as we recognize that simply by talking and writing about Buddhism in Chinese, Chinese Buddhists were at some level always understanding Buddhism on Chinese terms.³⁵ That is, far from passively absorbing ideas introduced in new scriptures by foreign monks, Chinese Buddhists were actively engaged in grappling with the new material in creative ways.

I have so far avoided regional variation and skirted over the deep divisions between North and South. Already in the Tang, monastic historians looking back on the Period of Division characterized the Buddhism of North and South as possessing distinctive traits. Buddhism in the South is known for lively, cultured debate and doctrinal sophistication, while northern monks were renowned for their seriousness of practice and achievements in meditation.³⁶ Modern scholarship has followed suit, noting that in the South disputes between Daoists and Buddhists at court were fought over doctrine in eloquent debates and refined writing, while in the North differences found expression in brutal acts of state-sponsored violence.³⁷ But while these characterizations hold true on a general level, there are notable exceptions and, more importantly, in the wider context of Chinese society during the period, Buddhist monasticism is more remarkable for its uniformity than for its divisions. Monks, regardless of locale, identified with the same foreign ideal; North and South, all monks shaved their heads and wore monastic robes. With the introduction of the monastic regulations, all received the tonsure in roughly the same ceremony and followed the same rules. Dao'an introduced the practice of all monks taking the same surname (Shi, Śākya, short for Śākyamuni), symbolically placing all monks in one grand lineage. Because of this sense of cohesion and common interest with a foreign community, monks in China nurtured customs that were unusual for China—for instance, they were the first in China to sit on chairs and the first to use communal bathhouses. Because of the power and stability of the monastic institution, they could maintain these practices over centuries. If monks had lived in

³⁴ For a discussion of *xuanxue*, see Chapter 23 in this volume.

³⁵ For critiques of the standard model, see, for instance, Victor H. Mair, “What is *geyi* after all?” *CR* 48.1–2 (2012), pp. 29–59; Robert Sharf, *Coming to terms with Chinese Buddhism: A reading of the Treasure Store Treatise* (Honolulu, 2002).

³⁶ *Beishan lu* 4, T. 2113, 52.596c. ³⁷ Tang, *Han Wei Liang Jin Nanbeichao Fojiao shi*, 357.

isolation from the rest of society, they would constitute a curious, but marginal, aspect of Chinese civilization. But in fact they maintained close contact with all levels of Chinese society, linking North and South, East and West. Monks were, moreover, among the most mobile members of society, regularly traveling between North and South. And the latest scriptures, like monastic practices, spread rapidly from one area to the next along roads dotted with monasteries.

DEVOTION

Forms of Chinese devotion now taken for granted—pilgrimage, the veneration of icons and relics, the recitation of lengthy scriptures—were all introduced with Buddhism, in many cases becoming so deeply ingrained in Chinese culture that one hesitates to call them Buddhist at all, since, with the exception of relic worship, all can now be found in Daoism and popular religion as well. Nonetheless, the origin of these standard forms of devotion in Buddhism is clear. In China, Buddhist devotion is rooted on the one hand in the doctrine of merit, and on the other in a fascination with the miraculous. The Buddhist doctrine of merit holds that one can acquire good karma through actions prescribed by scripture, most commonly the recitation or veneration of Buddhist texts and the creation and veneration of Buddhist images, stupas, or monasteries. Good karma can improve one's lot in this life, or bear fruit in the next. Equally important, though, is the belief that once merit is made it can be transferred to someone else, most commonly—whether in India, China, or anywhere else in the Buddhist world—to one's deceased parents to assist them in securing a favorable rebirth. Biographies of eminent monks and Buddhist scriptures of the period are replete with references to merit, but the most direct evidence for the rise of belief in the doctrines of karma, rebirth, and the transfer of merit among the populace are in the wealth of inscriptions from the period. While both debates over Buddhism at court and scriptural exegesis in the monasteries were limited to a very small group of elites, inscriptions allow us access to a much wider swath of the population, at least for the North. Over 1,600 inscriptions are extant from the period. Of these, many can be identified as by officials, monks, and nuns, but the majority were made by otherwise unknown commoners.³⁸

Consider, for example, one of the earliest Chinese Buddhist inscriptions, on a small stone stupa in the Jiuquan Museum in Gansu:

³⁸ Hou Xudong, *Wu, liu shiji beifang minzhong Fojiao xinyang: Yi zaoxiangji wei zhongxin de kaocha* (Beijing, 1998), p. 95.

Mid-part of the sixth month of the second year of the Taiyuan era, in the year of *bingzi* [377]. Cheng Duan'er, recognizing that his own blessings are few, that he was born in the final age [of the dharma], and that he has not read the Buddhist books, has expended his wealth for the sake of his parents and his entire family in order to erect this stone stupa decorated with images. May the merit from this allow him to achieve the ultimate path and avoid the office of punishments. His young wife and valiant sons join him in this vow.³⁹

This inscription and hundreds like it testify to the extent to which a belief in karma had become a standard means of interpreting death and the appropriate response to the death of a loved one. Cheng Duan'er's dedication of merit to his parents, a continuation of an Indian tradition, is common in the inscriptions, but they also include examples of parents donating merit for deceased children, siblings for dead brothers and sisters, or wives and husbands for deceased spouses. Donors express similar sentiments in colophons to Buddhist scriptures from the period preserved at Dunhuang—again, most often by sons for their deceased parents.⁴⁰

The same logic was at work on a grander scale in the construction of the three main cave temple complexes at Yungang, Longmen, and Dunhuang, all containing a diverse range of images, from small generic Buddhas to monumental sculpture and, in the case of Dunhuang, elaborate murals. For instance, the only dated inscription in Cave 285 at Dunhuang, containing some of the most impressive murals from the period, records that in the year 538, a monk donated the merit for images of a Buddha and two bodhisattvas to his parents.⁴¹ Cave 285, like a number of the caves at Dunhuang, was a “family cave”; that is, a temple made in honor of, and in order to pass merit on to, family members.⁴² Inscriptions in the two Northern Wei cave complexes, first at Yungang and then at Longmen, tell a similar story of sons and daughters honoring deceased parents, and spouses passing merit on to deceased husbands and wives.⁴³ Besides reflecting a continuation of Indian Buddhist practice, the inscriptions also draw heavily on the tradition of ancestral worship in China. For instance, donors often transfer the merit for making images to “seven generations of ancestors,” just as Chinese emperors had made offerings to seven generations of ancestors in the imperial temple from at least Han times.⁴⁴

³⁹ John Kieschnick, *The impact of Buddhism on Chinese material culture* (Princeton, 2003), p. 162.

⁴⁰ One well-preserved example is Or.8210/S.81, a copy of the *Nirvana sūtra* from 506, which is the earliest dated manuscript from the South in the Stein collection.

⁴¹ Dunhuang yanjiuyuan, ed., *Dunhuang Mogaoku gongyangren tiji* (Beijing, 1986), p. 114.

⁴² Ma De, *Dunhuang Mogaoku shi yanjiu* (Lanzhou, 1996), pp. 245–249.

⁴³ Only a few dozen, brief inscriptions are extant at Yungang: Mizuno and Nagahiro, *Yun-kang: The Buddhist cave-temples of the fifth century A.D. in north China*, Volume 2, text, appendix (Kyoto, 1956), p. 1. For Longmen, see Amy McNair, *Donors of Longmen: Faith, politics, and patronage in medieval Chinese Buddhist sculpture* (Honolulu, 2007).

⁴⁴ Knapp, “Borrowing legitimacy from the dead,” pp. 146–147.

In addition to expressing devotion to family members, the inscriptions and the images that accompany them reflect devotion towards Buddhist deities and a belief in their salvific power, whether it be deliverance from what many believed to be the corrupt age of the decline of the dharma (*mofa*) through the appearance of the next Buddha, Maitreya, or rebirth in the Pure Land of Amitābha Buddha.⁴⁵ But piety, whether directed towards parents or towards Buddhist deities, was only one factor motivating patrons of Buddhist projects. Some of the images at Yungang and Longmen, supported by the emperor, were intended in part to provide legitimacy for rule and heighten the majesty of the ruler. When Yuan Ke, Emperor Xuanwu (r. 500–515), at the age of eighteen, ordered the construction of the Binyang Caves at Longmen in honor of his parents—his mother had been murdered when he was twelve—the imagery of the Buddhas of the past, present, and future was specifically linked with the new emperor's position as inheritor of the throne.⁴⁶

In short, just as imperial ancestor worship was a more elaborate, politicized version of family ritual, Buddhist devotion too was in many ways the same for commoner and emperor alike. One difference is that at the local level, projects under Buddhist patronage meant to serve the community welfare, such as the construction of bridges, cemeteries, and wells, in addition to the making of steles with images, were often sponsored not by one person or even a single family, but by a lay association (*yiyi* or *fayi*) composed of often dozens of parishioners (*yizi*) overseen by a monk (*yishi*).⁴⁷ These associations included the most prestigious local families, but also artisans and the local monastery. Hence, just as images from a son or daughter to a parent helped to reinforce family cohesion, these complex acts of Buddhist devotion by large, well-organized lay associations reinforced communal identity and lent prestige to the primary donors whose names, and sometimes likenesses, were prominently displayed.

Aside from merit, Buddhist devotion was driven by a fascination with the miraculous. Buddhist images were not simply a means of making merit for the next life; they were animated with the presence of the figure they represented. Buddhist images wept, perspired, and bled. They spoke in visions and dreams. In a time when the only likely place to see an image was in a religious context, icons carried great power. Because images were not just representations, but also domiciles of the divine, one could gain further merit by making offerings

⁴⁵ Hou Xudong surveys the evidence and traces changes in the popularity of different Buddhas and bodhisattvas over time in "The Buddhist pantheon," in *Early Chinese religion*, Part 2, Volume 2, ed. Lagerwey and Lü, pp. 1095–1168.

⁴⁶ McNair, *Donors of Longmen*, 38.

⁴⁷ Liu Shufen, "Art, ritual, and society: Buddhist practice in rural China during the Northern Dynasties," *AM*, 3rd series 8.1 (1995), pp. 19–49.

to the icons and, more directly still, pray to them for immediate relief from disease, the birth of a child, or generic good fortune. The same was true for relics (often housed in stupas) and scriptures, both as numinously powerful as they were portable.⁴⁸

The cult of relics entered China with Buddhism and quickly inspired the Chinese imagination. Whether believed to be the sacred remains of the Buddha himself or of a local holy monk, relics were sources of merit, miracle, and wonder, venerated in stupas that grew up in every major city and at the very center of every major monastery.

From the fourth century on, in addition to recording merit-making activity in inscriptions, literate laymen began to collect and circulate tales of Buddhist miracles. These are stories set not in the distant past or in remote India, but often in the times and places in which the authors wrote. The small corpus of extant works, mostly only in fragments of the original, represent what must have been a large body of literature, particularly if we take into account the number of long-lost oral stories that no doubt circulated throughout the period. They recount stories of Buddhist scriptures that survive fire and flood intact and of holy monks with supernormal powers, men saved from fire, flood, and prison through their devotion to the bodhisattva Guanshiyin (Skt. Avalokiteśvara). They describe men who die but return from the underworld to explain how rebirth is determined by karma.⁴⁹ Many, if not most, of the stories draw on the indigenous Chinese principle of “resonance” (*ganying*), according to which a deity or natural forces respond to the sincerity of the devotee like one string on an instrument naturally vibrating when a corresponding string is plucked.⁵⁰

As in the case of inscriptions which reveal details of how village life was punctuated by Buddhist rituals of “bathing the Buddha,” circumambulation, and image consecration, miracle tales refer to the *zhai*, or “abstinence ceremony” held twice a month and (in a longer form) three times a year in lay households.⁵¹ Similarly, local Buddhist societies (*fashu*) emphasized rejection of animal sacrifice in the rites of spring and autumn.⁵² In traditional Buddhist historiography, the most famous devotional society of the period was that formed by Huiyuan in 402 at his mountain monastery, dedicated to devotion to the Buddha Amitābha in hopes of rebirth in his Western

⁴⁸ Kieschnick, *The impact of Buddhism on Chinese material culture*.

⁴⁹ Robert Ford Campany, *Signs from the unseen realm: Buddhist miracle tales from early medieval China* (Honolulu, 2012).

⁵⁰ Campany, *Signs from the unseen realm*, p. 49; Sharf, *Coming to terms with Chinese Buddhism*, pp. 77–136.

⁵¹ Shufen Liu, “Art, ritual and society”; Campany, *Signs from the unseen realm*, pp. 51–55.

⁵² Hao Chunwen, *Zhongguo shiqi shenji yanjiu* (Taipei, 2006), pp. 1–16.

Paradise.⁵³ And Huiyuan was not the only one to form such a group.⁵⁴ Down from the mountains and away from the village, sophisticated urbanites turned to local Buddhist temples to celebrate regular festivals, with Buddhist images paraded through the streets.⁵⁵ In sum, during our period, whether in prominent urban monasteries or even at the village level, for many Buddhists devotion had become incorporated into the ritual calendar, death rites, and everyday life.

Above I focused primarily on the Buddhist devotion of laymen, but we can just as easily find examples of monks, nuns, and laywomen donating images, copying scriptures, and as protagonists of miracle stories. Indeed, there are even cases of lay Buddhist societies composed entirely of women.⁵⁶ And while it is true that acts of Buddhist devotion were often an opportunity for acquiring or asserting social status (some names on a stele come above others, and only someone with exceptional resources could commission monumental sculpture), at the same time the basic principles of Buddhist merit, charity, and piety were broadly shared across divides of class, gender, and ethnicity.

CONCLUSION

I have divided Chinese Buddhism into court life, monasticism, and devotion, but this division quickly breaks down on closer inspection. In establishing and maintaining monastic institutions, decisions at court played a key role. Monks, literati, and commoners practiced what were essentially the same forms of Buddhist devotion. And while interest in abstruse Yogacāra treatises like the *Shi di lun* or technical compendiums like the *Cheng shi lun* was limited to a small circle of elites, leading monks like Huiyuan also composed doctrinal works of widespread appeal on basic topics such as the nature of karma. Scriptures like the *Lotus Sutra* were translated by monastic elites in co-operation with literati and had a major impact on the religious life of even those of the humblest background. Recall also that devotional societies down to the village level included a monk or two, most of whom would have had at least a rudimentary training in the scriptures.

In this brief survey, I have attempted above all to show that on the eve of unification under the Sui, Buddhism had become thoroughly integrated into Chinese society at all levels. Monasticism was now an established vocation; despite a nascent tradition of virulent anticlericalism that was to continue up

⁵³ Zürcher, *Buddhist conquest of China*, p. 219. ⁵⁴ Hao, *Zhonggu shiqi shenji yanjiu*, pp. 131–132.

⁵⁵ *Luoyang qielan ji jianzhu*, by Yang Xuanzhi, comm. Fan Xiangyong (Shanghai 1978); Yi-t'ung Wang, trans., *A record of Buddhist monasteries in Lo-yang* (Princeton, 1984).

⁵⁶ Hao, *Zhonggu shiqi shenji yanjiu*, pp. 315–348; Kate Lingley, "The patron and the community in Eastern Wei Shanxi: The Gaomiaoshan Cave Temple yi society," *AM*, 3rd series 23.1 (2010), pp. 158–159.

to modern times, and incessant policy measures intended to limit their number, monks and nuns played prominent roles among commoners and elites alike. Buddhist temples were an integral part of local economies and provided public space for all manner of rites and festivities in major cities. Beyond monks, Buddhist doctrines of karma and rebirth were widely accepted by people from all walks of life, providing the theoretical foundation for rites for the dead. In the realm of Chinese thought, even those hostile to Buddhism were now expected to be conversant in Buddhist texts and doctrines.

As the Period of Division came to a close and Emperor Wen of the Sui followed his military conquests with a series of measures intended to unify his fractured new empire, he drew on Buddhism to bring different regions of China together. Ironically, it was in part the foreign import of Buddhism that, through its ideas, practices, and institutions, provided common ground. But even before this, for all of its diversity, it was Buddhism that had helped hold the disparate peoples, families, and regions together in the first place.

CHAPTER 25

DAOISM

Stephen R. Bokenkamp

Among the many social, political, and ideological changes that took place during the period covered by this volume, none matches in impact or endurance those brought about in the realm of religion. We need recall here only a few of the changes: with increasing acceptance of Buddhism from roughly the third through the seventh centuries, Chinese gained new notions of the self, of time and cosmos, and of postmortem existence, and new possibilities for voluntary social organization. With the birth and growth of the Daoist religion, which began as an attempt to establish a kingdom, but ended as something we would recognize as a religious organization, China gained its first native translocal religion. This religion, too, introduced novel conceptions of the human body, of time, of cosmos, and of celestial hierarchies, both independently and in response to Buddhist innovations. Through these developments, Chinese culture was changed profoundly. To name but one indicator of this, in the second century CE, religious organizations were local and community-based. By the beginning of the seventh century, kingdom-wide networks of temples, both Buddhist and Daoist, dotted the landscape and emperors found it necessary both to control the influence of religion through regulation and to seek support from these organizations for legitimation.

This chapter will treat one portion of this complex story of social and cultural transformation. We will explore the origin and development of those religious organizations that by the sixth century contributed to the development of the nationally recognized religion eventually known by the name *daojiao* (“teachings of the Dao”), a word we regularly translate as “Daoism.” In the past, scholars often used the word “Daoism” to refer to nearly all nongovernmental or non-Confucian aspects of traditional Chinese life, but the term here will denote solely these religious organizations. Since the fundamental criterion in use here is an attestable historical and organizational presence, we will leave out of consideration several master–disciple lineages that fed ideas and practices into the main Daoist groups. While such schools of practice perhaps deserve the name “Daoist” as well, there are too

many of them and the lines of development are too complex to account for them fully here.¹

In order to chart the birth and early development of Daoism, we must take note of three distinctive features of the religion that complicate our attempts to trace its history. First is the very status of religion in Chinese society. The Chinese tended to view religion not as an organization to which one “belonged,” but as a path one might follow.² One of the entailments of this view is that practice is foregrounded over belief. Creeds are consequently less important than manuals of practice. Another entailment that developed from this, particularly toward the end of the Six Dynasties period, is that an individual might, either at various times in life or concurrently, have recourse to religious practices that we see as emanating from distinct religions. Second, as already mentioned, it was over the course of the Six Dynasties period that Daoism became a strong institutional presence. The growth and development of Daoism were a story that fell beyond the purview of the traditional historians except when Daoist groups were regarded as a threat to the kingdom. The only extended treatment of Daoism in the standard histories is Wei Shou’s (506–572) “Treatise on Buddhism and Daoism” of the *Weishu* (*History of the Northern Wei*).³ But the *Weishu* did not set a precedent for later standard histories, none of which contain sections on religion. Nor are the standard histories useful when it comes to recording the lives of individual Daoists. Where we know from other sources that a person is a Daoist practitioner, court historians were likely to ahistorically assign the individual in question to the category of “Huang–Lao” practice.⁴ The biography of such individuals will usually also contain a few clichéd miracles attributed to the person, making the historian’s account in fact more miraculous than that of religious hagiographers. Such standard historical biographies tend, in Michel Strickmann’s memorable words, to be little more than “a patchwork of fable and social passwords.”⁵ As a result, this chapter is based less on the notes of historians than on accounts written by Daoist practitioners. Where these accounts have

¹ For a discussion of the ways various scholars have defined the term “Daoism,” as well as accounts of a few of these movements, see Gil Raz, *The emergence of Daoism: Creation of a tradition* (London, 2012).

² Robert F. Campany, “On the very idea of religion (in the modern West and in early medieval China),” *HR* 42.4 (2003), pp. 287–319.

³ Leon Hurvitz, “Wei Shou: Treatise on Buddhism and Taoism. An English translation of the original Chinese text of Wei-shu CXIV and the Japanese annotation of Tsukamoto Zenryū,” in *Yün-kang: The Buddhist cave-temples of the fifth century A.D. in North China*, Volume 16 (supplement) (Kyoto, 1956), pp. 25–103.

⁴ Huang–Lao was the political philosophy of the Warring States and early Han derived from the *Daode jing* of Laozi and books attributed to Huangdi, the Yellow Emperor.

⁵ Michel Strickmann, “The Mao shan revelations: Taoism and the aristocracy,” *TP* 63 (1977), p. 34.

a scriptural origin, we shall attempt to separate historical fact from pious embellishment, biography from hagiography.

Third, while Daoist writings expend much more ink on the unseen than on recounting the growth of their religion, Buddhists did pay considerable attention to historiography. Buddhist monks chronicled such things as translation history, their interactions with various emperors, their converts among the elite, biographies of eminent monks and nuns, and even accounts of their disputes with Daoists. In addition to the sparse accounts of Daoism by official historians, then, we must also deal judiciously with the apologetics and oppositional history written by elite Buddhists.

The historical origins of Daoism can be traced to the final decades of the second century CE, when two separatist movements, both justified by the contents of holy books, attempted to set up kingdoms. These were the Yellow Turbans with their *Scripture of Great Peace* (*Taiping jing*) and the Celestial Masters (*tianshi*), who indoctrinated converts by means of a distinctive understanding of the *Daode jing* of Laozi.⁶ While the two movements were often conflated by contemporary historians, later Daoists traced their practices to the Celestial Masters and not to the more infamous Yellow Turbans. It was the Celestial Masters who developed a communal and evangelical religion that swept across north China and then conquered south China so that by the fifth century a number of the most important people in government in both north and south China, if not themselves practitioners, had been raised in Daoist families.⁷

Both movements began in the midst of the religio-political ferment that attended the end of the Han dynasty. Any attempt to establish rule as emperor

⁶ The earliest record of the Celestial Masters, a stele dated 173 CE, mentions “twelve scrolls of scriptures,” so there were likely other books as well. See Terry Kleeman, “Community and daily life in the early Daoist church,” in *Early Chinese religion*, Part 2, *The Period of Division* (220–589 AD), Volume 1, ed. John Lagerwey and Lü Pengzhi (Leiden, 2010), pp. 396–397.

⁷ Given the nature of Chinese religion, precise numbers are impossible to determine, but the Wang family of Langya, the Xie family of Chen Prefecture, the Chi family of Gaoping, and the Du family of Duling all had prominent members who were Celestial Master Daoists and some members of the clans went from North to South early in the fourth century. Some emperors were also Daoists, including Sima Yao (362–396), the Emperor Xiaowu of the Jin, and even, in his youth, the famously Buddhist monarch Xiao Yan (464–549), who ruled as Emperor Wu of the Liang. See Chen Yinke, “Tianshidao yu binhai diqu zhi guanxi,” *Zhongyang yanjiuyuan Lishi yuyan yanjiusuo jikan* 3.4 (1932), pp. 439–466. Chen incorrectly conflates the Yellow Turbans and the Celestial Masters and his contention that the graph *zhi* 之 at the end of a three-character name signals a Celestial Master adherent has been debunked, but his evidence for the growth of Celestial Master Daoism among the aristocracy is solid. On the graph *zhi*, see the following entries for 1956–7th of the third month, 10th of the third month, and 13th of the third month—in the correspondence between Hu Shi (1891–1962) and Yang Liansheng (1914–1990): Hu Shi jinianguan, ed., *Lunxue tianshi ershi nian: Hu Shi Yang Liansheng wanglai shuzha* (Taipei, 1998), pp. 257–264. On the growth of Daoism, see also Terry Kleeman, *Celestial masters: History and ritual in early Daoist communities* (Cambridge, MA, 2016), pp. 190, 210–213, inter alia.

required proofs of divine approbation. Celestially revealed books provided this, but there was another trend that contributed to the development of Daoism. Laozi, the supposed author of the *Daode jing*, came to be venerated as a god who long outlived his first earthly appearance. For example, Emperor Huan of the Han, Liu Zhi (r. 147–167), ordered offerings for both Laozi and the Buddha and had a stele erected at the sage's supposed birthplace, praising Laozi's perdurance, his movements through the cosmos, and his ability to transform his shape endlessly. One development of ideas concerning the cosmic Laozi was the myth that Laozi, when he went west, became the Buddha.⁸ This connected Buddhism to China, but, according to Daoist polemics, made it at the same time a foreign version of true Daoism and fit only for foreigners.⁹ Another indication of Laozi's deification comes from a sect that operated in Sichuan in the second century and left behind a text entitled *Scripture of the Transformations of Laozi* (*Laozi bianhua jing*) that described not only Laozi's cosmic dimensions, but also his ability to transform himself and appear on earth as the teacher of emperors.¹⁰

The Yellow Turban rebellion, led by a man named Zhang Jue, was a widespread and bloody insurrection organized around a millennial religious ideology. Zhang called his movement the "Way of Great Peace" (*taipingdao*) and, under the slogan "Yellow Heaven is about to rise," claimed to represent the vanguard of a new and perfect society. This ideology was drawn from a revealed book, the *Scripture of Great Peace* (*Taiping jing*). The work seems to have been a version of the *Book of Great Peace with Blue Borders* (*Taiping qingling shu*) that had been presented to the Han Emperor Shun (r. 126–144). Filling 170 scrolls, the *Scripture* was said to have originated in the region of modern Shandong Province from the Prescription Master (*fangshi*) Gan Ji (or Yu Ji). In 166 CE, the literatus Xiang Kai, also from the same region, presented the book again. The *Scripture of Great Peace*, as it survives today, promotes an ideal social structure based on cosmic principles, particularly the idea that the moral action of each person determines not only individual well-being, but also the health of the body politic and the smooth functioning of the cosmos. This idea of correspondence between the

⁸ HHS 30.1082; Anna Seidel, *La divinisation de Lao tseu dans le Taoïsme des Han* (Paris, 1969), pp. 36–50; and Terry Kleeman, *Great perfection: Religion and ethnicity in a Chinese millennial kingdom* (Honolulu, 1998), pp. 96–97.

⁹ See Erik Zürcher, *The Buddhist conquest of China: The spread and adaptation of Buddhism in early medieval China*, Volume 1 (Leiden, 1959), 288–320; and for the translation of an early Celestial Master articulation of this "conversion of the barbarians" (*huabu*) polemic, Stephen R. Bokenkamp, *Early Daoist scriptures* (Berkeley, 1997), pp. 169–170.

¹⁰ This is the Dunhuang text S. 2295. See Seidel, *La divinisation*, pp. 58 ff.

microcosm of the individual body and the macrocosm of the larger world became an important Daoist doctrine.¹¹

Zhang Jue attracted people to his movement through healing with talismanic water and confession, and organized his followers into thirty-six administrative regions. The new age of the Yellow Heaven was to dawn in the year 184, the beginning of a new sexagesimal cycle by the Chinese calendar. Despite well-laid plans, news of Zhang Jue's uprising reached the court and the Yellow Turbans were defeated throughout the realm by imperial generals, many of whom subsequently established themselves as regional warlords.

The Celestial Masters revered as founder Zhang Ling (Zhang Daoling in Daoist texts), a man of Pei (in modern Jiangsu Province) who traveled to the kingdom of Shu (the western part of modern Sichuan) to study the Dao on Hemingshan (Mount Crane-Call). Daoist texts record that there, in the year 142 CE, he was visited by the "Newly Appeared Lord Lao," the deified Laozi. Laozi granted him the title "Heavenly [Appointed] Teacher" or Celestial Master.¹² On Ling's death, the title of Celestial Master was passed on to his son Heng, and eventually to his grandson Lu. The claim that this line of transmission continued through the Six Dynasties period is a late legend, dating no earlier than the Tang dynasty. Further, some scholars have suggested that the legends of the first two Celestial Masters were fabrications, since only Zhang Lu is mentioned in non-Daoist historical records.¹³ Whatever the case with Zhang Ling himself, a stele inscription found in the modern province of Sichuan, recording the initiation of a group of libationers, or priests, in 173 CE, attests to the fact that Celestial Master practice existed at that time and already had produced a corpus of scriptures.¹⁴

Historians' descriptions of the Celestial Masters all center on the role of Zhang Lu during the tumultuous years surrounding the fall of the Han

¹¹ See B. J. Mansvelt-Beck, "The date of the *Taiping jing*," *TP* 67 (1980), pp. 149–182; and Barbara Hendrichske, *The Scripture on Great Peace: The Taiping jing and the beginnings of Daoism* (Berkeley, 2006), pp. 31–54.

¹² These texts include the *Commands and Admonitions for Families of the Great Dao* (*Da Dao jia lingjie*), a circular dated 255, and the early fifth-century *Scripture of the Inner Explanations of the Three Heavens* (*Santian neijie jing*), both translated in Bokenkamp, *Early Daoist scriptures*, pp. 149–229. Other early texts include the *Nüqing guilü* (*Spirit Statutes of Lady Blue*), *Dao Zang* (Taipei, 1962) (hereafter *DZ*), Case 63, Fasc. 563, early material collected in various other collections, and "Abridged codes of Master Lu for the Daoist community," translated by Peter Nickerson, in *Religions of China in practice*, ed. Donald S. Lopez, Jr. (Princeton, 1996), pp. 347–359. For an account of these early sources, see Kleeman, "Community," pp. 400–402.

¹³ See Liu Ts'un-yan, "Was Celestial Master Zhang a historical figure?", trans. Benjamin Penny, in *Daoism in history: Essays in honour of Liu Ts'un-yan*, ed. Benjamin Penny (London, 2006), pp. 189–253.

¹⁴ Kleeman, "Community," pp. 95–397.

dynasty.¹⁵ They refer to the movement as the “Way of Five Pecks of Rice” (*wudoumi dao*) or “Rice Bandits” (*mizei*), derogatory terms employed by outsiders. The new governor of the Yi district (western Sichuan), Liu Yan (d. 194), seems to have patronized Zhang Lu’s mother for her knowledge of spirits. Perhaps through her and because one of the bases of the Celestial Masters was in Hanzhong (southern Shaanxi Province), Zhang Lu served Liu as commander of militia (*duyi sima*) and, in 190, was dispatched to invade Hanzhong. Accompanying him was another commander, Zhang Xiu, who, according to Yu Huan’s *Dianlüe*, was a Celestial Master leader of Hanzhong who had risen in rebellion.¹⁶ According to the historian Chen Shou (233–297), once they had succeeded and executed the governor, Zhang Lu murdered Zhang Xiu and, incorporating Xiu’s followers among his own, continued to occupy Hanzhong. Modern scholars forward various explanations for this event, but the historical record is not clear enough to achieve certainty on the identity of Zhang Xiu or his dealings with Zhang Lu.¹⁷ At his death, Liu Yan was succeeded by his son, Liu Zhang (d. 220), as governor (*mu*) of Yizhou. Liu Zhang ordered the murder of Zhang Lu’s mother and family members on the ground that Lu had disobeyed him. At this, some of Zhang Lu’s followers suggested that he declare himself king, but others in his entourage argued against this step.

The Hanzhong valley had a strategically advantageous geography and the Celestial Master community enjoyed a relatively peaceful existence during the turmoil that inaugurated the Three Kingdoms period. In 215 CE, Cao Cao (155–220), the Han warlord whose son was to inaugurate the Three Kingdoms’ Wei dynasty (220–265), attacked Hanzhong. While some of his followers resisted, Zhang Lu led the majority in surrender. As a result of this act of fealty, a large portion of the Celestial Master community was relocated from Hanzhong to areas farther north, while many of its leaders were enfeoffed or otherwise ennobled. Some followers doubtless remained in Sichuan, giving Celestial Master Daoism a wide geographical presence. The spread of Daoism throughout China as a whole begins with this diaspora of the original Celestial Master community.

¹⁵ Early accounts of the Celestial Masters appear in the following sources: Yu Huan’s (fl. 220–232) *Dianlüe*, cited by Pei Songzhi’s (372–451) commentary to Chen Shou’s (233–297) *Sanguozhi*; the *Hou Hanshu* compiled by Fan Ye (398–445), and Chang Qu’s (c. 291–c. 361) *Huayangguo zhi*. For a judicious weighing of these sources, see Kleeman, “Celestial Masters,” pp. 211–110.

¹⁶ SGZ 8.264.

¹⁷ The best explanation is that provided by Kleeman, *Celestial Masters*, pp. 28–38. He provides evidence that Zhang Xiu was a religious leader, unassociated with the Celestial Masters, who was responsible for killing the governor and his retinue on the orders of Liu Yan. Historians reported the involvement of the Celestial Masters, he hypothesizes, on the basis of a report of the incident sent by Liu Yan.

Before seeking shelter in the Hanzhong valley, the Celestial Masters had divided their followers into twenty-four parishes or dioceses, each headed by a libationer. Women and non-Han peoples were welcomed as full members of the Celestial Masters community. Both could serve as libationers, and men were encouraged to emulate virtues specifically associated with women.¹⁸ This doctrine was derived from the ancient text supposedly written by Laozi, the *Daode jing*, which was to be recited chorally so that even the illiterate could be instructed. The *Xiang'er* commentary to the *Daode jing*, attributed to Zhang Lu and partially surviving in a Tang dynasty manuscript recovered from Dunhuang, attests to the novel ways in which they interpreted the text.¹⁹

The Celestial Masters called their religion the “Correct and Orthodox Covenant with the Powers” (*zhengyi mengwei dao*). They distinguished their practice from that of local cults and imperial sacrificial practice with the credo “the gods do not eat or drink, the master does not accept money.” This stricture, as clarified in the *Xiang'er* commentary, mandates the rejection of blood sacrifice, which they held to be “commerce with deviant forces.”²⁰ In place of deified heroes who might be influenced by offerings, the Celestial Masters revered gods who were pure emanations of the Dao and subsisted only on *qi*, “breaths, pneumas.” Agents of this unseen bureaucracy resided even in the human body and so could not be deceived. The gods of the celestial bureaucracy would be moved only by good deeds or ritually presented petitions of contrition. These deities kept detailed records of each person’s merits and demerits that they reported to Heaven, which, according to the *Xiang'er* commentary, investigated wrongdoing in a fashion “more thoroughgoing than that of any human being.”²¹

The Celestial Masters cured illness with confession and the ingestion of talismanic water. The ill were to confess their transgressions in structures called “chambers of quietude” (*jingshe*) and to forward the necessary written petitions to the offices of Heaven, Earth, and Water. Three times a year—the seventh of the first month, the seventh of the seventh month, and the fifth of the tenth month by the lunar calendar—people were to assemble at their

¹⁸ For instance, the early Celestial Master *Xiang'er* commentary to the *Laozi* seems to speak of more than sexual practice when it states “The ‘feminine’ is earth. The nature of its body is stable. Women are patterned on it; therefore [their sexual organs] do not become rigid. If a man wishes to congeal his essences he should mentally pattern himself on earth and be like a woman. He should not work to give himself priority.” Bokenkamp, *Early Daoist scriptures*, p. 83.

¹⁹ Translated in Bokenkamp, *Early Daoist scriptures*, pp. 29–148.

²⁰ Bokenkamp, *Early Daoist scriptures*, pp. 119–120. On the way in which meat sacrifice, which was shared by the community who performed the sacrifice, was held to be imbued with the power of the sacrificial recipient, see Terry Kleeman, “Licentious cults and bloody victuals: Sacrifice, reciprocity, and violence in traditional China,” *AM*, 3rd series 7.1 (1994), p. 189, n. 15.

²¹ Bokenkamp, *Early Daoist scriptures*, p. 108.

assigned parish. There, libationers would verify records of death and birth, and communal meals would be held. On this occasion, members of the community were to present a good-faith offering of five pecks of rice. This was the reason for outsiders' name for the community, the "Way of the Five Pecks of Rice" or, in less favorable sources "the Rice Bandits," mentioned above. Beyond these offerings, the community was enjoined to perform acts of merit, such as building roads and providing free food for refugees.

Libationers were also responsible for bestowing on the faithful registers recording the number of transcendent "generals," residents of their own bodies, that they were empowered to summon and control. Children of six years of age received a register with one general. By marriageable age, initiates could receive registers listing seventy-five generals, a number that they could double by performing the Celestial Master sexual ritual.²² This initiation ritual, known as "merging *qi* (pneumas)" (*heqi*), included instruction in a precise method of intercourse that could replenish the bodily forces of male and female participants, normally deficient in *yin* and *yang qi* respectively, without the exchange of bodily fluids that led to reproduction. As the *Xiang'er* commentary explains, the Dao wishes people to reproduce, but not to squander their vital energies. Later reformers were to criticize and rectify this practice, which was considered "lascivious" by outsiders.²³

A circular found in a later collection of early Celestial Master documents, the *Commands and Admonitions for the Family of the Great Dao* (*Da Dao jia lingjie*), dates to the first of the three yearly assemblies in 255 and gives us some idea of the disorganization into which the religion fell under the Wei Kingdom. Delivered in the voice of Zhang Lu, who had doubtless died by that time, the circular warns the community of the impending fall of the dynasty and excoriates them for lapses in practice. While the Wei had honored the original leaders of the Celestial Masters community of Hanzhong with high rank and emoluments, the Wei itself was now on the verge of falling. All of this was seen as the result of human misdeed and failure to follow the precepts of the Dao, a common theme throughout the early days of the movement. By this time, the original system of twenty-four parishes had fallen into disarray. Parish officials were not appointed according to the spiritual sanction that had been in place before; some positions remained unfilled; and in others, incompetent officials did not even know how to properly submit petitions to the celestial bureaucracy. Further, a number of texts bearing distinctive new features, including the important *Scripture of the*

²² Kristofer M. Schipper, "The Taoist body," *HR* 17 (1978), pp. 355–381.

²³ Gil Raz, "The Way of the Yellow and the Red: Re-examining the sexual initiation rite of Celestial Master Daoism," *NN* 10 (2008), pp. 86–120.

Yellow Court (*Huangting jing*), had come into circulation. The *Scripture of the Yellow Court* provided in verse form meditations for pacifying and unifying the gods of the body, something only alluded to in earlier Celestial Master writings.²⁴

After the formal end of the Wei dynasty in 265 there was a short period of peace before the outbreak of what is known to history as the “Disturbances of the Eight Princes,” a period of fratricidal warfare, famine, and drought that lasted from 291 to 306. It was during the turmoil of this period that a large number of Han and non-Han Celestial Masters adherents returned to Shu (present day western Sichuan) under the leadership of Li Te. Li Xiong, Li Te’s eldest son, founded the kingdom of Grand Cheng (Da Cheng) after first formally offering the throne to the Daoist “Long-lived” Fan. Fan, in turn, confirmed the Mandate of the Li family and was duly honored with the title Grand Master of Heaven and Earth (*tiandi taishi*), a title reminiscent of that held by early leaders of the Celestial Masters. This and other details of Li rule indicate that Da Cheng aspired to become a Daoist theocratic kingdom of the type envisioned by the first Celestial Masters.²⁵

The first enduring reformation of Celestial Master Daoist practice originated with the Daoist Yang Xi (330–386?), who had visions of and received texts from celestial beings between the years 364 and 370.²⁶ The revealing deities presented themselves as higher in status than Transcendents, calling themselves “Perfected Persons” (*zhenren*), and residing in the Heaven of Upper Clarity (*shangqing*, also translated as Higher Purity). Their texts were thus called the Shangqing scriptures.

Yang’s purpose was not to form a new school of Daoism. His revelations were initially circulated among a small group of upper-class Daoists. During this period, Yang worked as a spiritual adviser for the family of Xu Mi (303–373), a minor official of the Jin court. Xu’s residence was in the county of Jurong, just southeast of the Eastern Jin capital Jiankang (modern Nanjing). In addition, certain of the Shangqing revelations were passed to

²⁴ There are now two versions of this scripture, the inner (*Huangting jing neijing jing*) and the outer (*Huangting jing waijing jing*). The latter was the original while the “inner” was a revision probably received in vision by Yang Xi—see below. Kristofer M. Schipper, *Concordance du Houang-t’ing king: Nei-king et Wai-king* (Paris, 1975), pp. 1–11.

²⁵ On this, see Chapter 7 on the Cheng-Han state in this volume; and Kleeman, *Great perfection*.

²⁶ On the Shangqing revelations of Yang Xi, see primarily Strickmann, “The Mao Shan”; *idem*, “On the alchemy of T’ao Hung-ching,” in *Facets of Taoism: Essays in Chinese religion*, ed. Holmes Welch and Anna Seidel (New Haven, 1979), pp. 123–192; and *idem*, *Le taoïsme du Mao chan: Chronique d’une révélation* (Paris, 1981). Also see Isabelle Robinet, *La révélation du Shangqing dans l’histoire du taoïsme* (Paris, 1984); and Isabelle Robinet, Julian F. Pas, and Norman J. Girardot, trans., *Taoist meditation: The Mao-Shan tradition of Great Purity* (Albany, 1993).

Xu Mi's son Hui (341–c. 370), as well as high-ranking officials of the Jin court such as Chi Yin (313–384) and Lu Na (d. 395).

The Shangqing scriptures reconfigured Celestial Master practice for these elite practitioners through more restrictive master–disciple relationships and a tighter focus on psycho-physiological practices for the individual. Some earlier rituals, such as *heqi* practice, were entirely internalized. Yang's disciples were urged to give up *heqi* practice, even with their own wives, to enter into nonphysical union with a goddess, one of the Perfected women who appeared to Yang. This merger could not, of course, be accomplished by gross beings of flesh, so disciples were taught meditations that would refine the spirits of their bodies, in particular the twenty-four “effulgences” or “phosphors” (*jing*) that resided eight in each of the three regions of the body.²⁷ The physical contact thus made possible was called “matching phosphors” (*yujing*).²⁸ As the Perfected could exteriorize their phosphors at will—to form carriages of light that they rode through the cosmos, for instance—it is unknown whether all of the phosphors of each participant were involved in such transactions. The result of such unions was always described in terms of joint excursions into the stars and the like.²⁹

The Perfected who appeared directly to Yang Xi in his midnight visions were fully described in the Shangqing scriptures so that adepts might recognize them in their own visions and dreams. Whether male or female, the Perfected appeared clothed in resplendent garb, described in terms of mists and auroras. They wear tinkling gems at their belt, symbols of their high office in the heavens. We are told that their bodies are formed of the purest pneumas and glow with a celestial radiance as they move about the heavens in chariots of light.

The Shangqing scriptures that were bestowed on Yang described the practices the Perfected themselves employed to remake their bodies through various visualization and breathing practices. The human body, he learned, could be gradually rendered incorruptible, of one substance with the breaths of the cosmos, through visualization of the deities of the body and inducting into the body the *qi* of the Sun, Moon, Dipper, and planets in meditations timed to the movements of those celestial bodies. One form the Shangqing scriptures take is that of a biography of one or another of the Perfected, replete with descriptions of the practices associated with that deity. For example, the *Central Scripture of the Nine Perfected* (*Jiuzhen zhongjing*) is preceded by the

²⁷ This grouping of spirits is often called the “eight phosphors in the three registers [of the body]” (*sanyuan bajing*).

²⁸ Strickmann, *Le Taoïsme du Mao Chan*, pp. 188–191.

²⁹ For many lively examples, see Robinet, *Taoist meditation*.

biography of the Central Yellow Ancient Lord (*zhongyang huanglaojun*). The original form of the practice involved visualizing the “great spirit,” the former life that through rebirth entered into the mother’s womb to be “reborn” as the practitioner. This spirit is visualized as inhabiting the spots in the body it took in each of the nine months of gestation, *but in reverse order*, beginning with the heart/mind, through the bones, blood systems, viscera, and ending in the unformed brain.³⁰ The purpose of this meditation, as explained by Tao Hongjing (456–536), was to bring all of the spirits and constituents of the self into alignment so that they remained together after death, whether in a future life or in the heavens.³¹ This reference to rebirth is one of the few borrowings from Buddhism found in the Shangqing texts. Yang Xi also rewrote the classic Buddhist *Scripture in Forty-Two Sections* (*Sishier zhang jing*) as revealed to him by the Buddhists of the east, described as living on the floating isles, Fangzhu, in the eastern seas.³²

One feature of Yang’s revelations that continued the concerns of the Celestial Masters was the belief that the world age was coming to an end, evil persons would be destroyed, and only a saving remnant of humanity would pass over into the new age. This belief is detailed in a section of the *Purple Script Inscribed by the Spirits* (*Lingshu ziwen*), which describes the arrival of Li Hong, Sage of the Latter Heavens. First a weak ruler will be supported by strongmen and “pestilence and flood will wash over them; weapons and fire will circle below them. All the evil will be eradicated at once . . . those who delight in the Dao will hide away.” Then “the Sage Lord will descend and appear to mortals in all his glory,” to conduct an inspection tour of the world.³³ The event is predicted to occur on the forty-sixth *dinghai* 丁亥 year (the twenty-fourth in the sixty-cycle system); that is, 2,700 years after the reign of the Sage-King Yao. In that Yao was a mythical figure, there were various ways of calculating when he ruled. Thus the idea that the world was

³⁰ The early Chinese, like many peoples, held that the heart was the center of cognition and emotion. For Daoists, the head, round like the dome of heaven, was the site of nine palaces inhabited by important deities. See Mark Csikszentmihalyi, “Jiu gong,” in *Encyclopedia of Taoism*, ed. Fabrizio Pregadio, Volume 1 (London, 2008), pp. 590–591.

³¹ For early work on this text, see Isabelle Robinet, “Introduction au *Kieou-tchen tchong-king*,” *BSSCR* 7 (1979), pp. 24–45; and Stephen R. Bokenkamp, “Simple twists of fate? The Daoist body and its *Ming*,” in *The magnitude of Ming: Command, allotment, and fate in Chinese culture*, ed. Christopher Lupke (Honolulu, 2005), pp. 151–168. On Tao Hongjing’s explanation of the ritual and its purposes, see Stephen R. Bokenkamp, “Research note: Buddhism in the writings of Tao Hongjing,” *DRHS* 6 (2014), pp. 253–268.

³² On the Buddhist text, see Robert Sharf, “The Scripture in Forty-Two Sections,” in *Religions of China in practice*, ed. Donald S. Lopez, Jr. (Princeton, 1996), pp. 360–371; and, on the Daoist rewrite, Stephan P. Bumbacher, “A Buddhist sutra’s transformation into a Daoist text,” *AS* 60.4 (2006), pp. 799–831. On the Fangzhu Buddhists, see Bokenkamp, “Research note,” pp. 248–253.

³³ Bokenkamp, *Early Daoist scriptures*, pp. 345–346.

soon to be destroyed and built anew survived throughout the Six Dynasties period and is found in Daoist and Buddhist texts alike.

The imminence of the end times seems to have stimulated the interest of early Shangqing adepts in the practices of operative alchemy. Alchemy was the attempt to mimic and accelerate cosmic processes of flourishing through firing and refining lead, mercury, cinnabar and other substances to create an elixir that, when properly ingested, would perfect the human body and vastly lengthen the years of its existence, either on Earth or, more usually, in the heavens themselves. Such practices were introduced into Celestial Master Daoism in the south of China, but were practiced from at least the Qin dynasty by shadowy practitioners who, according to scattered records, preferred to complete their experiments deep in the mountains.³⁴ The elixir recipes associated with Yang Xi and the Xus are unlike those of earlier traditions in the literary excellence of the descriptions provided by the Perfected and in the number of ingredients required, some quite fantastic. For example, the Fourfold Floriate Elixir (*siyaodan*) required fourteen ingredients, including amber, pearls, and incense.³⁵

Yang Xi's scriptures seem to have become popular as much for their style as for their content. His deities communicate with humans partly in verse that seems to allude to a vast celestial literature only dimly decipherable. His descriptions of shimmering goddesses are lent force through synesthetic effects—sounds are described as colors, colors as sounds, etc.

These scriptures, together with fragmentary transcripts of Yang's revelations, letters and communications between Yang and the Xus were collected by Tao Hongjing. Tao organized the miscellaneous fragments of revelation into a work he titled *Zhen'gao* (*Declarations of the Perfected*) while more technical revelations on ritual and meditation practice he placed into another work meant for practitioners that he entitled *Dengzhen yinjue* (*Secret Instructions on the Ascent to Perfection*). Both works were heavily annotated by Tao and found inclusion in the Daoist canon, although only three of the original twenty-four chapters of the *Secret Instructions* now survive. Tao's annotations reveal the importance to Daoism of the art of calligraphy, some of which imitated the stylized script Yang Xi used in transcribing the words of the Perfected.

³⁴ The best source on these developments and on the creation of the Grand Purity or *taiqing* tradition, as it came to be known, is Fabrizio Pregadio, *Great Clarity: Daoism and alchemy in early medieval China* (Stanford, 2006). For early alchemy and its underlying principles, see Nathan Sivin, *Chinese alchemy: Preliminary studies* (Cambridge, MA, 1968); and Joseph Needham, with Nathan Sivin, "The theoretical background of elixir alchemy," in his *Science and civilisation in China*, Volume 5, *Chemistry and chemical technology*, Part 4, *Spagyric discovery and invention: Apparatus, theories and gifts* (Cambridge, 1980), pp. 210–323.

³⁵ See Strickmann, "On the alchemy of T'ao Hung-ching," pp. 171–173.

Among famous Daoist calligraphers of this period were Wang Xizhi (303–61) and Wang Ningzhi (d. 399).

The second reformation of Celestial Master Daoism occurred not long after the close of Yang Xi's revelations and most likely began with a family related to the Xus by marriage and residing in the same Jurong county. Like the Xus, the Ge family had several ancestors who were renowned as seekers of Transcendence. It was to one of these, Ge Xuan, who was said to have lived around 100 CE, that the release to the world of these scriptures, known as *Lingbao* or *Numinous Treasure*, was traced.

Stimulated by the pioneering researches of Japanese scholars, who came to the study of Daoism from Buddhology and tended to share the dismissive attitudes of medieval Buddhists toward Daoist scripture, modern scholars have often wanted to discount the sparse references to Ge Chaofu (c.400), an otherwise unknown grand-nephew of the famous Ge Hong (c.283–c.343), as author of the *Lingbao* texts.³⁶ Ge is said to have passed the scriptures on to two further Daoists whose careers are equally shadowy: Ren Yanqing and Xu Lingqi (?–473 or 474). Nonetheless, in that Ge Xuan is portrayed in the scriptures as receiving the texts from deities, it is likely that the Ge family was closely involved in their creation. Thus, while Ge Chaofu is unlikely to have had a hand in all the scriptures, the references to his authorship cannot be lightly dismissed.

The *Lingbao* scriptures are split into two divisions that correspond to the story of their origins. The first, known collectively as the *Wonderous Scriptures in Ten Sections* (*Shibu miaojing*), was revealed by the highest deity of the scriptures, the Celestial Worthy of Primal Origins (Yuanshi tianzun), many world-ages ago in paradisiacal lands given names that sound like transcriptions of Sanskrit. The second division comprises texts revealed to and featuring Ge Xuan in our own world-age. The distinction is not always maintained and there is perhaps a certain disorder in the placement of scriptures, but generally the tale is adhered to and is repeated in the preface to the scriptures written by Lu Xiujing (406–477), who collected and perhaps augmented the scriptures.³⁷ In the Daoist canon and the Dunhuang manuscripts, we find nineteen scriptures from the first division and eight from the second.³⁸

³⁶ Zhen'gao, *DZ*, Case 72, Fasc. 640, 19.11b; Kristofer Schipper and Franciscus Verellen, eds., *The Taoist canon: A historical companion to the Daozang*, Volume 1 (Chicago, 2004), pp. 198–200, #1016; and *Daojiao yishu*, *DZ*, Case 87, Fasc. 762–763, 2.6b; Schipper and Verellen, *The Taoist canon*, Volume 1, p. 442, #1129.

³⁷ Yunji qiqian, *DZ*, Case 77, Fasc. 677, 4.4a–6a; Schipper, and Verellen, *The Taoist canon*, Volume 1, pp. 943–945, #1032.

³⁸ Stephen R. Bokenkamp, "Sources of the *Ling-pao* scriptures," in *Tantric and Taoist studies in honour of R. A. Stein*, Volume 2, ed. Michel Strickmann (Brussels, 1983), pp. 479–486.

Taken as a whole, the Lingbao scriptures return to the Celestial Master emphasis on ritual, but with additions drawn from popular religious practice, especially the mediumism of southern China, and from Buddhism.³⁹ They also brought Buddhist doctrines, such as notions of sin, purgatories, and rebirth, fully into Daoism for the first time.

Great emphasis is placed in the Lingbao scriptures on communal rituals known as *zhai* (Fast, Retreat) for healing, the salvation of the dead, and the alleviation of disaster. Lu Xiuqing lists the following Lingbao retreats: (1) the Golden Register Retreat (*jinlu*) for the protection of the emperor and the harmony of cosmic forces; (2) the Yellow Register Retreat (*huanglu*) for erasing the sins of dead ancestors; (3) the Retreat of the Luminous Perfected (*mingzhen*) for releasing the dead from the purgatories known as “earth-prisons” (*diyu*); (4) the Retreat of the Three Primes (*sanyuan*) for the thrice-yearly remission of sins; (5) the Retreat of the Eight Nodes (*ba jie*) for confession on the solstices, equinoxes, and opening days of each season; (6) the Retreat of the Self-Actualized (*ziran*) for the perfection of self and alignment with the Dao; (7) the Retreat of the Eight Resplendent Ones (*ba huang*), a ritual of purification emphasizing the burning of incense and candles; (8) the Retreat of Grand Unity (*Taiyi*) for praise and reverence; (9) the Retreat of Instruction (*zhijiao*) emphasizing moral purity; and (10) the Retreat of Mud and Ash (*tutan*) for the Three Primes, a scapegoat ritual for passing merit to ancestors in the earth-prisons.⁴⁰ The overlapping range and frequency of these retreats gives some idea of the importance of salvific ritual to Lingbao practitioners.

The earliest historical records concerning Lingbao Daoist practice all feature these rituals. Lu Xiuqing’s introduction to his catalogue of the Lingbao scriptures was addressed to his fellow religious practitioners and dated 437, about a decade after he began collecting the scriptures.⁴¹ His emphasis in this document is on the scriptures as an invaluable source for proper practice. Some seven years later, building on scattered transmission records from the scriptures themselves, Lu composed his own ritual script for Lingbao ordinations.⁴² According to Ma Shu (522–588), Lu engaged in debates with Buddhists, arguing for the identity of the two religions, perhaps in accord with the *huabu* story.⁴³

³⁹ Lü Pengzhi, *Tang qian daojiao yishi shigang* (Beijing, 2008).

⁴⁰ John Lagerwey, “Canonical fasts according to Lu Xiuqing,” in *Affiliation and transmission in Daoism: A Berlin symposium*, ed. Florian C. Reiter (Wiesbaden, 2012), pp. 41–80.

⁴¹ Ōfuchi Ninji, *Shoki no dōkyō: dōkyōshi no kenkyū, sono ichi* (Tokyo, 1991), p. 71. The introduction is collected in the *Yunji qiqian*; see note 37 above.

⁴² *Taishang dongxuan lingbao shoudu yi*, DZ, Case 35, Fasc. 294; Schipper and Verellen, *The Taoist canon*, Volume 1, pp. 255–257, #528.

⁴³ Stephen R. Bokenkamp, “Lu Xiuqing, Buddhism, and the first Daoist canon,” in *Culture and power in the reconstitution of the Chinese realm, 200–600*, ed. Scott Pearce, Audrey Spiro, and Patricia Ebrey (Cambridge, MA, 2001), pp. 181–199. For the bibliographic problems surrounding the work attributed

Sometime during the 450s and 460s, Lu came to the attention of the emperor, who provided him with a sanctuary named Venerating the Void Hall (Chongxu guan) in the northern precincts of the capital. It was here that Lu in 471 performed the Retreat of the Three Primes for Liu Yu, the ailing Emperor Ming of the Song (r. 465–472), and received the celestial confirmation of yellow *qi* that rose up in front of the ritual hall and transformed itself into a cloud of five colors. This augury and the recovery of the emperor earned Lu the first positive mention of Daoism in the official histories.⁴⁴ The only other official mention of Lu records that he gave a white egret-feather fan to Zhang Rong (444–497) with the words “this is a remarkable object for a remarkable man.”⁴⁵

In 471 Lu also submitted to the throne a catalogue of Daoist scriptures, thus inaugurating the practice of imperial canon collection. His organization of the canon into three “comprehensive” collections (*dong*) survived until the last collection of the canon during the Ming. The three sections are: (1) *dongzhen*, Comprehending Perfection, which comprises Shangqing scriptures; (2) *dongxuan*, Comprehending the Mysteries, for the Lingbao scriptures; and (3) *dongsben*, Comprehending the Spirits, a small section reserved for the scriptures associated with the *Writs of the Three Luminaries* (*Sanhuang wen*). The contents of this last section of the canon are unclear since we lack a list of the texts that Lu Xiuqing included. The *Writs of the Three Luminaries* seems to have been an early text emanating from southern Transcendent cults that emphasized the visualization of gods and the ingestion of herbal drugs associated with the Three Luminaries, gods of Heaven, Earth, and Humanity. A “newer” version was said to have been discovered in a cave by Ge Hong’s father-in-law Bao Jing (260–c. 330). Most of these texts spoke of the Grand Purity (*taiqing*) heavens as the ultimate goal, as did alchemical texts. Alchemical texts were thus also likely included in this section. The convoluted textual history of this section of the canon, the scriptures of which were proscribed and burned by imperial order in 646, when they were replaced by commentaries on the *Daode jing*, has only been tentatively worked out.⁴⁶

to Ma Shu, see Stephen Peter Bumbacher, *The fragments of the Daoxue zhuan: A critical edition, translation, and analysis of a medieval collection of Daoist biographies* (Frankfurt am Main, 2000), pp. 9–40.

⁴⁴ *SōS* 3.836–837. ⁴⁵ *NQS* 41.721.

⁴⁶ Schipper and Verellen, *The Taoist canon*, Volume 1, pp. 260–269. Fragments probably dating to the earliest recensions of the text are discussed in Poul Andersen, “Talking to the gods: Visionary divination in early Taoism (the Sanhuang tradition),” *TR* 5.1 (1994), pp. 1–24; and Gil Raz, “Ritual and cosmology: Transformations of the ritual for the Eight Archivists” (MA thesis, Indiana University, 1996). See also Dominic Steavu-Balint, “The Three Sovereigns tradition: Talismans, elixirs, and meditation in early medieval China” (PhD dissertation, Stanford University, 2010).

We should also note that in Western works, the “three caverns,” as I shall continue to call them, are commonly rendered “Cavern of Perfection,” “Cavern of Mystery,” and “Cavern of Spirit.”⁴⁷ All surviving explanations, however, beginning with that of the early commentator on the Scripture of Salvation, one of the most important of the Lingbao scriptures, read the compound differently.⁴⁸ In that work, Yan Dong (fl. 485) and the rest read *dong* 洞 verbally in these names and glossed it as *tong* 通, “to penetrate, comprehend.”⁴⁹ We should thus read “Comprehending Perfection” and so on. Aspects of this canon organization have incited scholarly controversy. First, why did Lu Xiuqing, while identifying himself as a Celestial Master Daoist, not include a section of the canon for Celestial Master writings? The answer is that Lu, who identified himself as “Disciple of the Three Comprehensives,” most likely believed that the Shangqing, Lingbao, and Sanhuang texts in some fashion superseded earlier writings, which, at any rate, comprised mainly talismans, registers, ritual scripts, and rules of conduct.⁵⁰ Second, given what we know of Lu Xiuqing’s involvement with the Lingbao scriptures, why were the Shangqing scriptures given first place? In fact, both of these questions presuppose a modern, Western view of religious organization emphasizing doctrinal differences and sects that has little to do with how religion functioned in Six Dynasties China. Schipper argues that the tripartite division represents “1) the individual mystical search for transcendence, 2) the liturgical celebration of the mystery, and 3) the worship of deities, saints, and ancestors.” This is no doubt true, but, as Schipper also notes, the organization of the canon is based on the cosmogony of the three breaths that produced the true (or “perfect,” *zhen*) scripts underlying all creation.⁵¹ The three breaths are organized in hierarchical fashion, from highest to lowest, and associated with the three mutually influencing realms, Heaven–Human–Earth. The central division, associated in the three-caverns formulation with humans and thus most appropriate for the present needs of humanity, takes precedence over the celestial and the earthly. There is some indication that proponents of the Lingbao scriptures in fact saw the

⁴⁷ See Judith M. Boltz, “*Sandong*,” in *Encyclopedia of Taoism*, ed. Pregadio, Volume 1, pp. 33–35; and Kristofer M. Schipper, “General Introduction,” in *The Taoist canon*, ed. Schipper and Verellen, Volume 1, pp. 14–17.

⁴⁸ For a translation and study of the Scripture of Salvation, see Bokenkamp, *Early Daoist scriptures*, pp. 373–438.

⁴⁹ *Yuanshi wuliang duren shangpin miaojing si zhu*, DZ, Case 5, Fasc. 38, 2.2a; Schipper and Verellen, eds., *The Taoist canon*, Volume 2, p. 712, #87. Yan Dong also glosses *dong* as *ming* 明, “to make clear.” See also 1.1b, and *Yunji qiqian*, DZ, Case 77, Fasc. 677, 6.1a.

⁵⁰ Schipper argues that the Celestial Masters already had a canon, the *Zhengyi fawen*. See Schipper, “General Introduction,” pp. 16–17, but Lu does not mention this collection.

⁵¹ Schipper, “General Introduction,” pp. 11–17.

Shangqing texts as of highest holiness, meant primarily for celestial use, and thus inappropriate for wide dissemination among humans.⁵²

A third, unanswerable question is how these scriptures were put into practice. We have prescriptive descriptions, but, as mentioned at the outset, little in the way of reportage, even on the activities of priests. By the Tang dynasty, at the latest, a hierarchy of transmission had been worked out, so that Daoist priests received the texts and registers of Celestial Master Daoism before being ordained in the scriptures of the Three Caverns in ascending order—*dongshen*, *dongxuan*, *dongzhen*. We have no records, beyond those that make clear that recipients of the Shangqing and Lingbao scriptures were not to practice the merging of pneumas or practice ritual with those who did, to indicate that these scriptural dispensations were ever seen as exclusive. Given the nature of Chinese religion, it is most likely that practitioners would adhere to a variety of practices including, sometimes, those emanating from what we today might see as incompatible scriptural traditions, including even Buddhism. Recent work on religious groups that erected steles as acts of merit for their ancestors indicates that lived religious practice, sometimes including elements of both Buddhism and Daoism, was very different from the doctrinal orthodoxies we find prescribed in scriptural evidence.⁵³

Lu was not the only Daoist who sought the support of the Liu-Song dynasty. The *Scripture of the Scripture of the Inner Explanations of the Three Heavens* (*Santian neijie jing*) was presented to the throne by a man known only by his surname and title, “Xu, Disciple of the Three Heavens.” The scripture, composed between 417 and 420, puts forward the appearance of the Lingbao scriptures as a powerful portent in support of Liu Yu (356/363–422), the Jin general who turned his success in retaking Chang’an in 417 into the Mandate to found his own dynasty, the Liu-Song. But the scripture does more. It recounts the cosmic origins of Buddhism, Celestial Master Daoism, and the mediumistic religions of the South.⁵⁴ It narrates that, in 157, Zhang Daoling went to the Han court and made a covenant with the emperor “sealed with the blood of

⁵² Bokenkamp, “Lu Xiuqing,” pp. 188–189.

⁵³ Gil Raz, “Lineages, schools, or communities of practice: Buddho-Daoist stelae of the Northern Dynasties and the lived religion of local communities,” paper presented at the Fourth Daoist Studies Japan–American Conference, Pacific Lutheran University, Tacoma, Washington, March 30, 2016.

⁵⁴ Ursula-Angelika Cedzich, “*Santian neijie jing*,” in *The Taoist canon*, ed. Schipper and Verellen, Volume 1, pp. 125–126, holds that the “Great Way of the Pure Covenant” (*Qingyue dadao*) must refer to the Celestial Masters, since they hold to the *mengwei* “covenant with the Powers.” But the text is critical, reading “in Chu and Yue, the *qi* of yin and yang are thin, so he caused them to serve the way of the Pure Covenant” (Bokenkamp, *Early Daoist scriptures*, p. 209). It seems unlikely that a text tracing the origin of the Celestial Masters to Zhang Daoling’s activities in Sichuan would give the cosmic cause of the religion as lying farther to the east.

a white horse and with an iron tally inscribed with cinnabar as verification.”⁵⁵ This legend of a contract between the Han ruling house and the Celestial Masters is a clear sign that Daoists desired the same relationship with Liu Yu, who counted himself the thirty-second-generation heir of the Han founder.

Celestial Master Daoism could also serve as an ideology for rebel movements.⁵⁶ In 398, Sun En (?–402), a descendant of the Three Kingdoms Wu ruling family, joined his uncle Sun Tai in planning rebellion. When Sun Tai was executed, Sun En escaped. After several notable victories, Sun En committed suicide in 402, though the uprising, led by one Lu Xun, continued for at least another eight years. It was defeated by the general Liu Yu who founded the Liu-Song dynasty. While the details of their religious innovations are unclear, the rebels are said to have been Celestial Master adherents. Sun called his followers “the Long-Lived” and taught “merging of *qi*” sexual rites.⁵⁷

At roughly the same time that Lu was working to spread liturgical Daoist practices among the court and aristocracy of the southern Liu-Song dynasty, another reformer was working, with the help of an influential minister, to make Daoism the official religion of the Northern Wei dynasty (386–534). He succeeded to such an extent that Richard B. Mather, with justification, calls the period of Kou Qianzhi’s (365–448) ascendancy, between 425 and his death in 448, a “Daoist theocracy.”⁵⁸ Members of an official family, Kou Qianzhi and his brother Zanzhi (363–452) in 417 helped restore order after the sack of Chang’an by Liu Yu. But Kou devoted himself to Celestial Master Daoist practice, studying with the Master Chenggong Xing, who had been a disciple of a monk who had collaborated with the renowned translator of Buddhist texts, Kumārajīva. The precise nature of Chenggong’s teachings is not known, but Kou apparently learned from him mathematics, medicine, and a striking style of calligraphy.⁵⁹

⁵⁵ Bokenkamp, *Early Daoist scriptures*, p. 216.

⁵⁶ Some scholars see Sun Tai, Sun En, and their followers as practitioners of a heterodox form of Celestial Master Daoism, since those who opposed them were also Celestial Master adherents. See Miyakawa Hisayuki, “Local cults around Mount Lu at the time of Sun En’s rebellion,” in *Facets of Taoism*, ed. Welch and Seidel, pp. 83–101.

⁵⁷ Miyakawa Hisayuki, “Sun On, Ro Jun no ran ni tsuite,” *Tōyōshi kenkyū* 30.2–3 (1971), pp. 1–30; Werner Eichhorn, “Description of the rebellion of Sun En and earlier Taoist rebellions,” *MIO* 2 (1954), pp. 325–352; Chi-tim Lai, “Daoism and political rebellion during the Eastern Jin dynasty,” in *Politics and religion in ancient and medieval Europe and China*, ed. Frederick Hok-ming Cheung and Ming-qi Lai (Hong Kong, 1999), pp. 77–100; and Grégoire Espeset, “Sun En,” in *Encyclopedia of Taoism*, ed. Pregadio, Volume 2, pp. 924–925.

⁵⁸ Richard B. Mather, “K’ou Ch’ien-chih and the Taoist theocracy at the Northern Wei court, 425–451,” in *Facets of Taoism*, ed. Welch and Seidel, pp. 103–122.

⁵⁹ Mather, “K’ou Ch’ien-chih,” p. 112.

While practicing Daoism on Mount Song, in 415 Kou Qianzhi received a text in twenty chapters entitled *Precepts of a New Code to be Chanted to the Melody "Within the Clouds"* (*Yunzhong yinsong xinke zhi jie*) from the deified Laozi. Then, in 423, the great grandson of Lord Lao, Li Puwen, appeared to him to announce that Kou had been awarded the position of Celestial Master, succeeding the Zhang family. In addition, he was given the outlines of an ecclesiastical organization, a text in sixty chapters entitled *True Scripture of Registers and Charts* (*Lutu zhenjing*), and instructed to present these books as heavenly confirmation of the Mandate of the Northern Wei ruler who was granted the title "Perfect Lord of Great Peace" (*taishang zhenjun*).⁶⁰

Kou Qianzhi wasted no time in taking his revelations to the capital at Pingcheng, where he met Minister Cui Hao (381–450), who would become his principal disciple and promoter. Through Cui, Kou was introduced to the emperor, who declared him officially the successor to Zhang Lu as Celestial Master and caused his *New Code* to be promulgated and Daoist ritual stages to be set up throughout the realm. Through the strategic insights of Cui Hao, the Northern Wei simultaneously accomplished some military success against surrounding kingdoms. Two incidents demonstrate the extent to which Daoism became a state religion. In 442, the emperor personally received talismanic registers of Daoist investiture, a practice that was continued by the next two emperors of the Northern Wei. Then, in 444 and again in 446, proscriptions were issued against mediums, sorcerers, and, more seriously, Buddhist monks. This order was rescinded by the next emperor, Wencheng (r. 452–465), bringing the Daoist theocracy to an end.

From the massive textual revelation accorded Kou Qianzhi, all that survives today is one chapter of the *New Code*, entitled "Lord Lao's Scripture of Chanted Precepts."⁶¹ Despite its brevity, we are able to judge from it some of Kou's reformations. First, there is a clear desire to end the power of hereditary libationers. He abolished the twenty-four parishes and mandated that libationers should instead affiliate their parish with the twenty-eight lunar lodgings, seven spots transited by the Moon each month in each of the four cardinal directions. Second, he abolished the rites of sexual union known as "merging pneumas" (*heqi*). Third, various rituals, such as the communal banquets, mortuary rites, and healing rituals, were simplified and regulated. Finally, in line with his support of the Northern Wei, Kou criticized sharply the apocalyptic and messianic tendencies of some Daoist groups, naming in particular the *Sanmei shenzhou jing* (*Scripture of the Divine Spells of Samādhi*).

⁶⁰ WS 114.3050–3051.

⁶¹ *Laojun yinsong jie jing*, DZ, Case 63, Fasc. 562; *The Taoist canon*, ed. Schipper and Verellen, Volume 1, pp. 125–126, #785.

Kou Qianzhi's concern that the scriptures of Daoism and the image of Li Hong might be used to overthrow unwanted kingdoms as well as to support rising dynasties was not fantasy. While we do not have evidence that the Sun En rebellion had invoked Li Hong, several surviving Daoist scriptures do refer to him. These seem to have been used not only to provide confirmation of divine sanction for a regime, but also to justify rebellion against the previous regime and to attract followers. Two apocalyptic scriptures composed during the fifth century fit this category. The *Taishang Lingbao tiandi yundu ziran miaojing* (*Most High Lingbao Self-Actualizing Scripture on the Revolutions of Heaven and Earth*) takes the name of one of the unrevealed Lingbao scriptures. It begins like a normal text on Daoist cosmology, but buries its message in ten obscure verses that prophesize the end of the "golden horse" era, likely to be equated with the Sima rulers of the Jin (265–420) and the fall of the northern homeland to the "old moon," which may be an elliptical reference to *hu* 胡, a character made up of those for "old" and "moon." *Hu* is a general term for the tribes beyond the borders with whom the Chinese often were at war. What follows seems to be instructions concerning places where one might find safety or assemble to join forces with others. For example, one pair of couplets might be translated "On the *renwu* 壬午 [day?] go to the southern Marchmount, where *yin* will be made *yang*. In Yangzhou [= Jiangsu] you can transcend the generation. At that time you should chant the *Stanzas for Giving Birth to the Spirits* [*Shengshen yuzhangjing*]." The latter is one of the Lingbao texts and the chanting of it might be meant as a sign of recognition, but the exact meaning of such directions was clear only to the properly instructed. Deniability would, of course, be the point of hiding messages in a religious scripture.

Another scripture mentioned with approval in the above-cited *Self-Actualizing Scripture on the Revolutions of Heaven and Earth*, entitled the *Most High Spirit Spells Penetrating the Abyss* (*Taishang dongyuan shenzhou jing*), also known as the *Scripture of the Divine Spells of Samādhi*, cited above, seems to represent a larger eschatological movement.⁶² Apparently the product of mediumistic revelations, the work refers to the founding of the Liu-Song dynasty and appears to have been composed in southern China early in the fifth century.⁶³ It also bears elements deriving from the original Lingbao scriptures. But the *Spirit Spells* presents itself as the ultimate divine knowledge that will save humans from the impending end of the world. The text describes in horrifying and sometimes mind-numbing detail the floods, drought,

⁶² *Taishang dongyuan shenzhou jing*, Case 35, Fasc. 563; *The Taoist canon*, ed. Schipper and Verellen, #335. The scripture is now twenty chapters in length, but only the first ten date to the Six Dynasties period. There are also many Dunhuang copies of these texts.

⁶³ Christine Mollier, *Une apocalypse taoïste du ve siècle: le livre des incantations divines des grottes abyssales* (Paris, 1990), is the most complete study of this scripture.

illness, warfare, and sorcery brought upon the people by hordes of demons and ghost generals, mostly the souls of the dead. Those who wish to survive the catastrophes of the end-times and become the first citizens of a new Heaven and Earth as seed peoples should copy and recite the text as well as invite the ritual services of the “Ritual Masters of the Three Caverns” (*sandong fashi*).

Early in his reign, Xiao Yan, the Martial Emperor of the Liang, (r. 502–549), despite the fact that his family had practiced Daoism for generations, banned the religion in favor of Buddhism. We have had occasion to mention Tao Hongjing’s role in the collection and preservation of the Shangqing scriptures produced by Yang Xi, but that did not exhaust his contributions. During a time when Daoism was proscribed, Tao was able to maintain good relations with the emperor, who desired from Tao drugs of longevity, and to oversee a flourishing Daoist establishment on Mount Mao. While a devoted partisan of Shangqing Daoist practices, Tao was well versed in Buddhism, pointing out areas where the goals and practices of the two religions were similar. He also built a pagoda on Mount Mao and had Buddhist ritual conducted there.⁶⁴ At the same time, Tao’s account of the distribution of Shangqing scriptures and manuscripts during the fifth century attests to the existence of flourishing Daoist communities. Many of the figures mentioned by Tao came from prominent families and had taken refuge in the eastern and coastal areas (present-day Zhejiang province). While practitioners such as Chu Boyu (394–479), Lou Huiming, and Du Jingchan (436–499) are treated in standard histories as traditional recluses, they were Daoist practitioners from elite families, possessing their own scripture storehouses, oratories, and in some cases disciples.⁶⁵ In addition to his work on the Shangqing fragments from the hand of Yang and the Xus, Tao collected and annotated the transcripts of the visitations, some by the same deities who appeared to Yang, secretly accorded his own young disciple, Zhou Ziliang (498–516). The resulting work, *Master Zhou’s Communications with the Unseen* (*Zhoushi mingtong ji*), like the *Declarations of the Perfected*, provides intimate glimpses into Daoism in the daily life of a family.

We know little about the fate of Daoism in the Northern Dynasties in the aftermath of Kou Qianzhi’s Daoist theocracy in 452 and until the reign of the Northern Zhou’s Emperor Wu (r. 560–578). While subsequent northern emperors, beginning with the Wencheng emperor of the Northern Wei (r. 452–465), tended to favor Buddhism, Daoist priests undoubtedly remained

⁶⁴ Michel Strickmann, “Mao Shan,” p. 471. See also Wang Jiakui, *Tao Hongjing congkao* (Ji’nan, 2003), pp. 30–33.

⁶⁵ These figures are treated in the *NQS* 54.926–946; and by Tao Hongjing in *Daoshu*, *DZ*, Case 73, Fasc. 641–645, 19.14b–20.4b; *The Taoist canon*, ed. Schipper and Verellen, Volume 2, pp. 780–781, 1017.

active at the local level. Given the imperfect projection of imperial power to localities distant from the capital, it is even likely that Celestial Master Daoist activities continued undisturbed. This supposition finds support in the over fifty Daoist devotional steles that have been discovered in the North, dating from the late fifth century down to the beginning of the Sui dynasty.⁶⁶ One of the steles, composed in 496 by Yao Boduo, who claimed descent from the founder of the Later Qin dynasty (384–417), although dedicated to the deified Laozi, bears traces of Lingbao religiosity. This shows the speed with which religious doctrine flowed across seemingly impermeable boundaries, while at the same time demonstrating the equal permeability of what modern scholars have sometimes seen as clear sectarian boundaries within Daoism.⁶⁷

Some scholars have attempted to use legends surrounding the Daoist abbey Louguan to reconstruct the “Northern Celestial Masters” Daoism of this period. This edifice, in the Zhongnan mountains south of Chang’an (present-day Xi’an) came to be seen as the location of the pass through which Laozi left the central kingdom on his journey to the West. Here the gatekeeper Yin Xi was said to have delayed the sage just long enough for him to compose the *Daode jing*. The earliest solid evidence concerning Louguan dates, however, to the latter half of the sixth century.⁶⁸ Since the Tang ruling family claimed descent from Laozi, it was convenient for them to have an ancient site associated with him near their capital.⁶⁹ It is thus unlikely that the “chronicles” that survive only in citation, and that report an illustrious history for the site, can provide reliable information on what happened here during the course of the Six Dynasties.

But we do possess early information on a nearby Daoist institution, the Abbey of the Pervasive Dao (*Tongdao guan*), that was founded by Yuwen Yong, the Martial Emperor of the Northern Zhou (r. 561–578), at the foot of the Zhongnan mountains. The most renowned of those who resided there were the “Ten Elders of Tiangu” (*tiangu shilao*) including Yan Da (514–609), Wang Yan (520–604), and Yu Changwen. Yu Changwen and Yan Da are recorded in Daoist sources as having served a master from Louguan. This group of Daoists would come to play an important role in the development of Daoism.

⁶⁶ Zhang Xunliao, “Daoist stelae of the Northern Dynasties,” in *Early Chinese religion*, Part 2, *The Period of Division* (220–589 AD), Volume 1, ed. John Lagerwey and Lü Pengzhi (Leiden, 2010), pp. 437–543.

⁶⁷ For a clear statement on this problem, see Angelika Cedzich, “Review article: *Early Daoist scriptures*,” *JCR* 28 (2000), pp. 165–171. For the seamless intermingling of Daoist and Buddhist elements in these monuments, see Raz, “Lineages, schools, or communities of practice.”

⁶⁸ On Louguan, see Livia Kohn, “The Northern Celestial Masters,” in *idem*, ed., *Daoism handbook*, Volume 1 (Leiden, 2000), pp. 283–287.

⁶⁹ Vincent Goosaert, “Louguan,” in *Encyclopedia of Taoism*, ed. Pregadio, Volume 1, pp. 708–709.

The Emperor Yuwen Yong, originally partial to Buddhism, was convinced by the Daoist Zhang Bin and an apostate monk, Wei Yuansong, that the brevity of the Qi and Liang dynasties was retraceable to the Buddhist faith of their leaders. As a result, beginning in 568 Yuwen Yong scheduled a series of debates between Buddhists and Daoists and, according to Buddhist sources, arranged for the compilation of the *Index of Scriptures [of the Abbey] of the Mysterious Metropolis (Xuandu [guan] jingmu)*. The abbey was a Daoist institution in the capital that was to become the center for the emperor's unification of all three teachings under a new religious orthodoxy built under the ranking determined by the debates—Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism. While the emperor ordered the laicization of both Daoist and Buddhist monks in a decree of 574, he allowed the Abbey of the Pervasive Dao, as well as Daoist monasteries on the five holy mountains, to remain in operation. There are several indications that he favored Daoism and allowed it to continue in operation. Closely after the proscription, the emperor ordered that all Daoist texts and practices be collected and an annotated *Catalogue of the Scriptures from the Pearl Satchel of the Three Caverns (Sandong zhunang [jingmu])* was prepared. A further indication that the emperor continued to favor Daoism is the fact that he traced his victory over the Northern Qi in 577 to the fact that he had succeeded in wiping out Buddhism.⁷⁰

These proscriptions led to the compilation of two treatises that, despite their polemical nature, have influenced our modern view of Daoism more than they influenced the views of the court. The first, commissioned by the emperor in 570, is the *Essays Deriding the Dao (Xiaodao lun)* of the Zhou official Zhen Luan.⁷¹ When this treatise failed to meet imperial approval and was burnt, a second document, the *Essays on the Two Teachings (Erjiao lun)* was submitted by the Buddhist monk Dao'an. Both documents survive intact. The same cannot be said for the major Daoist project of the period. The *Essentials of the Highest Secrets (Wushang biyao)* is the earliest surviving collectanea of Daoism; unfortunately, only two-thirds of it remain. It was compiled by the Buddhist and Daoist scholars of the Abbey of the Pervasive Dao between 577 and 588. The collection includes a number of chapters devoted to rituals derived primarily from the Lingbao corpus. The *Essentials* also contains a good proportion of citations from the Shangqing corpus. There are no citations of early Celestial Master scriptures. The prevalence of liturgical texts in this collection indicates clearly enough the role of ritual in the new orthodoxy that Yuwen

⁷⁰ Tsukamoto Zenryū, "Hokugi no haibutsu ni tsuite," *Tōbō gakubō* 16 (1948), pp. 29–101, 18 (1950), pp. 78–111; John Lagerwey, *Wu-shang pi-yao: Somme taoïste du VII^e siècle* (Paris, 1981), pp. 1–48.

⁷¹ Livia Kohn, *Laughing at the Tao: Debates among Buddhists and Daoists in medieval China* (Princeton, 1995; paper edn Honolulu, 2009).

Yong hoped to institute in a unified realm. The emphasis on the most recent revelations should, however, be taken only as evidence of their popularity among the literate.

While only two-thirds of the work survive, a Dunhuang manuscript, P. 2861, provides us with a complete table of contents. Of the 120 texts cited in the extant *Essentials*, around seventy still exist, a survival rate much better than that of works not recorded in the work. At the same time, the missing portions, including sections on precepts, deities, and retribution, lead one to suspect that overtly Buddhist elements were purposely expunged as a result of Buddhist critiques. Buddhio-Daoist debates continued into the Tang period and bibliographic records compiled during the period from 713 to 741 indicate that already by that time twenty-eight of its 100 chapters were “lost.” The canonical version of the *Essentials* extant today is missing thirty-three chapters. In that more Buddhist material is often found in Dunhuang Daoist scriptural manuscripts, this purgation of Buddhist elements seems to have been thoroughgoing.

These later canonical revisions obscure what seems to have been a major aspect of the development of the Daoist religion during the Six Dynasties period. While Buddhist sources emphasize the ways Daoist scriptures pilfered doctrines and practices from them, and the elite of the two religions certainly competed bitterly for imperial recognition, Daoists generally treated the foreign religion with condescending tolerance and, whether through competition for believers or through honest attempts to improve spiritual services, continued to reconfigure Buddhism for Daoist use. For example, Gu Huan (fl. 480) is best known as the author of the *Traces of the Perfected* (*Zhenji*) and the *Treatise on the Barbarians and the Chinese* (*Yixia lun*), which is characterized as an “anti-Buddhist polemic.”⁷² Tao Hongjing, as we have seen, was influential in the collection and dissemination of the Shangqing scriptures. Yet both of these Daoist leaders were well educated in and even practiced Buddhism. Gu studied the “Three Treatises” (*Sanlun*) school of Madhyamaka Buddhist thought while Tao took the Bodhisattva vow, maintained a separate Buddhist stupa on Mount Mao, and held services there.⁷³

One area where the two religions came to share both symbolism and doctrine was in the area of cosmology, specifically the apocalyptic view that

⁷² Qing Xitai, *Zhongguo daojiao shi*, Volume 1 (Chengdu, 1996), p. 489.

⁷³ See Timothy Barrett, “Gu Huan,” in *Encyclopedia of Taoism*, ed. Pregadio, Volume 1, pp. 451–452; and Michel Strickmann, “A Taoist confirmation of Liang Wu Ti’s suppression of Taoism,” *JAOS* 98.4 (1978), pp. 471–472.

the cycles of time were coming to a crucial point where Heaven and Earth, as well as the rulers thereof, would be destroyed and renewed. This had long been a theme of Daoism, developing from the Celestial Masters idea of the chosen “seed people” who would populate a new Earth, and extending through the conviction that a savior named Li Hong would descend to separate the righteous from the evil to accomplish the task. During the Six Dynasties period, a number of rulers—Li Xiong of the Great Cheng, Liu Yu of the Liu-Song, and Tuoba Dao of the Northern Wei—portrayed themselves as fulfilling this prophecy.⁷⁴ And, since Daoists early adopted the idea of kalpa cycles to portray the impossibly long cycles of time that had led to this important moment, Buddhists found it easy to write apocalyptic scriptures of their own, introducing new images—the white-robed Maitreya, Buddha of the future, and salvific spells in celestial language—that were eagerly adopted by Daoists.

Millennialism was the vehicle for the ideological, social, and ethical gifts that the Daoist religion was to bequeath to the Tang dynasty whose rulers patronized the religion to a greater extent than had any before. The founders of the Sui dynasty, while favoring Buddhism, also employed Daoist millennial symbolism to the extent that one of their reign names, Kaihuang 開皇 (581–600), was named after a Daoist kalpa period. Yet it was the Tang rulers who discovered in Daoism more thoroughgoing support. Drawing on the image of Li Hong found in the Shangqing scriptures, the founder, Li Yuan (566–635), portrayed himself not only as a descendant of Laozi, but as an avatar of Li Hong. Telling signs of celestial approbation were found in divinely inspired verses from a Daoist spirit and from the brush of the apostate monk Wei Yuansong, who had contributed to the anti-Buddhist polemic of the Northern Zhou in the 570s. These verses foretold the arrival of Li Hong, pointing out that his given name rhymed with the word *hong* 洪, “flood,” clearly a kenning for the given name of Li Yuan.

To conclude that we have come full circle, from Daoism as anodyne to dynastic dissolution to Daoism as tool for dynastic formation, would be to misconstrue the social diffusion and roles of the Daoist religion, whose history is so poorly served by Chinese historiography. By the time of the unifying convulsions of the Sui and Tang dynasties, Daoism had become integral to the self-construction of Chinese civilization. From the new knowledge concerning the names and appearances of the gods inhabiting the interstices and organs of the human body to elaborate descriptions of meditative journeys to the Moon, Sun, and stars, the Chinese imaginary was

⁷⁴ Anna Seidel, “The image of the perfect ruler in early Taoist messianism: Lao-tzu and Li Hung,” *HR* 9 (1969–1970), pp. 216–247.

enriched beyond measure. Further, as the first native translocal religion, Daoism provided a space to explore new patterns of social organization. Even the landscape of China underwent profound transformation. As any survey of the poetry of the late Six Dynasties and Tang would indicate, temples had come to stand as representative of spaces now marked with divine immanence. In all these ways and others that we are only now beginning to comprehend, Daoism was an integral constituent in the development of Chinese culture, thought, and civilization.

POPULAR RELIGION

Robert Ford Company

Any attempt to describe “popular religion” in early medieval China must first come to grips with what the term means. The category has long been contested. Broadly speaking, over the past fifty years popular religion (in China and elsewhere) has been seen in one of five ways. For some, it has comprised the religious practices and understandings of the lower social classes as opposed to those of the elite. For others, it has designated types of phenomena that are widely shared across most levels of society rather than those of narrower scope. (These scholars often prefer the term “common religion.”) For yet others, to study popular religion has meant focusing on religion as carried out in particular places, as opposed to studying translocal ideas or institutions in abstraction from local contexts. For still other writers, to study popular religion is to study religion as it was actually practiced, as opposed to religion as prescribed or religion as official doctrine. And for another group, popular religion is better seen as an arena of conflict and not a bounded entity—but since that seems true of any other sort of religion, it does not help to pinpoint what is distinctive about religion designated as “popular.” In addition to the loose and sometimes overlapping positions just sketched, modern writers have sometimes used the modifier “popular” to signal any practice or notion they deem, in effect, “religion *manquée*,” roughly synonymous with such other (no less problematic) categories as “magic” and “superstition.”¹

¹ See, among many other treatments, Catherine Bell, “Religion and Chinese culture: Toward an assessment of ‘popular religion’,” *HR* 29 (1989), pp. 35–57; Daniel Overmyer, “From ‘feudal superstition’ to ‘popular beliefs’: New directions in mainland Chinese studies of Chinese popular religion,” *CEA* 12 (2001), p. 104, n. 2; Rolf A. Stein, “Religious Taoism and popular religion from the second to seventh centuries,” in *Facets of Taoism*, ed. Holmes Welch and Anna Seidel (New Haven, 1979), p. 54; Patrick J. Geary, “Peasant religion in medieval Europe,” *CEA* 12 (2001), p. 197; William A. Christian Jr., *Local religion in sixteenth-century Spain* (Princeton, 1981), pp. 178–179; Glen Dudbridge, “Tang sources for the study of religious culture: Problems and procedures,” *CEA* 12 (2001), pp. 141–154; Stephen F. Teiser, “Popular religion,” *JAS* 54 (1995), pp. 378–379; Donald Harper, “Contracts with the spirit world in Han

The one constant among these usages is that “popular religion” is defined contrastively, even privatively: it is religion that, whatever else it may be, is not elite, not specialized, not translocal, or not centered on institutionally authorized doctrine. The volume you now hold similarly presupposes that, whatever it might be, “popular religion” was neither state religion, nor Daoism, nor Buddhism, nor Confucianism, but some fifth type of practice. Although there may have been a “popular” (in one or more of the above senses) Buddhism or Daoism in the early medieval period, this volume’s organization implies that there remained residual phenomena not adequately subsumed under those other categories and therefore warranting separate treatment. This is not merely a modern conceit: early medieval texts, too, often constructed traditions or canons of practice they regarded favorably by contrasting them with practices they deemed “vulgar” or “uncouth” (*su* 俗), a term that, in such contexts, connotes merely local, extra-canonical practices outside official control.

Whether these “other” phenomena amounted to a simple congeries of disconnected practices conveniently swept up into a “miscellaneous” category, or perhaps constituted something more coherent—a worldview or habitus spanning multiple practices and locales—is an open question. Many scholars, from the Dutch sinologist Jan Jakob Maria de Groot in his monumental *The religious system of China* (published in six volumes from 1892 to 1910) to Poo Mu-chou in his *In search of personal welfare* (1998), have followed the common practice of characterizing the object of their study as a perduring “system” without, however, considering what this term might imply and thus whether it is here justified.²

Although the three major traditions plus the state ritual system produced most of the texts encountered nowadays in university curricula and have received the lion’s share of scholarly attention, we should not forget that, in terms of the proportion of the population involved and the kinds and levels of their involvement, the sorts of practices and understandings discussed below were vastly more important. If reckoned thus, it is the other traditions, not popular religion, that deserve to be characterized privatively.

common religion: The Xuning prayer and sacrifice documents of A.D. 79,” *CEA* 14 (2004), pp. 229–231; J. J. M. de Groot, *The religious system of China: Its ancient forms, evolution, history and present aspect: Manners, customs and social institutions connected therewith*, 6 vols. continuously paginated (Leiden, 1892–1910), p. viii; Philip Clart, “The concept of ‘popular religion’ in the study of Chinese religions: Retrospect and prospects,” in *The Fourth Fu Jen University International Sinological Symposium: Research on religions in China: Status quo and perspectives; symposium papers*, ed. Zbigniew Wesołowski (Taipei, 2007), pp. 166–203 (English version), 208–237 (Chinese version). For examples of slippage among these usages in a single work, see Poo Mu-chou, *In search of personal welfare: A view of ancient Chinese religion* (Albany, 1998).

² See Robert Ford Campany, “On the very idea of religion (in the modern West and in early medieval China),” *HR* 42 (2003), pp. 287–319.

This chapter more or less takes the second, third, and fourth senses of “popular religion” as heuristic guides to the topics treated. It is difficult to say much with confidence about popular religion in the first sense—the religion of the lower social orders as opposed to those of the elite—for the simple reason that the directly relevant surviving material is extremely scant.³ A survey this brief can only attempt to sketch this complex terrain; I have chosen to do so aspectually.

The extant evidence may be divided into two broad types: transmitted texts and archaeologically recovered materials. The latter comprise mostly excavated tombs and their contents.⁴ Relevant transmitted texts include passages in the standard histories, essays, and treatises; extant bits of regional histories and gazeteers,⁵ as well as wider-ranging, geographically oriented texts such as the *Shuijingzhu* (*Annotated Classic on Waterways*); some hagiographies of Daoist and Buddhist persuasion that depict (usually to oppose) local religious practice; and various scriptures and imperial decrees that, seeing local religion as a problem, propose to do something about it. Special mention must be made of one other genre of transmitted texts: “accounts of anomalies” (*zhiguai*) and miracle tales from the period, comprising many hundreds of anecdotes that both depict aspects of local religion in action and, often, suggest some particular stance toward them—not always a negative stance.⁶ Although practicing popular religion tended not to generate documents representing “insider” views in the numbers that Daoist or Buddhist communities did, we still have an almost overwhelming mass of material attesting to its key features; and even hostile, outsider representations have some evidential value. What is more, the various extant representations of local religious

³ Anthony Barbieri-Low, *Artisans in early imperial China* (Seattle, 2007), has shown, for the Qin and Han periods, how much may be gleaned about the lives (but not very much about the religious practice) of commoners from skillful reading of the dynastic histories paired with careful sifting of archeological data. Stephen F. Teiser, in *The Scripture on the Ten Kings and the making of purgatory in medieval Chinese Buddhism* (Honolulu, 1994), has shown, for the late Tang and early Song periods, how much we can learn about the religious practice of ordinary persons from codicological readings of Dunhuang manuscripts paired with printed sources. We await a study of early medieval religion that might illuminate the religion of commoners in similarly skilled fashion.

⁴ Convenient overviews may be found in Albert E. Dien, *Six Dynasties civilization* (New Haven, 2007), pp. 76–232; Li Yuqun, “Review of discoveries in Wei Jin Nanbeichao archeology since 2000,” *AM*, 3rd series 23.1 (2010), pp. 253–284; Bai Bin, “Religious beliefs as reflected in the funerary record,” in *Early Chinese religion*, Part 2, *The Period of Division (220–589 AD)*, Volume 2, ed. John Lagerwey and Lü Pengzhi (Leiden, 2010), pp. 989–1073. A collection of tomb inscriptions from the period may be found in Zhao Chao, *Han Wei Nanbeichao muzhi huibian* (Tianjin, 2008).

⁵ Such writings flourished for the first time in this period. See Andrew Chittick, “The development of local writing in early medieval China,” *EMC* 9 (2003), pp. 35–70.

⁶ These texts have typically been studied as literary works; as sources for the study of religion, with the exception of de Groot’s monumental early work, they have only begun to be tapped.

practice in early medieval times, whatever their stance toward it, all agree on what its basic features were.

If popular religion in early medieval China may be thought of as, in part at least, a field of relations, we may approach this unwieldy subject by asking some simple questions: with what sorts of beings did people interact? How did people relate to them (and vice versa)? What sorts of specialists mediated or assisted? Where and why did such interactions typically occur? The following may be seen as preliminary answers to these questions.

LOCAL GODS, THEIR TEMPLES, AND ASSOCIATED PRACTICES: DOMESTIC DEITIES

People often had dealings with local gods and goddesses—deities of particular places—in their temple or shrine (*miao* or *ci*) by making offerings accompanied by a request for safe travel, healing, protection, or some other boon. In numerous *zhiguai* narratives, local gods are depicted as rewarding offerings or appropriate shows of piety or, on the other hand, jealously defending their prerogatives when their territory is encroached upon (as, for example, when animals or fruits are poached from their temple grounds). The divine–human relationship at the local level was generally structured by the notion of reciprocity. But, taken as a whole, these stories explore subtleties of that relationship in ways that defy summary.⁷ In theory, at least, many local gods were deceased humans; they are often depicted in narratives as responding to situations in recognizably human ways—for example, by keeping agreements with living human protagonists, granting requests in return for offerings (a kind of gift exchange), and reacting angrily when slighted.

Divine contact might occur with or without mediation. Gods were sometimes portrayed as appearing directly to ordinary people in dreams or waking visions to convey their messages. More commonly, communication occurred through the offices of a spirit medium (*wu*) attached to the temple or operating independently.

Worship at local shrines and temples typically involved the following elements: animal sacrifice and other offerings; prayer requests, especially for healing, protection, and good fortune; the involvement of spirit mediums who (whether in trance or not) spoke for the god; communal feasts, including the consumption of alcohol; and dancing and singing accompanied by musical instruments (drumming is most often, but not exclusively, mentioned). Temples typically were wooden, covered structures, sometimes with lacquered

⁷ For a preliminary treatment, see Robert Ford Campany, *Strange writing: Anomaly accounts in early medieval China* (Albany, 1996), pp. 369–377.

columns, painted mural scenes, and an altar bearing a three-dimensional image of the deity.⁸ Miyakawa Hisayuki, in a study of four translocal topographic texts of the period, counted 282 separate mentions of shrines and 148 mentions of temples, excluding ancestral shrines erected by clans (whether imperial or other clans).⁹ Wolfram Eberhard, based on only a limited set of local and regional treatises, found notices of 115 distinct temples built, rebuilt, or repaired in the period before the year 600.¹⁰ Given the likelihood that there existed many shrines and cults that go entirely unmentioned in extant texts and given that these texts give only partial listings, these numbers should be taken as absolute minima.

How did these cults originate? Several dozen narratives of the origins of particular cults or temples survive. One scenario—attested in both hostile and sympathetic writings, the latter including stele inscriptions erected at temple sites (preserved in *Shuijingzhu* and elsewhere)—recurs often enough that it must have already been typical, as it was in later times. An individual or group would die unjustly, unexpectedly, or violently. He, she, or they would appear in dreams and visions to people in the area, demanding offerings and a temple.¹¹ Prayers made at the temple would be deemed efficacious; word of this would spread, attracting more worshipers; and thus the temple and cult would flourish. It was by such processes of social estimation and the exchange of narratives that gods' reputations were governed. In some cases a further degree of development took place and the cult was officially recognized by the imperium (which meanwhile maintained on its own a distinct array of shrines to clan ancestors and other temples),¹² which meant increased resources for the

⁸ For passages clearly indicating the presence of images in temples and shrines, see Lin Fu-shih, "Chinese shamans and shamanism in the Chiang-nan area during the Six Dynasties period (3rd–6th century A.D.)" (PhD dissertation, Princeton University, 1994), pp. 89–95.

⁹ Miyakawa Hisayuki, *Rikuchō shūkyō shi* (Tokyo, 1974), pp. 196–198.

¹⁰ Wolfram Eberhard, "Temple-building activities in medieval and modern China: An experimental study," *MS* 23 (1964), p. 279.

¹¹ For examples see Poo Mu-chou, "Images and ritual treatment of dangerous spirits," in *Early Chinese religion*, Part 2, Volume 2, ed. Lagerwey and Lü, pp. 1083–1084; Campamy, *Strange writing*, pp. 374–376.

¹² On imperially sponsored shrines and sacrifices during the Qin and Han periods, see Michael Loewe, "The imperial tombs of the Former Han dynasty and their shrines," *TP* 78 (1992), pp. 302–340; *idem*, "K'uang Heng and the reform of religious practices—31 B.C.," in *idem*, *Crisis and conflict in Han China* (London, 1982), pp. 154–192; and Marianne Bujard, "State and local cults in Han religion," in *Early Chinese religion*, Part 1, *Shang through Han (1250 BC–220 AD)*, ed. John Lagerwey and Marc Kalinowski, Volume 2 (Leiden, 2009), pp. 802–811. On the early medieval period see Chen Shuguo, "State religious ceremonies," in *Early Chinese religion*, Part 2, Volume 1, ed. Lagerwey and Lü, pp. 53–142; *idem*, *Wei Jin Nanbeichao lizhi yanjiu* (Changsha, 1995); Kaneko Shuichi, *Chūgoku kodai kōtei kisai no kenkyū* (Tokyo, 2006); Guo Shanbing, *Zhongguo gudai diwang zongmiao lizhi yanjiu* (Beijing, 2007); Liang Mancang, *Wei Jin Nanbeichao wuli zhidu kaolun* (Beijing, 2009); and Xu Yinghua, *Han Wei zhi Nanbeichao shiqi jiaosi zhidu yanjiu* (Harbin, 2009).

local temple but also more outside control.¹³ This process often started with a petition by a local official for imperial recognition; in some cases it proceeded in the other direction. Stele inscriptions sponsored by the more well-to-do among the local populace and erected on temple grounds sometimes excerpted the texts of such official documents to establish the cult's bona fides. Such inscriptions were also sources for narratives about local gods preserved in *zhiguai* and other genres.

Certain gods appear prominently in extant evidence, a measure of their cults' popularity. Perhaps the most noteworthy deity in the Southeast was Jiang Ziwen, also known as Marquis Jiang (*Jianghou*), the most important of whose temples was on Mount Zhong east of Jiankang.¹⁴ Gan Bao's *Records of an Inquest into the Spirit World* (*Soushenji*) preserves a detailed account of his cult's origin; several other *zhiguai* stories recount how he aided travelers, rewarded supplicants, and punished violators of his temple. Jiang Ziwen also figures in several passages in the dynastic histories, where we see officials, even members of imperial families, involved in his worship. To choose only the most richly documented example, the *Songsbu* (*History of the Song*) contains an account of a palace intrigue at the Song court involving so-called black magic or *wugu*, a female spirit medium, and an icon of Jiang Ziwen. Liu Shao, after seizing the throne in a coup in 453, met with military resistance led by other members of the imperial clan; he conferred imperial titles on Jiang Ziwen as well as on another god important in the Southeast, Su Jun, in an effort to enlist their divine assistance in the crisis, but was defeated nonetheless.¹⁵

Another important cult in the Southeast was dedicated to the god of Mount Lu, centered on his temple on Lake Gongting. He (along with other gods of lakes and rivers, such as the god of the Yellow River) was particularly important to travelers, fishermen, and boatmen, as he was thought to control winds and water currents.¹⁶ Many other local and regional deities are mentioned by name in extant texts. Some such established cults were extremely

¹³ For a description of the typical course of this process, see Bujard, "State and local cults in Han religion," pp. 805–807. For another, later, case, see James L. Watson, "Standardizing the gods: The promotion of T'ien Hou ('Empress of Heaven') along the south China coast, 960–1960," in *Popular culture in late imperial China*, ed. David Johnson, Andrew J. Nathan, and Evelyn S. Rawski (Berkeley, 1985), pp. 292–324.

¹⁴ See Miyakawa Hisayuki, *Rikuchō shūkyō shi*, pp. 213–228; Lin Fu-shih, "The cult of Jiang Ziwen in medieval China," *CEA* 10 (1998), pp. 357–375.

¹⁵ *SōS* 99.2424–2439; for summary and partial translation, see Lin, "The cult of Jiang Ziwen," pp. 364–367. For similar, if less richly recounted, cases, see *SōS* 79.2027; *SōS* 79.2040; *NS* 5.136; *NQS* 7.105. On *wugu*, see Feng Han-yi and J. K. Shryock, "The black magic in China known as *ku*," *JAOS* 55 (1935), pp. 1–30; de Groot, *The religious system of China*, pp. 826–869.

¹⁶ On this cult see Miyakawa Hisayuki, "Local cults around Mount Lu at the time of Sun En's rebellion," in *Facets of Taoism*, ed. Holmes Welch and Anna Seidel (New Haven, 1979), pp. 83–101.

long-lasting, even though they changed over time.¹⁷ And there were instances of national or translocal gods worshiped in distinctive ways at local cult sites. One example that has been studied is Wenchang, who was imagined and supplicated very differently at national and at local levels.¹⁸

Not all local gods were conceived of as deceased humans. Mountain gods, in particular, but also other deities, were liable to be imagined zoomorphically, often as serpents or dragons.¹⁹ Narratives also developed the trope of the impostor deity—gods who attracted worship in temples but who, when exorcized by a specialist or glimpsed in their true form, turned out to be animal spirits and were then usually executed, their temples destroyed. This trope is found in quite a few Daoist and Buddhist texts advocating the eradication of most local temples, but it is also found in tale collections whose stance toward local cults is sympathetic or neutral.

In addition to these sorts of temples to named local gods, there were also shrines to each community's spirits of the earth—the *she*, which are documented many centuries before (and after) the early medieval period. *She* normally consisted of uncovered, simple stone altars, often under an old tree, although sometimes more elaborate temples were constructed.²⁰ Unlike spirits worshiped in temples, the spirits propitiated at these shrines were not usually anthropomorphized—although in later periods they sometimes were.²¹

On an even lower hierarchical rung was a small but important set of household deities, prominently including gods of the door, stove, and latrine. Door gods were propitiated as protectors of the household.²² The god of the stove mediated between the family and the celestial pantheon, observing and periodically reporting on the family's doings and transgressions; its most important annual worship took place during the New Year festivities. Many

¹⁷ For one striking example, see Marianne Bujard, "Le joyau de Chen: Culte historique—culte vivant," *CEA* 10 (1998), pp. 131–181.

¹⁸ See Terry Kleeman, "Sources for religious practice in Zitong: The local side of a national cult," *CEA* 10 (1998), pp. 342–344; and *idem*, *A god's own tale: The Book of Transformations of Wenchang, the Divine Lord of Zitong* (Albany, 1994), pp. 1–6.

¹⁹ See Terry Kleeman, "Mountain deities in China: The domestication of the mountain god and the subjugation of the margins," *JAOS* 114 (1994), pp. 226–238.

²⁰ For an example see Robert Ford Campany, *Signs from the unseen realm: Buddhist miracle tales from early medieval China* (Honolulu, 2012), p. 162.

²¹ On the *she*, see Kominami Ichirō, "Rituals for the earth," in *Early Chinese religion*, Part 1, Volume 1, ed. Lagerwey and Kalinowski, pp. 201–234. On Song-period anthropomorphization see Kenneth Dean, "Transformations of the *she* (altars of the soil) in Fujian," *CEA* 10 (1998), p. 25.

²² Derk Bodde, *Festivals in classical China: New Year and other annual observances during the Han dynasty* (Princeton, 1975), pp. 127–138; Henri Maspero, *Taoism and Chinese religion*, trans. Frank A. Kierman Jr. (Amherst, 1981), pp. 115–117; Zhou Zonglian, Zhou Zongxin, and Li Hualing, *Zhongguo minjian de shen* (Changsha, 1992), pp. 69–77.

rules of purity surrounded the stove.²³ Already in early medieval times the latrine goddess seems to have assumed an important function in family divination and spirit writing.²⁴ Meanwhile, in the heavens above there were gods of meteorological phenomena (notably of rain, thunder, and wind), and the stars themselves were thought of as divine; a body of myth attached to the Weaving Maiden was particularly important and was tied to seasonal customs.²⁵ All these divine beings were propitiated across many levels of society.²⁶

Throughout early medieval times there were sporadic attempts, motivated by various ideological currents, to curtail local temple cults, none of them lastingly successful.²⁷ The Daoist and Buddhist canons preserve spells to be used when destroying temples to local gods. Even ordinary earth god shrines were not always exempt from attack.²⁸ Such assaults on local religion are usually viewed from the vantage point of outsider texts of one or another persuasion, but we have a few precious records of instances in which the local god successfully resisted efforts at eradication; there would surely be more such narratives if local religion had generated texts in greater numbers. The frequency of such campaigns attests to the durability and popularity of local cults. Ideological winds might shift, but the gods and their temples proved resilient.

²³ See Maspero, *Taoism and Chinese religion*, pp. 112–115; Robert L. Chard, “Rituals and scriptures of the stove cult,” in *Ritual and scripture in Chinese popular religion: Five studies*, ed. David Johnson (Berkeley, 1995), pp. 3–54; Campany, *Signs from the unseen realm*, pp. 177, 179.

²⁴ See Maspero, *Taoism and Chinese religion*, pp. 119–120; Judith Magee Boltz, “On the legacy of Zigu and a manual on spirit-writing in her name,” in *The people and the Dao: New studies in Chinese religions in honour of Daniel L. Overmyer*, ed. Philip Clart and Paul Crowe (Sankt Augustin, 2009), pp. 349–388; Ian Chapman, “Carnival canons: Calendars, genealogy, and the search for ritual cohesion in early medieval China” (PhD dissertation, Princeton University, 2007), pp. 230–232, 243–244; Zhou et al., *Zhongguo minjian de shen*, pp. 83–85.

²⁵ See Marcel Granet, *The religion of the Chinese people*, trans. and ed. Maurice Freedman (New York, 1975), pp. 54–55; Han Yimin and Guo Xingwen, eds., *Zhongguo gudai jieri fengsu* (Xi’an, 1987), p. 205.

²⁶ See Hou Ching-lang, “The Chinese belief in baleful stars,” in *Facets of Taoism*, ed. Welch and Seidel, pp. 193–228; Maspero, *Taoism and Chinese religion*, pp. 96–101; Campany, *Strange writing*, p. 387; Edward H. Schafer, *Pacing the void: T’ang approaches to the stars* (Berkeley, 1977).

²⁷ See Rolf A. Stein, “Religious Taoism and popular religion,” in *Facets of Taoism*, ed. Welch and Seidel, pp. 53–82; Jean Lévi, “Les fonctionnaires et le divin: Lutttes de pouvoirs entre divinités et administrateurs dans les contes des Six Dynasties et des Tang,” *CEA* 2 (1986), pp. 81–110; Kleeman, “Mountain deities in China”; Lai Chi-tim, “The opposition of Celestial-Master Taoism to popular cults during the Six Dynasties,” *AM*, 3rd series 51 (1998), pp. 1–20; Christine Mollier, “Visions of evil: Demonology and orthodoxy in early Daoism,” in *Daoism in history: Essays in honour of Liu Ts’an-yan*, ed. Benjamin Penny (New York, 2006), pp. 74–100; Peter Nickerson, “Shamans, demons, diviners and Taoists: Conflict and assimilation in medieval Chinese ritual practice (c. A.D. 100–1000),” *TR* 5.1 (1994), pp. 41–66.

²⁸ For an example, see Campany, *Signs from the unseen realm*, p. 146.

DEMONS, SPRITES, AND ANIMALS

Most of the divine beings mentioned so far had one thing in common: they received offerings at some sort of cultic site, whether a regional temple or a household. But there were other denizens of the spirit world as well, and they impacted people's lives in many ways.

For one thing, there were aspects of the surrounding natural world that were thought to be ensouled, and while it is true that, as Maspero observed, "the gods of Nature play only a rather weak role in Chinese religion" relative to other divine beings,²⁹ they should not be overlooked. In *zhiguai* narratives we find a recurring motif of ensouled trees. Such trees are usually particularly old and large. Someone begins to cut them down only to see blood spurt from the wounds. At this point the motif branches: in some cases the hewing proceeds, and creatures emerge from the trunk, with either good or disastrous consequences for the protagonist; in others, the protagonist stops cutting and renders apology.³⁰ Small springs,³¹ unusual stones, and mountains³² are among other natural features portrayed in narrative as responsive to human activity or presence. Certain unusual rock formations were imagined as having been formed when a local person transformed into stone and must have been frequent subjects of local narrative.³³

"Demon" is an inadequate portmanteau term for a large range of beings designated by such words as *gui* (which can also refer to the human dead), *mei*, *mo*, *jing*, and *wangliang*; none of these terms designate an unambiguous taxon—perhaps appropriately, since all these beings were notorious for changing shape, assuming disguise, and concealing their true names and forms.³⁴

Their impact on people was concrete. Demonic "infusions" (*zhu*) were seen as a leading cause of illness both physical and mental. Treatments ranged from exorcism by means of spells to the application of apotropaic substances.³⁵

²⁹ Maspero, *Taoism and Chinese religion*, p. 96. ³⁰ Campany, *Strange writing*, pp. 262–263.

³¹ Michel Soymié, "Sources et sourciers en Chine," *BMFJ*, new series 7 (1961), pp. 1–56.

³² Delphine Ziegler, "The cult of the Wuyi mountains and its cultivation of the past: A topo-cultural perspective," *CEA* 10 (1998), pp. 255–286; Bujard, "State and local cults in Han religion," pp. 804–807.

³³ For a list of passages, see Campany, *Strange writing*, p. 252.

³⁴ It is indicative of how little this topic has been studied that one of the most comprehensive treatments is still de Groot, *The religious system of China*, pp. 465–1185. See also Mollier, "Visions of evil"; Lin Fu-shih, "Renjian zhi mei: Han Tang zhijian jingmei gushi xulun," *Zhongyang yanjiuyuan Lisbi yuyan yanjiusuo jikan* 78 (2007), pp. 107–179; Michel Strickmann and Bernard Faure, *Chinese magical medicine* (Stanford, 2002).

³⁵ See Li Jianmin, "They shall expel demons: Etiology, the medical canon and the transformation of medical techniques before the Tang," in *Early Chinese religion*, Part 1, Volume 2, ed. Lagerwey and Kalinowski, pp. 1103–1150; Strickmann, *Chinese magical medicine*.

Many techniques and objects were designed to protect the household and one's person from demonic attack in the first place.³⁶

Poltergeist activity in the household was thought to cause family unrest. Both women and men were vulnerable to the depredations of demon lovers who appeared in seductive disguise to steal their victims' vital energies.³⁷ This was a common theme in narrative and also in demonographic texts that described the various kinds of demons and telltale signs of their activity and prescribed ameliorative action.

One key service performed by religious specialists of all sorts was to diagnose the presence of, correctly taxonomize, and then drive off, maleficent spirits. But we have both narrative and prescriptive texts showing how ordinary householders sometimes dealt with demons themselves without summoning professionals. Whether one was a professional or an amateur, what was most critical was to know the name and type of spirit one was dealing with: this was the key to expelling it.³⁸

Demons were famous for shape-shifting. When they sought to seduce human victims, they appeared as an attractive member of the opposite sex. But their true forms were usually imagined to be monstrous, grotesque, and misshapen, or else they resembled animals. And some demons *were* ensouled animals—particularly animals who had lived so long that they had had time to absorb enough energy to gain special powers, including that of bodily transformation. We have many narratives of travelers (travel being an inherently dangerous, liminal undertaking) who stay at an isolated, rural inn, or who meet a fellow traveler along their route, have sexual relations with the stranger, and then realize they have slept with an ensouled otter, turtle, or other animal.³⁹ But it was ensouled foxes to whom this sort of seduction was most often attributed. A body of lore grew up around spirit foxes and their depredations; in some cases sacrificial cults developed to appease them.⁴⁰ As is often the case, however, narratives preserve a more complex picture—for

³⁶ One of the most complete treatments of apotropaic measures remains de Groot, *The religious system of China*, pp. 929–1185.

³⁷ See Donald Harper, "Warring States, Qin, and Han manuscripts related to natural philosophy and the occult," in *New sources of early Chinese history: An introduction to the reading of inscriptions and manuscripts*, ed. Edward L. Shaughnessy (Berkeley, 1997), pp. 245–246; *idem*, "Wang Yen-shou's nightmare poem," *HJAS* 47 (1987), pp. 239–283; *idem*, "A note on nightmare magic in ancient and medieval China," *TS* 6 (1988), pp. 69–76; de Groot, *The religious system of China*, pp. 723–761.

³⁸ Donald Harper, "A Chinese demonography of the third century B.C.," *HJAS* 45 (1985), pp. 459–498; Poo Mu-chou, ed., *Guimei shenmo: Zhongguo tongshu wenhua zexie* (Taipei, 2005).

³⁹ Campany, *Strange writing*, pp. 263–264, 360–361.

⁴⁰ Xiaofei Kang, *The cult of the fox: Power, gender, and popular religion in late imperial and modern China* (New York, 2006), pp. 14–43; Kang, "The fox [狐] and the barbarian [胡]: Unraveling representations of the other in late Tang tales," *JCR* 27 (1999), pp. 35–67; Daniel Hsieh, *Love and women in early Chinese fiction* (Hong Kong, 2008); Campany, *Strange writing*, pp. 254, 285, 361.

example, instances in which fox spirits signed on as benign protectors in exchange for a steady supply of food.⁴¹

Many demons, as we have seen, appeared in animal form. But animals themselves also figured in religious thought, practice, and narrative, and not only as passive sacrificial victims offered up to gods and spirits.⁴² Many stories of strange creatures and cross-species transformation were circulated.⁴³ A frequent motif involved the transformation of humans into tigers, often as divine punishment.⁴⁴ Another was built on the notion of moral reciprocity between humans and other creatures: animals are shown remembering and rewarding human kindness toward them and punishing gratuitous harm.⁴⁵ Such stories were entertaining, of course, but they were also platforms for reflection on humans' relation to animals as fellow moral agents in a responsive cosmos.

SPIRITS OF THE HUMAN DEAD

Traditional China is often represented as a culture whose primary attitude toward the dead was unqualified reverence. Filial service of the elderly, continued after death in the form of the ancestor cult, is often portrayed as a defining feature of Chinese civilization. There can be no doubt of the centrality of filial piety as a constantly inculcated virtue, or of ritual care for the family dead as a fundamental preoccupation of the living. But, as often happens, scholars have tended to take repeated prescriptions of how people should act and feel as descriptions of how they did act and feel. The truth is that representations of and attitudes toward the dead were more complex than the standard picture suggests. At best, the dead were capricious, inscrutable; their ongoing spiritual support was a matter of constant negotiation. At worst, the dead could be outright malevolent, either from resentment or because maleficence toward the living was reckoned the only means of drawing attention to their troubles.

To begin with the tomb, its basic function was to fix the deceased occupant into place. As Michel Strickmann observed,

⁴¹ See Campany, *Strange writing*, p. 389.

⁴² A study focusing on earlier periods is Roel Sterckx, *The animal and the daemon in early China* (Albany, 2002).

⁴³ See Campany, *Strange writing*, pp. 245–255.

⁴⁴ See Charles Hammond, "An excursion into tiger lore," *AM*, 3rd series 4.1 (1991), pp. 87–100; *idem*, "The demonization of the other: Women and minorities as were-tigers," *JCR* 23 (1995), pp. 59–80; and Campany, *Strange writing*, p. 251.

⁴⁵ See Campany, *Strange writing*, pp. 384–393.

There is little doubt that, by ensuring the tranquility of their deceased family member, the living were also taking pains to protect themselves against trouble emanating from the grave or beyond it. The tomb was their own familial nexus between the visible and invisible worlds, and it is obvious (especially from the elaborate construction of Chinese tombs, with their enclosure within enclosure and their inner and outer coffins) that the tomb's primary function was containment.⁴⁶

This containment was meant not to completely isolate the dead but to restrict their movement—to limit their capacity to appear as ghosts to haunt and harass the living. The ubiquity of narratives of ghost encounters suggests how unsuccessful these attempts were ultimately deemed to be, while reinforcing the perception that they were needed.

The wealthy, at least, were buried in vault-like structures designed for durability and equipped with furnishings, food, visual decoration, and other objects suggesting an ongoing life in the tomb⁴⁷—a concept matched by many narratives implying that the tomb is indeed the site of ongoing residence by the deceased occupant.⁴⁸ Tombs were also populated with human figurines designed to serve the tomb's occupant in the afterlife and serve in his stead in unwanted duties.⁴⁹ But perhaps the most important objects buried with the corpse were documents designed to protect the tomb and its occupant—and, not least, to protect living relatives from the deceased. There were several genres of such documents, all couched in legalistic prose style and presuming a bureaucratic afterlife. They functioned to establish rightful ownership of the space of the tomb, to ward off otherworld suits against the tomb's occupant, to shield the tomb from demonic or ghostly incursion, and—not least—to disallow complaints *by* the tomb's occupant against living parties. They also served as identity papers for the deceased, to be presented to the afterlife authorities for proper registration.⁵⁰ For the

⁴⁶ Strickmann, *Chinese magical medicine*, p. 79.

⁴⁷ See Cary Y. Liu, Michael Nylan, and Anthony Barbieri-Low, eds., *Recarving China's past: Art, archaeology, and architecture* (New Haven, 2005), pp. 203–390; de Groot, *The religious system of China*, pp. 361–827; Dien, *Six Dynasties civilization*, pp. 193–232; Poo Mu-chou, *Muzang yu shengsi: Zhongguo gudai zongjiao zhi xingsi* (Taipei, 1993); Albert E. Dien, “Instructions for the grave: The case of Yan Zhitui,” *CEA* 8 (1995), pp. 41–58; and Wu Hung, *The art of the Yellow Springs: Understanding Chinese tombs* (Honolulu, 2010).

⁴⁸ For examples and listings, see Campany, *Strange writing*, pp. 379–381.

⁴⁹ For an overview, see Dien, *Six Dynasties civilization*, pp. 218–232. On figurines as replacements see Robert Ford Campany, “Religious repertoires and contestation: A case study based on Buddhist miracle tales,” *HR* 52 (2012), pp. 130–133.

⁵⁰ See Anna Seidel, “Traces of Han religion in funeral texts found in tombs,” in *Dōkyō to shūkyō bunka*, ed. Akizuki Kan'ei (Tokyo, 1987), pp. 21–57; Terry Kleeman, “Land contracts and related documents,” in *Makio Ryōkai Hakase shōju kinen ronshu, Chūgoku no shūkyō: shisō to kagaku* (Tokyo, 1984), pp. 1–34; Peter Nickerson, “‘Let living and dead take separate paths’: Bureaucratization and textualization in early Chinese mortuary ritual,” in *Daoism in history*, ed. Penny, pp. 10–40; Timothy M. Davis, “Potent stone:

living, tombs and associated steles functioned as sites of memory and ancestral offerings.⁵¹

Notwithstanding all these attempts to fix the dead in their tombs, their spirits were apt to escape those confines.⁵² Many hundreds of ghost narratives have survived from what was surely once a much greater number. Unsurprisingly, the dead are repeatedly depicted as appearing to living family members or friends, often seeking assistance with afterlife complaints or a compromised tomb, sometimes simply to converse with or comfort the living. But there are even more stories of encounters between ghosts and living parties not their kin. In one such motif, a traveler (usually male) spends the night at what appears to be a lonely rural inn, accompanied by the attractive innkeeper (usually female), only to discover the next morning that the inn is actually a tomb.⁵³ In another, a ghost appears to a living stranger to request an offering of food; or else the ghost announces that its tomb has been broken open and its coffin been breached, and requests reburial—sometimes donating grave goods to defray the cost.⁵⁴ (This worry about the integrity of the tomb is understandable when we recall the frequency with which graves were looted.⁵⁵) Another anxiety addressed in narratives is the absence of the corpse of a family member known or suspected to be deceased.⁵⁶

Entombed epigraphy and memorial culture in early medieval China" (PhD dissertation, Columbia University, 2008); Valerie Hansen, "Why bury contracts in tombs?" *CEA* 8 (1995), pp. 59–66; and Guo Jue, "Concepts of death and the afterlife reflected in newly discovered tomb objects and texts from Han China," in *Mortality in traditional Chinese thought*, ed. Amy Olberding and Philip J. Ivanhoe (Albany, 2011), pp. 85–116.

⁵¹ See Kenneth E. Brashier, *Ancestral memory in early China* (Cambridge, MA, 2011); Howard L. Goodman, "Sites of recognition: Burial, mourning, and commemoration in the Xun family of Yingchuan, AD 140–305," *EMC* 15 (2009), pp. 49–90.

⁵² On conceptions of the multiple souls of the dead, see Kenneth E. Brashier, "Han thanatology and the division of 'souls'," *EC* 21 (1996), pp. 125–158; and Yu Ying-shih, "O soul, come back! A study in the changing conceptions of the soul and afterlife in pre-Buddhist China," *HJAS* 47 (1987), pp. 363–395. See also Michèle Pirazzoli-t'Serstevens, "Death and the dead: Practices and images in the Qin and Han," in *Early Chinese religion*, Part 1, Volume 2, ed. Lagerwey and Kalinowski, pp. 949–1026; and Poo Mu-chou, "The concept of ghost in ancient Chinese religion," in *Religion and Chinese society*, Volume 1, *Ancient and medieval China*, ed. John Lagerwey (Hong Kong, 2004), pp. 173–192.

⁵³ For examples, see Campany, *Strange writing*, pp. 382–383.

⁵⁴ For numerous examples and a typology of motifs, see Robert Ford Campany, "Ghosts matter: The culture of ghosts in Six Dynasties *zhiguai*," *CLEAR* 13 (1991), pp. 15–34. See also Poo Mu-chou, "The culture of ghosts in the Six Dynasties period (c. 220–589 C.E.)," in *idem*, ed., *Rethinking ghosts in world religions* (Leiden, 2009), pp. 237–268; Alvin P. Cohen, *Tales of vengeful ghosts: A sixth century collection of Chinese avenging ghost stories* (Taipei, 1982).

⁵⁵ See Dien, *Six Dynasties civilization*, pp. 193, 459, n. 1.

⁵⁶ See Timothy Wai Keung Chan, "Searching for the bodies of the drowned: A folk tradition of early China recovered," *JAOS* 129 (2009), pp. 385–401, for Warring States and Han cases; numerous early medieval narratives display the same concern. Yet another anxiety was enforced geographic separation from the tomb, a common occurrence during the period and one that was perhaps responsible for the prevalence of "soul urns" in early medieval tombs. See Dien, *Six Dynasties civilization*, pp. 214–216.

The afterlife in early medieval times, as it had been already for several centuries and would continue to be, was conceived of in bureaucratic terms. To die was to be summoned to undergo a bureaucratic registration process; it was also to make a long journey.⁵⁷ The administrative center managing and housing the dead was sometimes thought to exist beneath Mount Tai in Shandong. This bureaucratic idiom reinforced a sense of the inexorability of death, but it also engendered a sense of looseness that brought its own anxieties. Stories of early death summons, such as individuals being hauled off to the other world before their allotted lifespan (*ming*) expired due to name confusion, or because of a plaint lodged against them, or simply because a vacant administrative post needed filling, were ubiquitous.⁵⁸

SPECIALISTS

Families and individuals often handled their own dealings with gods, ghosts, and spirits. But sometimes they employed a specialist. Diviners not only advised clients on their future prospects but also diagnosed the source of persistent problems. Our understanding of the many sorts of divination techniques and the textual sources for them has greatly improved.⁵⁹ However, a history of early medieval occasions and consequences of divination and of diviners' relations with their clients—a history based upon the substantial body of relevant extant narratives (including biographies of diviners)⁶⁰—has yet to be attempted. Diviners specialized in various procedures based on the observation of celestial or terrestrial anomalies, the interpretation of dreams, clients' physiognomy, and many other techniques. They also prepared books intended as guides to auspicious and inauspicious times for undertaking travel, weddings, funerals, coming-of-age ceremonies, and other activities, and they dispensed advice on the auspicious placement of homes and tombs.

⁵⁷ See Lai Guolong, "Death and the otherworldly journey in early China as seen through tomb texts, travel paraphernalia, and road rituals," *AM*, 3rd series 18 (2005), pp. 1–44.

⁵⁸ See Donald Harper, "Resurrection in Warring States popular religion," *TR* 5.2 (1994), pp. 13–28; Robert Ford Campany, "Return-from-death narratives in early medieval China," *JCR* 18 (1990), pp. 91–125; Campany, "Living off the books: Fifty ways to dodge *ming* (preallotted lifespan) in early medieval China," in *The magnitude of Ming: Command, allotment, and fate in Chinese culture*, ed. Christopher Lupke (Honolulu, 2005), pp. 129–150.

⁵⁹ See, for example, Marc Kalinowski, ed., *Divination et société dans la Chine médiévale: Étude des manuscrits de Dunhuang de la Bibliothèque nationale de France et de la British Library* (Paris, 2003); Jue Guo, "Divination," in *The Wiley-Blackwell companion to Chinese religions*, ed. Randall L. Nadeau (Chichester, 2012), pp. 419–440.

⁶⁰ On these texts, see Kenneth J. DeWoskin, "A source guide to the lives and techniques of Han and Six Dynasties *fang-shih*," *BSSCR* 9 (1981), pp. 79–105; and *idem*, *Doctors, diviners, and magicians of ancient China: Biographies of fang-shih* (New York, 1983).

The other prominent sort of religious specialist in this period was the spirit medium or shaman(ess) (*wu*).⁶¹ Both men and women performed this important role. While most persons who acted as *wu* were apparently of relatively low social standing, their clientele extended all the way up the social ladder to rulers and high officials.⁶² Their central function was to mediate communication and interactions between gods or spirits, on the one hand, and their client communities, families, and individuals, on the other. They did so in both directions, channeling requests and messages between humans and gods. Some clearly did this by entering a trance state; others claimed to habitually see ghosts and spirits.⁶³ *Wu* also presided over offerings to spirits and exorcized unwelcome presences. They did these things in the service of various goals for clients, among them healing, divination and prognostication, the removal of curses, the securing of blessings and protection, defense against otherworldly complaints (including by ancestors), political or military success (even a sitting emperor might be targeted with imprecations),⁶⁴ the thwarting of opponents and enemies, and erotic conquest. Occasionally they conducted memorial rites for families' ancestors. They sometimes personally built shrines for the deities they served, having come to serve them out of debt or gratitude for the god's having healed them of illness.⁶⁵

Most male *wu* were adults; female *wu* included girls and women of all ages. While most were not necessarily of humble origin, very few hailed from socially prominent clans. They might be married or, in rarer cases, celibate. Few are stated to have received formal education, although their illiteracy should not be assumed and we have references to "*wu* writings" (*wu shu*); similarly, few are said to have been from wealthy families or to have earned riches through their service, but their poverty should not be assumed either.

⁶¹ Scholars have long debated the relative merits of "shaman" or "spirit medium" as an equivalent for *wu*. "Medium" highlights the key role of trance possession in *wu* performance but scants the many other practices in their role's repertoire, including singing, dancing, drumming, prayer, and the performance of various rituals (including the making of food offerings and the burning of spirit money or written messages) to communicate with and petition the gods. "Shaman" suggests parallels to or influences from Siberian and Tungusic traditions that are affirmed by some scholars but rejected by others. See Lin Fu-shih, "Chinese shamans and shamanism," pp. 1–3, 19–21; Jordan Paper, *The spirits are drunk: Comparative approaches to Chinese religion* (Albany, 1995), pp. 86–90; Lin Fu-shih, "The image and status of shamans in ancient China," in *Early Chinese religion*, Part 1, Volume 1, ed. Lagerwey and Kalinowski, pp. 397–458.

⁶² See Lin Fu-shih, "Shamans and politics," in *Early Chinese religion*, Part 2, Volume 2, ed. Lagerwey and Lü, pp. 275–318; Miyakawa Hisayuki, *Rikuchōshi kenkyū: shūkyō ben* (Kyoto, 1964), pp. 336–390; Miyakawa, *Rikuchō shūkyō shi*, pp. 191–235.

⁶³ The sorts of ecstatic soul journeys often associated with shamans tend not to be credited to *wu* in extant sources.

⁶⁴ See *SoS* 79.2028, 79.2040, 99.2424; *NS* 14.398.

⁶⁵ An example occurs in *Soushenji*, Chapter 4, translated in Kenneth J. DeWoskin and J. I. Crump Jr., *In search of the supernatural: The written record* (Stanford, 1996), p. 52.

Some served full-time, others part-time. Early medieval *wu* seem to have entered the vocation not by family tradition or formal initiation but informally, often tapped for such service by a particular god.⁶⁶

Performances by *wu* often included singing, dancing, and drumming before an audience of clients and onlookers. We have a few songs that seem to have been sung on such occasions, perhaps by the medium under trance.⁶⁷ The performances would often include offerings, particularly animal sacrifice and libations of wine, accompanied by incense and the lighting of lamps. Unlike similar modern-day practitioners known from their participation at temples and processions in Taiwan and elsewhere, *wu* in early medieval times do not normally seem to have mutilated themselves.⁶⁸ They were often associated with a particular god and temple, and success depended on the reputations they built among clients. Their performances were not restricted to temples and shrines but might also be staged in open fields,⁶⁹ beside waterways, in official buildings or the imperial palace, or even in their own or clients' homes. Images of the gods being channeled or supplicated were sometimes used; several accounts mention icons housed in the homes of *wu*.⁷⁰ *Wu* are often described as having been accompanied in their performances by "invocators" (*zhu*). Much less is known to date about their precise roles, but they seem to have assisted at temple-offering ceremonies. Whether they mediated communication between entranced mediums and their clients, as do similar figures in Taiwan temples today, is not yet known.

Although Buddhist and Daoist authors did not always approve of resorting to the services of *wu* and some techniques (especially blood sacrifice) were shunned, *wu* powers of clairvoyance were seldom challenged and were sometimes appropriated by those traditions.⁷¹ It was not, in other words, the existence of the world of spirits accessed by *wu* or the reality of their access that was challenged by proponents of these religions, but rather the means and purposes of contact. Meanwhile, beginning with Cao Pi—Wei Emperor Wen—in 225,⁷² several imperial decrees were issued, particularly in the North, prohibiting the "excessive cults" (*yinsi*) built upon the activities of

⁶⁶ See Lin Fu-shih, "Chinese shamans and shamanism," pp. 61–66; and *idem*, *Handai de wuzhe* (Taipei, 2004), on both of which I have drawn heavily here.

⁶⁷ See Donald Holzman, "Songs for the gods: The poetry of popular religion in 5th-century China," *AM*, 3rd series 3 (1990), pp. 1–19.

⁶⁸ For one exception, in which *wu* are said to have cut their tongues, see *JS* 94.2428.

⁶⁹ For an example, see Campany, *Signs from the unseen realm*, p. 187.

⁷⁰ See Campany, *Signs from the unseen realm*, pp. 114–115, 174.

⁷¹ For examples, see Campany, *Signs from the unseen realm*, p. 59; *idem*, "Religious repertoires and contestation," pp. 129–130.

⁷² *SGZ* 2.84.

wu.⁷³ The extent to which such prohibitions were actually enforced in locales is often unclear.⁷⁴ Zealous officials also sometimes fulminated against *wu* and their activities, and some regional officials were known for tearing down shrines and abolishing and even executing some of the *wu* in their jurisdictions on grounds of Confucian ideological purity and the supposed harm caused by local cults to public order and social morality.⁷⁵

Finally, transcendence seekers, Daoist adepts, and Buddhist monks also numbered among the specialists called upon by laypersons for assistance, healing, and protection—including protection against the demands of local gods, the depredations of ghosts and demons, and even in some cases the power of spirit mediums.⁷⁶

CONCLUSION

A number of important aspects of popular religion in early medieval China have been skirted here, due to insufficient research at present, insufficient space in this chapter, or both. I mention a few of them in closing.

The surviving evidence probably does not permit any in-depth examination of women's religious practice as distinct from men's, but this is at least a question to which researchers should become more alert. Similarly, but more surprisingly, we seem to have relatively little good textual material concerning the ordinary practice of the ancestor cult⁷⁷—how it was actually

⁷³ Lin Fu-shih, "Chinese shamans and shamanism," pp. 282–285.

⁷⁴ The temple to Jiang Ziwen is said to have been razed after an imperial decree prohibiting "excessive cults" in 421, only to be rebuilt and have additional imperial titles granted to the deity in subsequent years, as noted in the same passage. See *SōS* 17.488; and Lin Fu-shih, "The cult of Jiang Ziwen," p. 364.

⁷⁵ Jean Lévi, "Les fonctionnaires et le divin," pp. 81–110; Lin, "Chinese shamans and shamanism," pp. 286–291. One example must suffice: when the zealous official Mao Xiuzhi (375–446), who "did not believe in ghosts and spirits" and habitually "burned down and razed any temples he encountered," came into the jurisdiction of Jiang Ziwen's temple, he not only apparently destroyed it (this is unclear from the passage) but also confiscated the "good cattle and fine horses" that grazed on its grounds (this much is clear). See *SōS* 48.1428; and Lin Fu-shih, "The cult of Jiang Ziwen," p. 364.

⁷⁶ See, for example, Christine Mollier, *Buddhism and Taoism face to face: Scripture, ritual, and iconographic exchange in medieval China* (Honolulu, 2008), pp. 55–99. For instances involving seekers of transcendence, see Robert Ford Campy, *Making transients: Ascetics and social memory in early medieval China* (Honolulu, 2009), pp. 165–168; *idem*, *To live as long as Heaven and Earth: A translation and study of Ge Hong's Traditions of divine transients* (Berkeley, 2002), pp. 152–159, 252–255. A longer treatment would also deal with cases of what might be called "conversion" from devotion to popular deities to Daoist, Buddhist, or other practice.

⁷⁷ As compared with relevant archaeologically recovered material, of which there is a relative abundance—but this tells us almost exclusively about burial customs (and only for the wealthy); see, for example, Liu, Nylan, and Barbieri-Low, *Recarving China's past*; and Wu Hung, *The Wu Liang shrine: The ideology of early Chinese pictorial art* (Stanford, 1989). But see Keith N. Knapp, "Borrowing legitimacy from the dead: The Confucianization of ancestral worship," in *Early Chinese religion*, Part 2, Volume 2, ed. Lagerwey and Lü, pp. 143–192.

carried out, as opposed to how canonical texts said it should be. Most narratives involving ancestors depict some sort of unusual happening, not the normal functioning of the cult. I have not dealt here with specific healing practices of any sort, even though all early medieval Chinese therapeutic techniques and systems had elements we would now call religious.⁷⁸

I have not addressed mass religious movements during the period—another topic for which we have better current research for the Han than for the post-Han, pre-Tang centuries.⁷⁹ I have not dealt with religious practices tied to the solar and lunar cycles and the great annual festivals. These are dealt with elsewhere in this volume.⁸⁰ Nor have I discussed texts in which authors wrote extensively about unusual local customs, sometimes trying to make sense of them by citing folkloric gleanings or by reading them as isolated survivals from earlier times when, from the writer's perspective, they made better sense.⁸¹

The many practices and suppositions that have been addressed in this chapter were a dynamic, fluid repertoire of resources used by people of all social levels as they negotiated their individual, familial, and communal lives in early medieval China. The organized religio-ideological traditions and the state often attempted to curtail and regulate them, but to little permanent avail. They were woven into the very fabric of local communities and families and into the rhythms of social life.

⁷⁸ This is an area, like the study of divination, in which great advances have been made in understanding the history of techniques but in which we still lack a social history of healing practices and practitioners and their relationships with clients.

⁷⁹ See Erik Zürcher, "Prince Moonlight: Messianism and eschatology in early medieval Chinese Buddhism," *TP* 68 (1982), pp. 1–58; William G. Crowell, "Social unrest and rebellion in Jiangnan during the Six Dynasties," *MC* 9 (1983), pp. 319–354; Grégoire Espeset, "Latter Han religious mass movements and the early Daoist church," in *Early Chinese religion*, Part 1, Volume 2, ed. Lagerwey and Kalinowski, pp. 1061–1102; J. Michael Farmer, "The Three Chaste Ones of Ba: Local perspectives on the Yellow Turban rebellion on the Chengdu plain," *JAO* 125 (2005), pp. 191–202; Lai Chi-tim, "Daoism and political rebellion during the Eastern Jin dynasty," in *Politics and religion in ancient and medieval Europe and China*, ed. Frederick Hok-ming Cheung and Ming-chiu Lai (Hong Kong, 1999), pp. 77–100; and Li Gang, "State religious policy," in *Early Chinese religion*, Part 2, Volume 1, ed. Lagerwey and Lü, pp. 210–212.

⁸⁰ See also Wolfram Eberhard, *The local cultures of south and east China*, trans. Alide Eberhard (Leiden, 1968); Bodde, *Festivals in classical China*; Chapman, "Carnival canons"; the works of Marcel Granet, such as *Fêtes et chansons anciennes de la Chine* (1919; reprint Paris, 1982) (for speculative but often intriguing theories); and Liu Tseng-kuei, "Taboos: An aspect of belief in the Qin and Han," in *Early Chinese Religion*, Part 1, ed. Lagerwey and Kalinowski, Volume 2, pp. 881–948.

⁸¹ See Campany, *Strange writing*, pp. 139–142, 362–363; *idem*, "'Survival' as an interpretive strategy: A Sino-Western comparative case study," *MTSR* 2 (1990), pp. 1–26.

THE WORLD OF PROSE LITERATURE

Antje Richter

THE LITERARY HERITAGE OF THE SIX DYNASTIES

The four centuries between the end of the Han (220) and the beginning of the Sui dynasty (581) witnessed a remarkable increase and diversification of literary production. Literary activities were closely interrelated with crucial aspects of elite social and individual life. Works of literature in various genres of poetry and prose—the latter being the focus of this chapter—became integral to political endeavors, to social and religious discourses, to the quest for knowledge in all its branches, to familial life, and to personal relationships. The Six Dynasties are also an age of heightened literary reflection, due to the overall flourishing of literature and a rise in artistic self-reflection, whose textual and visual expressions belong to those elements of the period's literary and artistic heritage that are most cherished today.

The extant corpus of literature makes it quite clear that only a fraction of the texts that were written and read during the Six Dynasties has come down to us. From quotations and references in existing historical texts and commentaries, from encyclopedias and library catalogues, we know the titles of hundreds of works that were lost or are only fragmentarily received, and we can safely assume that many more texts have vanished without leaving any trace at all. While historical transmission always produces a lopsided image of a period's literary life, largely by favoring the writings of the political and cultural elites, Six Dynasties literature suffers from an additional distortion, because much less has been transmitted from the “barbarian” states in the North than from the “legitimate” Chinese Southern Dynasties. Although we cannot eliminate the traditional dominance of southern literature, we can attempt to balance it by acknowledging that this dominance is mainly due to notions of North and South that were established in the Sui dynasty (581–618) and early in the Tang (618–907), based on the political calculations and cultural preferences of the new regimes. The surviving examples of literary activity in the North,

scarce as they may be, give us no reason to dismiss the North as culturally barren or insignificant.

Historically even more influential than the bias against the “barbarian” North, however, was the Sui and Tang derision of southern literature as decadent. It established certain features of southern literary style, usually described in pejorative terms as ornate, escapist, and effeminate, as manifestations of more general deficiencies—moral, political, and military—that were only remedied after the Sui and Tang reunification. This negative judgment of much of Six Dynasties literature has in the last decades been shown to be tendentious and unfounded; and the literary achievements of the Period of Division are now, on the contrary, regarded in many ways as foundational for the further development of Chinese literature.¹

With the exception of a few decades during the Western Jin (256–316), the division of China into a northern and a southern sphere was a political reality for most of the four centuries under consideration, and thus plays a decisive role in the period’s literary and cultural life. The large-scale migration to the South that started in the late third century and peaked in the years after the sack of Luoyang in 311 and the final collapse of the Western Jin in 316, as well as the subsequent shift of the economic and cultural center from the Yellow River basin to the area south of the Yangzi river (Jiangnan) greatly expanded the geographical and cultural horizon of Chinese literati and forever changed their worldview and self-perception. The nomadic invasions and the establishment of alien regimes in the North triggered different, but similarly crucial, processes of assimilation with non-Han Chinese cultural spheres. Although the political division was an undeniable reality, connections between North and South persisted on many levels, not least because of the fluidity of the frontier. The strongest bond may have existed in the minds of the southern elites, who were northern in origin and identity and thus reluctant to accept the loss of their homeland as final, even though attitudes toward reunification were all but uniform. There were also actual communications between North and South, either through the dislocation of individuals as a result of warfare or, less violently, through trade, travel, and correspondence.

This chapter is an introduction to Chinese prose literature in the Six Dynasties period and as such a companion to the chapter on poetry. The fact that “prose literature” for our purposes includes a major genre of poetry—the poetical exposition or rhapsody (*fu*), a poem introduced by and interspersed with passages in prose—points to the difficulty of isolating any part of the

¹ See, for instance, Xiaofei Tian’s exploration of the evolving reception of palace-style poetry and of the cultural construction of the North and South in *Beacon fire and shooting star: The literati culture of the Liang* (502–557) (Cambridge, MA, 2007), pp. 162–210, 310–366.

period's literary heritage. Prose and poetry not only shared functions, topics, imagery, and other literary features; they also frequently occur together in one text: poems may be introduced by prose prefaces and essays concluded by verse, to cite only two very common patterns. Since authors rarely limited themselves to writing in either mode, almost every prose writer who is discussed in the following pages was an accomplished poet, even if this may not be specifically mentioned in each case. What is more, because of the manifold interconnections between literature, society, and individual life, even isolating literature per se is difficult. Six Dynasties authors of literary texts were often also political protagonists, administrators, managers of private estates, recluses, monks, medical men, scientists, musicians, or artists—or all of the above, if not necessarily at the same time in their lives. So overlap with other chapters in this volume, apart from the one dedicated to poetry, is inevitable and indeed desirable, since the majority of those chapters are text-based studies that draw on sources that are part of the wide field of prose literature.

LITERATURE IN A WEB OF INTERCONNECTIONS: A FOURTH-CENTURY EXAMPLE

One of the most admired pieces of Six Dynasties literature, Wang Xizhi's (303–361) “Preface to the *Lanting Collection*” (*Lanting ji xu*), may exemplify the web of interconnections that surrounds every literary text and thus the multitude of approaches that are possible or even necessary to appreciate a text in all its complexity.² In the “Preface to the *Lanting Collection*” (also known as the *Orchid Pavilion Collection*) Wang describes a literary party in the countryside—held in Shanyin near Guiji (also known as Kuaiji, modern Shaoxing, Zhejiang), about 200 miles southeast of the capital, Jiankang—and ruminates on the evanescence of life:

This place has lofty mountains and towering ranges, dense groves and tall bamboos. A clear stream dashes and swirls ahead, reflecting everything to its left and right. It had been diverted so that we could float our wine cups along its winding course . . . On this day the sky was clear, the air was fresh, and a gentle breeze was blowing. Gazing up we contemplated the vastness of the universe, looking down we examined the abundance of creation.

² See Lothar Ledderose, *Mi Fu and the classical tradition in Chinese calligraphy* (Princeton, 1979), pp. 19–24; and *idem*, “Some Taoist elements in the calligraphy of the Six Dynasties,” *TP* 70 (1984), pp. 246–278; Donald Holzman, “On the authenticity of the ‘Preface’ to the *Collection of poetry written at the Orchid Pavilion*,” *JAOS* 117 (1997), pp. 306–311; Robert E. Harrist, “Copies, all the way down: Notes on the early transmission of calligraphy by Wang Xizhi,” *EALJ* 10 (2001), pp. 176–196; Qi Xiaochun, *Mai shi zhi feng: You guan Wang Xizhi ziliao yu renwu de zongbe yanjiu* (Taipei, 2007), pp. 253–366; Wendy Swartz, “Revisiting the scene of the party: A study of the *Lanting* collection,” *JAOS* 132 (2012), pp. 275–300.

Letting our eyes roam and giving reign to our feelings like this was enough to let us enjoy everything we saw and heard to the extreme—this truly was happiness . . . But whatever we enjoy becomes stale in a flash, which must give us pause. What is more, our lives in their length or brevity follow the mysteries of creation and must finally come to an end.³

Both the brief preface and the thirty-seven poems of the collection itself were composed during this gathering, which took place in 353 on the third day of the third lunar month, the customary date to observe the Lustration or Bathing Festival (*shangsi jie*). The roots of this festival go back to an ancient Chinese spring purification rite, but by early medieval times the elites celebrated the festival as a gathering at the banks of a stream, with elaborate literary and drinking games that involved floating wine cups on water. The literary charm of the preface rests on its immediacy and autobiographical flavor: in just over 300 words Wang perfectly captures a joyful moment of his life, reveling in the beauty of nature around him and the company of his friends. Although he laments the transitoriness of this moment and the coming of death, he also situates himself and this text on an axis connecting the past and future and thus affirms the immortality of his creative work.

The social setting of literary composition and performance first of all calls for a discussion of the “Preface to the *Lanting Collection*” in the context of literary circles, an essential and evolving feature of Six Dynasties literature that evinces the high prestige of literary excellence. For the Lanting party, Wang Xizhi, a scion of the eminent Langye Wang family hailing from Shandong and at the time governor of Guiji, had assembled an illustrious group of aristocratic and intellectual men. Among them were members of other great northern émigré families such as Xie An (320–385) and Xie Wan (d. 361); acclaimed poets such as Sun Chuo (314–371), Li Chong (d. c. 362), and Xu Xun (d. 361); and religious figures such as the renowned Buddhist monk and *Zhuangzi* exegete Zhi Dun (314–366). Of Wang’s approximately forty guests, only twenty-six are represented in the Lanting collection, and tradition has it that those who failed to compose a poem had to drink a certain amount of wine. We can only speculate if this penalty was applied to the adolescents among the guests as well, for instance to Wang Xizhi’s youngest and most distinguished son, Xianzhi (344–386/388), only nine years old at the time. Neither do we know of any women who attended the party, which may point to their plain absence or just to lack of information due to the conventional neglect of female life in early medieval historiography.

Since Wang Xizhi’s “Preface to the *Lanting Collection*” stands in a lineage of related texts, the social perspective on this meeting of elite figures in the countryside and the texts that were produced on this occasion could be

³ JS 80.2099.

complemented by a discussion of aspects of literary history and intertextuality. A prominent precedent of Wang Xizhi's piece, as far as genre and theme are concerned, is Shi Chong's (249–300) preface to poems written during a gathering at Shi's legendary Golden Valley estate near Luoyang in 296 (*Jingu shi xu*).⁴ Later examples include the Liu-Song dynasty (420–79) poet Yan Yanzhi's (384–456) "Preface to the Poems Composed at the Winding Stream Festival on the Third Day of the Third Month" (*Sanyue sanri qushui shi xu*, 434) and a text of the same title written in 491 by Wang Rong (467–493), one of the great writers of the Yongming period (483–493).⁵ Far from coming to a close with the end of the Six Dynasties, references to Wang Xizhi's Lanting preface continue throughout Chinese literary history and culture until the present day. Its resonance is felt in literary writings from poems to plays, in pictorial depictions in different genres of visual art as well as in modern media.⁶

A related third approach to the "Preface to the *Lanting Collection*" could settle on the potential of prefaces (*xu*) as a particularly versatile paratextual genre. A genre study appears promising because of the greater early medieval awareness of genre in general and, more specifically, because there are hundreds of prefaces transmitted from the period, among them acclaimed prose texts that overshadow their main texts. The example that comes to mind most readily and is a close rival to Wang Xizhi's work in historical reverberations and multimedia popularity is Tao Qian's (365?–427) "Account of Peach Blossom Spring" (*Taohua yuan ji*). This famous preface to a little-known poem describes how a fisherman accidentally discovers a Utopian pocket of time, in which a Golden Age has been anachronistically preserved, and how he fails to find his way back to it again once he has left.⁷ Wang's and Tao's texts, as different in character as they might be, exemplify why prefaces were so valued in this period: as a genre of marginal status, they allowed for a greater range of topics—including the autobiographical and the fantastic—and

⁴ See David R. Knechtges, "Jingu and Lanting: Two (or three?) Jin dynasty gardens," in *Studies in Chinese language and culture: Festschrift in honour of Christoph Harbsmeier on the occasion of his 60th birthday*, ed. Christoph Anderl and Halvor Eifring (Oslo, 2006), pp. 395–405; and *idem*, "Estate culture in early medieval China," in *Early medieval China: A sourcebook*, ed. Wendy Swartz et al. (New York, 2014), pp. 530–537.

⁵ Studies about both authors include Huang Shui-yun's *Yan Yanzhi ji qi shi wen yanjiu* (Taipei, 1989); and Richard B. Mather, *The age of eternal brilliance: Three lyric poets of the Yung-ming era (483–493)*, Volume 2 (Leiden, 2003) pp. 287–469.

⁶ A fairly recent and well-known pop-cultural example is the 2008 song *Lanting xu* by the Taiwanese musician Zhou Jielun (also known as Jay Chou).

⁷ Among other studies, see Wendy Swartz, *Reading Tao Yuanming: Shifting paradigms of historical reception (427–1900)* (Cambridge, MA, 2008); and Zhiyi Yang, "Return to an inner utopia: Su Shi's transformation of Tao Qian in his exile poetry," *TP* 99 (2013), pp. 329–378.

a more individual style of literary expression. Another productive avenue of inquiry would be a study of the textual and thematic relations of Wang's preface, written in loose parallel prose, to the collection's tetra- and pentasyllabic poems, which were later characterized as "poems of arcane discourse" (*xuanyan shi*).

The "arcane," a common epithet of the Dao, also lent its name to the "Study of the Arcane" (or Dark Learning, *xuanxue*), a third- and fourth-century type of philosophical inquiry revolving around the early Chinese texts *Zhuangzi*, *Laozi*, and *Book of Changes* (*Yijing*).⁸ This connection could lead to a study of the Lanting preface in the light of early medieval intellectual history. Wang Xizhi's vehement rejection of Zhuangzi's equalization of life and death in the preface's second part (whose authenticity is disputed) could be a vantage point to read the text as an expression of religious ideas, especially Celestial Masters Daoism (*Tianshi dao*) with its emphasis on the pursuit of longevity and transcendence. Textual and archaeological evidence indicates that members of the Wang family were adherents of this belief, which arose in the late second century in the North and in the course of the Six Dynasties period spread throughout southern China. Wang Xizhi's affirmation of life, transient as it may be, is attended by a self-confident affirmation of his own individual life and art in the eyes of history. When he anticipates, at the end of the Lanting preface, that future readers will be as moved by the text he is just composing as he himself is by works of the ancients, we hear the voice of a man not only who is fully aware of his exceptionality, but whose notion of transcendence also included the pursuit of literary and artistic immortality.

A further significant avenue of inquiry that would open up connections to many other contemporary texts would be to read the evocation of the splendors of nature in the Lanting preface as an early, outstanding example of Chinese landscape and travel literature. Both reached new heights during the Six Dynasties, not least because of the exposure of many literati to unfamiliar landscapes through dislocation and a new appreciation of localities and regional cultures. Although the text only describes the natural setting of the party, not the excursion there itself, Wang Xizhi's biography in the *Jinshu* (*History of the Jin*) notes that he loved to roam the countryside, and Wang's transmitted letters reveal that he had a keen interest in travel and places outside the environs of Guiji.⁹

⁸ See also this volume's Chapter 23 on *Xuanxue* and *qingtan*.

⁹ Xiaofei Tian, *Visionary journeys: Travel writings from early medieval China and nineteenth-century China* (Cambridge, MA, 2011), pp. 68–73. See also Antje Richter, "Beyond calligraphy: Reading Wang Xizhi's letters," *TP* 96 (2011), pp. 370–407.

The culturally dominant presence of the “Preface to the *Lanting Collection*” is its visual dimension, just as Wang Xizhi is best remembered as the greatest Chinese calligrapher. Tang dynasty copies of the preface that Wang wrote on the day of the gathering itself are among the most celebrated pieces of calligraphy in Chinese history. No original manuscripts by Wang’s hand are extant, but the copies made by rubbings from reproductions in stone, with their faithful representation of even crossed-out characters and ink blots, reveal that Wang’s preface was also revered for its spontaneity (*ziran*), for perfectly capturing the moment of writing. By the fourth century, calligraphy had become an indispensable skill, a skill that defined a literatus’s overall cultural competence as much as mastery in the composition of literary texts. The veneration of Wang Xizhi’s calligraphy—and the *Lanting* preface in particular—were part of early Tang efforts to define the literary and cultural heritage of the Six Dynasties in its own political interests.¹⁰ How successful these efforts were, also beyond their immediate goals, is demonstrated by the ubiquity of Wang’s calligraphic style ever since, as well as by their evident effect on the narrative imagination. Anecdotes and legends about Wang became a powerful presence in both elite and popular culture all over East Asia, including the fate of the original manuscript of the preface, which is said to have been buried with Emperor Taizong of the Tang dynasty (r. 626–649).

The “Preface to the *Lanting Collection*” may be a particularly good example to demonstrate the complex web in which literary texts existed, but it is not at all exceptional. Many texts or individual authors discussed in the following review of major aspects of Six Dynasties prose literature would lend themselves to similarly multifaceted approaches.

LITERARY CIRCLES AT COURTS AND BEYOND

Most major writers of the period appear to have been connected to literary circles, usually at a court or around an aristocratic figure with close connections to political power. Even if “membership” in these circles may have been loose and our understanding of the circles with their sometimes fanciful names owes much to later historical imagination, literary circles were a crucial element of Six Dynasties literature.¹¹ Through literary banquets, excursions, group compositions, debates, the circulation of texts, and personal exchange via correspondence, circles facilitated communication about literary and other intellectual concerns and helped to create discourses with far-reaching

¹⁰ See Jack Chen, *The poetics of sovereignty: On emperor Taizong of the Tang dynasty* (Cambridge, MA, 2010), pp. 148–159.

¹¹ See also Hu Dalei, *Zhonggu wenxue jituan* (Guilin, 1996).

influences. Since literary accomplishment was one of the foremost means to advance an official career, these circles were also used to gain recognition and patronage. Despite the undoubted social embedding of elite life and writing, ideas of a life in temporary or permanent reclusion—that is, without an official position—flourished among early medieval Chinese literati. Living in reclusion promised an escape from a life of strict adherence to a limiting code of behavior, and even from the personal peril that holding office entailed, especially in periods of political strife and dynastic change that cost countless literati their own lives and frequently those of their entire families too. Beyond the personal and pragmatic, notions of reclusion also had a social and idealistic dimension, since it provided a space to uphold moral and intellectual alternatives to gruesome social and political realities often enough.¹²

The first important literary circle straddles the transition from the Han dynasty to the Three Kingdoms period and revolves around the Cao family, notably Cao Cao (155–220), the Han general who prepared the ground for the foundation of the Wei dynasty (220–265), and his sons, Cao Pi (187–226), who reigned as emperor Wen of the Wei (r. 220–226), and Cao Zhi (192–232), whose ambition to the throne was thwarted.¹³ As the most acclaimed writers of a family at the center of political power for more than half a century, the three Caos attracted the literary talent of their day to their salon in Ye (modern Linzhang, Hebei), among them the “Seven Masters of Jian’an” (*Jian’an qi zi*), named after the last reign period of the Han (196–219).¹⁴ No member of this group lived to see the founding of the Wei and only fragments of their *oeuvre* have been transmitted, but their impact is felt and their compositions are evoked throughout the Six Dynasties, not least because of their connection with the court of their patrons. Especially Cao Pi’s nostalgic recollections of a shared and vanished past in his correspondence with Wu Zhi (177–230) were instrumental in making this group iconic. Among the rhapsodies, memorials (*biao*), letters (*shu*), discourses (*lun*), and other prose writings that the Caos and their literary protégés left behind are pieces that became archetypal or authoritative examples in their genres, among them Cao Cao’s memorials, Ruan Yu’s letters, Cao Pi’s “Discourse

¹² Wolfgang Bauer, “The hidden hero: Creation and disintegration of the ideal of eremitism,” in *Individualism and holism: Studies in Confucian and Taoist values*, ed. Donald J. Munro (Ann Arbor, 1985), pp. 157–197; Alan Berkowitz, *Patterns of disengagement: The practice and portrayal of reclusion in early medieval China* (Stanford, 2000).

¹³ See Shih Hsiang-Lin’s recent study “Jian’an literature revisited: Poetic dialogues in the last three decades of the Han dynasty” (PhD dissertation, University of Washington, 2013).

¹⁴ These were Kong Rong (153–208), Ruan Yu (d. 212), Xu Gan (170–217), Wang Can (177–217), Ying Yang, Chen Lin, Liu Zhen; the latter three all died in 217.

about Literature" (*Lunwen*), and Cao Zhi's "Rhapsody on the Goddess of the Luo River" (*Luoshen fu*).

A literary group in which imperial patronage plays only a minor role is the "Seven Sages of the Bamboo Grove" (*Zhulin qi xian*). Ruan Ji (210–263, Ruan Yu's son), Xi Kang (also known as Ji Kang, 223–262), and the men around them¹⁵ have come to represent the "spirit of the Wei-Jin period."¹⁶ They are notorious for their eccentric behavior, often in connection with heavy drinking and drug use, colorfully described in countless anecdotes. As we know from early pictorial depictions, the popularity of the "Seven Sages of the Bamboo Grove" extended to the visual arts as well.¹⁷ Prose writings of the "Seven Sages" have always been admired for their stylistic elegance, for instance Xi Kang's "Letter to Shan Tao Severing Their Relationship" (*Yu Shan Juyuan juejiao shu*), a very personal expression of autonomous spirit; Ruan Ji's penetrating disquisition of the Warring States philosopher Zhuangzi ("Discourse on Understanding the Zhuangzi," *Da Zhuang lun*); or the renowned zither player Xi Kang's "Sound Has Neither Sorrow nor Joy" (*Sheng wu ai le lun*). While many of these texts are dialogic in themselves, others are presented as one side of a dialogue, like Xi Kang's "Discourse about Nourishing Life" (*Yang sheng lun*), which responds to Xiang Xiu, also a member of the group of "Seven Sages."¹⁸

The most influential patron of literature towards the end of the third century was Jia Mi (d. 300), a nephew of Empress Jia (257–300). His coterie was called "Twenty-Four Friends" (*Ersbisi you*) or "Twenty-Four Friends of Jingu," because they would meet in Shi Chong's Golden Valley estate. The most outstanding member of this group is Lu Ji (261–303), whose fame rests on his many superb rhapsodies, although he also left writings in other genres, such as a number of letters to his

¹⁵ Other members of the group are Shan Tao (205–283), Xiang Xiu (third century), Liu Ling (c. 221–c. 300), Ruan Xian (234–305), and Wang Rong (c. 234–305). See Donald Holzman, "Les Sept sages de la forêt des bambous et la société de leur temps," *TP* 44 (1956), pp. 317–346.

¹⁶ See the text of two lectures that Lu Xun (1881–1936) gave in 1927: "Wei Jin fengdu ji wenzhang yu yao ji jiu zhi guanxi," in *idem, Lu Xun quanji*, Volume 3 (Beijing, 1989), pp. 501–517. See also Dominik Declercq, *Writing against the state: Political rhetorics in third and fourth century China* (Leiden, 1998), pp. 12–13.

¹⁷ See Audrey Spiro's study *Contemplating the ancients: Aesthetic and social issues in early Chinese portraiture* (Berkeley, 1990).

¹⁸ See Thomas Jansen, "The art of severing relationships (*juejiao*) in early medieval China," *JAOS* 126 (2006), pp. 347–365; Donald Holzman, *Poetry and politics: The life and works of Juan Chi (A.D. 210–263)* (Cambridge, 1976), pp. 88–109; Robert G. Henricks, *Philosophy and argumentation in third-century China: The essays of Hsi K'ang* (Princeton, 1983), pp. 21–30. See also Paul Kroll's study "Huilin on black and white, Jiang Yan on *wuwei*: Two Buddhist dialogues from the Liu-Song dynasty," *EMC* 18 (2012), pp. 1–24.

younger brother Lu Yun (262–303), a fine poet and writer of rhapsodies in his own right.¹⁹ Both brothers were also noted calligraphers; Lu Ji's "Letter on Recovering from Illness" (*Pingfu tie*), now in the Palace Museum in Beijing, is treasured as a rare example of an early medieval autograph. Pan Yue (247–300) wrote several pieces in different genres dedicated to mourning, such as "Rhapsody Lamenting the Deceased" (*Daowang fu*) and "Mourning the Eternally Departed" (*Ai yongsbi wen*), both written on the death of his wife, and "Dirge for Xiahou Zhan [d. 291]" (*Xiahou chang shi lei*). Other members of the circle are the anthologist and genre critic Zhi Yu (d. 311);²⁰ the poet Zuo Si (c. 250–c. 305), author of the ambitious "Rhapsody on the Three Capitals" of the states Shu, Wu, and Wei (*San du fu*);²¹ the *Zuozhuan* scholar Du Yu (222–284); and Liu Kun (271–318), who is best remembered for the poems and letters exchanged with Lu Chen (284–350).²²

About a century later—and half a century after the Lanting gathering—Xie Hun (d. 412), a grandson of Xie An, established a circle on Black Robe Lane (Wuyi xiang 烏衣巷) in Jiankang which chiefly consisted of members of the Xie family.²³ Xie Hun's work is almost completely lost, including the substantial anthology he compiled. The even more extensive compilation projects of his cousin Xie Lingyun (385–433) have not survived either, although much else of his *oeuvre* is still extant. Xie Lingyun, the most remarkable and flamboyant member of this family circle, was a brilliant poet and master of prose, as his transmitted discourses, memorials, letters, encomia (*zan*), inscriptions (*ming*), and dirges (*lei*) show. In addition to his literary accomplishments he was a painter and calligrapher of repute and known for his profound learning of Buddhist doctrine. Xie Lingyun is also famous for his fascination with the aesthetic and spiritual dimension of landscape. His monumental, self-annotated "Rhapsody on Living in the Mountains" (*Shan ju fu*) shows that

¹⁹ About the Lu brothers and other members of Jia Mi's circle, see David R. Knechtges, "Sweet-peel orange or southern gold? Regional identity in Western Jin literature," in *Studies in early medieval Chinese literature and cultural history: In honor of Richard B. Mather and Donald Holzman*, ed. Paul W. Kroll and David R. Knechtges (Provo, UT, 2003), pp. 27–79.

²⁰ On Zhi Yu's largely lost *Wenzhang liubie ji* (*Collection of Literature by Genre*), probably the first general anthology in China, and his "Discourse of Genres of Literature" (*Wenzhang liubie lun*), see Joseph R. Allen, "Chih Yü's *Discussions of different types of literature*: A translation and brief comment," *Parerga* 3 (1976), pp. 3–36.

²¹ David R. Knechtges, *Wen xuan or selections of refined literature*, Volume 1 (Princeton, 1982), pp. 337–477.

²² David R. Knechtges, "Liu Kun, Lu Chen, and their writings in the transition to the Eastern Jin," *CLEAR* 28 (2006), pp. 1–66.

²³ See Cynthia L. Chennault, "Lofty gates or solitary imprisonment? Xie family members of the Southern Dynasties," *TP* 85 (1999), pp. 249–327.

this fascination extended to pristine wilderness as well as to landscape fashioned by humans.²⁴ The company Xie Lingyun kept during his long periods of residence at his private estate in Shining (in Guiji) shows that literary circles could change location and grow; apart from family members, such as Xie Huilian (407–433), author of a noteworthy “Rhapsody on Snow” (*Xue fu*) and a “Sacrificial Address to an Ancient Tomb” (*Ji guzhong wen*), Xie Lingyun associated with local recluses and Buddhist monks.

The “Eight Friends of the Prince of Jingling” (*Jingling ba you*) were at the core of the large literary circle around Xiao Ziliang (460–494), son of emperor Wu (r. 482–493) of the Southern Qi dynasty (479–502). The group was also called the salon at the “Western Residence” (*Xidi*), after the place where the coterie of Xiao Ziliang gathered from 487.²⁵ The highly illustrious circle included a future emperor—Xiao Yan (464–549), founder of the Liang dynasty, who reigned as Emperor Wu (r. 502–549)—along with the foremost literati of the time. Ren Fang (460–508) left a variety of fine prose writings, especially in genres of official communication, such as edicts (*zhao*), examination questions (*cewen*), commands (*ling*), memorials, presentations (*zou*), appeals (*yi*), and thank-you notes (*qi*), but also a collection of accounts of the strange (*zhiguai*).²⁶ The fact that he was himself the patron of a minor circle, the “Longmen Associates” (*Longmen zhi you*), exemplifies that many more literary circles flourished than the few introduced here, and that they were neither mutually exclusive nor narrowly circumscribed. Shen Yue (441–513) is another distinguished member of the “Eight Friends of the Prince of Jingling.” Although he is best known today as the author of a standard history, the *Songsbu* (*History of the Liu-Song*, compiled 492–493), Shen Yue is one of the great poets of the Yongming period, along with Wang Rong and Xie Tiao (464–499).²⁷ The prosodic innovations of the Yongming poets are not only manifest in their observation of tonal euphony in their poems, but also discussed in prose writings, from letters to a discourse that Shen Yue appended to the chapter on Xie Lingyun in his *Songsbu*.²⁸ Shen’s brief account of literary history from its origins in primordial times to the early sixth century

²⁴ Francis A. Westbrook, “Landscape description in the lyric poetry and ‘Fuh on dwelling in the mountains’ of Shieh Ling-yunn” (PhD dissertation, Yale University, 1973).

²⁵ See Thomas Jansen’s study *Höfische Öffentlichkeit im frühmittelalterlichen China: Debatten im Salon des Prinzen Xiao Ziliang* (Freiburg, 2000).

²⁶ Erin L. Brightwell, “Discursive flights: Structuring stories in the *Shuyi ji*,” EMC 18 (2012), pp. 48–68.

²⁷ See Mather, *The age of eternal brilliance*. The other three members of the group were Xiao Chen (479–530), Fan Yun (451–503), and Lu Chui (470–526).

²⁸ *SoS* 67.1778–1779, translated in Siu-kit Wong, *Early Chinese literary criticism* (Hong Kong, 1983), pp. 75–87; and Richard B. Mather, *The poet Shen Yüeh (441–513): The reticent marquis* (Princeton, 1988), pp. 40–54, which includes remarks on a correspondence between Shen Yue and Lu Jue (472–499). See also Meow Hui Goh, *Sound and sight: Poetry and courtier culture in the Yongming era (483–493)* (Stanford, 2010).

concludes with a description and cosmological justification of certain prosodic features that result in tonal harmony.

It may not be a coincidence that the appreciation of tonal prosody came out of Xiao Ziliang's salon, with its strong Buddhist connections, since proper pronunciation is crucial in Buddhist liturgy and in the recitation of sutras and other Buddhist texts.²⁹ Towards the end of the Han dynasty, this particular emphasis, and the exposure to Indic languages, had led to the creation of a method that glossed the pronunciation of Chinese characters more effectively. In earlier centuries, the only way to point out the pronunciation of a Chinese character by means of the nonalphabetic Chinese script had been to refer to the pronunciation of another character—either a homophone or an approximate homophone. The new, so-called *fanqie* method expressed the pronunciation of a Chinese character by means of two other, often simple, well-known characters. The first of these characters provided the initial of the word in question and the second the final, which included the tone. *Fanqie* was widely used in rhyme dictionaries, such as the Sui dynasty *Qieyun* (*Cutting Rhymes*, 601), which partly survived in Chen Pengnian's (961–1017) *Guangyun* (*Expanded Rhymes*, 1011).

The wide literary circle around Xiao Tong (501–531), Crown Prince Zhaoming of the Liang dynasty, included childhood tutors such as Shen Yue and Xu Mian (466–535), members of his extended family such as Xiao Ziyun (487–549) and Xiao Zixian (489–537), and other eminent literati of the time.³⁰ The most significant work that came out of Xiao Tong's circle was *Wenxuan* (*Selections of Refined Literature*), the earliest transmitted anthology of Chinese literature arranged by genre. It shapes the understanding of Six Dynasties literature to the present day. The project was made possible not the least by the prince's library of 30,000 scrolls at the Eastern Palace: as large as the also remarkable collections held by Shen Yue and Ren Fang together, but only a fraction of the library that his younger brother Xiao Yi (508–554) assembled. Tragically, this last collection was destroyed by his own hand when he set fire to it, under siege at the close of his brief reign as the last emperor (Emperor Yuan) of the Liang dynasty (r. 553–554). Although anthologies were compiled before, often in connection with literary circles and their improved access to manuscripts—for instance by Cao Pi, who in 218 gathered the works of friends who had died during the 217 pandemic—none of these earlier compilations have survived, including other anthologies assembled at

²⁹ Willy Vande Walle, "Lay Buddhism among the Chinese aristocracy during the period of the Southern Dynasties: Hsiao Tzu-Liang (460–494) and his entourage," *OLP* 10 (1979), pp. 275–297.

³⁰ Ping Wang, *The age of courtly writing: "Wen xuan" compiler Xiao Tong (501–531) and his circle* (Leiden, 2012).

Xiao Tong's Eastern Palace. The *Wenxuan* is thus both an invaluable repository of texts that otherwise might have been lost and a rare opportunity to study literary appreciation at a Six Dynasties court.³¹ One roughly contemporary anthology that is still extant deserves a mention here: the massive *Hongming ji* (*Collection on the Propagation and Clarification [of Buddhism]*, c. 515–518), an anthology of apologetic texts in different genres and a crucial source of the history of Buddhism in China.³² It was compiled by the eminent monk Sengyou (445–518) under whose tutelage the young Liu Xie, the future author of *Wenxin diaolong*, had spent a decade at Dinglin Temple on the outskirts of Jiankang.

THE RISE OF LITERARY CRITICISM

The Six Dynasties period is famous for a wealth of texts in different genres that are especially dedicated to literary thought and criticism. Not only is the breadth of questions that are raised in these texts impressive—ranging from the origins of writing and literature to their functions, from formal matters to reader response—but some of the discourses, letters, prefaces, and rhapsodies that reflect on literature moreover belong to the finest examples of their genre. It is also worth mentioning that many discussions that are central to early medieval literary thought—about the origins of creativity, the faithfulness of representation, and the value of recent historical developments—are found in other areas of aesthetic criticism as well, for instance in discussions of calligraphy, painting, and music.³³

Most of the major texts on literary thought come out of the main literary circles or are in some way connected to them, which may be one reason why they were transmitted. The first comprehensive discussion of literature in China, Cao Pi's "Discourse on Literature" (c. 218), survived because it was included in the *Wenxuan*'s section on discourses, while the critical text it was part of, *Classical Discourses* (*Dianlun*), is largely lost.³⁴ Given its brevity, the

³¹ Knechtges, *Wen xuan*, Volume 1, pp. 1–70.

³² See Helwig Schmidt-Glintzer, *Das Hung-ming chi und die Aufnahme des Buddhismus in China* (Wiesbaden, 1976).

³³ These discussions also come in a variety of genres. See Zhao Yi's (late second–early third centuries) essay "Against Cursive Script" (*Fei caoshu*), Gu Kaizhi's (c. 345–c. 406) "Account of Painting Cloud Terrace Mountain" (*Hua Yuntai shan ji*), and Zong Bing's (375–443) "Preface to Painted Landscapes" (*Hua shanshui xu*). For translations of these texts, see Yolaine Escande, *Traité chinois de peinture et de calligraphie*, Volume 1, *Les textes fondateurs (des Han aux Sui)* (Paris, 2003), pp. 75–84, 175–185, 203–217.

³⁴ See, among others, the annotated translation in Stephen Owen, *Readings in Chinese literary thought* (Cambridge, MA, 1992), pp. 57–72.

“Discourse on Literature” covers astonishingly broad ground, expounding on theoretical topics such as the origin of talent in the individual writers’ innate vital energy or *qi* (*wen yi qi wei zhu* 文以氣為主), on desirable qualities of several genres of writing, and on the legitimization of literary pursuits. Some of these ideas are presented together with the critical evaluation of writers, among them the group that was later designated the “Seven Masters of Jian’an.” The overarching concern of the “Discourse on Literature” is criticism itself: Cao Pi repeatedly points to the epistemological obstacles that result from a critic’s lack of self-awareness and declares the ability to know oneself as the precondition of successful criticism (*junzi shen ji yi du ren* 君子審己以度人). Apart from this discourse, Cao Pi also wrote about literary topics in his letters, for instance to Wu Zhi, a senior adviser who also corresponded with Cao Zhi.³⁵

The greatest exploration of literature in the demanding form of a rhapsody was composed by Lu Ji. The masterful “Rhapsody on Literature” (*Wen fu*) is a tour de force of literary insight, imagination, and artistry, in which, for the first time in Chinese literary history, the experience of the writer takes center stage.³⁶ Cao Pi had assumed critics to be writers themselves, too, but in “Discourse on Literature” this premise remains in the background. The tightly structured “Rhapsody on Literature” presents Lu Ji’s vision of the creative process from his own perspective, describing its conditions and stages from the inception of “being” and “sound” out of “nothingness” and “silence” (*ke xu wu yi ze you, kou jimo er qiu yin* 課虛無以責有，叩寂寞而求音) through finishing the draft based on certain aesthetic principles and notions of genre. Lu Ji then grants the finished work a virtually cosmological plausibility. Rhapsodies with their changing rhyme schemes, prose interpolations, extravagant language, and encyclopedic approach to their subjects were of particularly high standing during the Han dynasty, but remained a popular genre in the Six Dynasties as well. While rhapsodies written during this age are usually shorter and less exhaustive than their great epideictic predecessors, there are many Six Dynasties rhapsodies of imposing magnitude, among them Lu Ji’s “Rhapsody on Literature,” Zuo Si’s “Rhapsody on the Three Capitals,” or Xie Lingyun’s “Rhapsody on Living in the Mountains.”

Many of the ideas that were first expressed by Lu Ji in the late third century are resumed 200 years later by Liu Xie (c.470–after 519) in his

³⁵ These correspondences, as well as other important literary letters, are introduced by Donald Holzman in “Literary criticism in China in the early third century A.D.,” *AS* 28.2 (1974), pp. 113–149. See also Antje Richter, *Letters and epistolary culture in early medieval China* (Seattle, 2013), pp. 64–71.

³⁶ Translations include Owen, *Readings in Chinese literary thought*, pp. 73–181; and David R. Knechtges, *Wen xuan or selections of refined literature*, Volume 3 (Princeton, 1996), pp. 211–231.

Wenxin diaolong (*The Literary Mind and the Carving of Dragons*),³⁷ a collection of fifty essays of unique scope in Chinese literary history.³⁸ At 38,000 characters, *Wenxin diaolong* is not only exceptionally long (compare the “Discourse on Literature” at around 600 and the “Rhapsody on Literature” at around 2,000 characters), it is also of great structural complexity on different textual levels. In the first five chapters of his work, Liu Xie, who had at least loose connections to the circle around Xiao Tong, sets forth his views of the basic principles that inform literature. Opening with a treatise on the origin of civilization, language, writing, and literature in the metaphysical, absolute Dao, he then turns to the core of the Confucian tradition: the literary impact of the sages, particularly Confucius, and the overarching importance of the Confucian canonical writings as models for all later serious literature. Other texts that Liu singles out in this first part are the Apocrypha and the *Elegies of the South* (*Chu ci*), which are both assumed to be of quasi-canonical significance for later literary production. The following twenty chapters are dedicated to dozens of literary genres and subgenres, by far superseding any former attempts at genre classification in China. Liu traces each genre back to its origin in the Confucian canon, gives an explanation of the genre designation, outlines the development of the genre from antiquity to his own day—mainly through critical references to exemplary works—and records subgenres. In the third part of *Wenxin diaolong*, Liu Xie explores a variety of questions concerning the creative process, rhetoric, prosody, reception theory, and so on. Many of the twenty-five chapters in this part are celebrated treatises of Chinese literary thought, such as Chapter 26, *Shen si* (“Spirit Thought”), about the workings of imagination;³⁹ Chapter 27, *Ti xing* (“Style and Personality”), about the formative power of an author’s personality and its interaction with normative categories; and Chapter 48, *Zhi yin* (“The One Who Understands the Tone”), about questions of reader response. The last chapter of the book is a postface in the early and early

³⁷ The title, which is without doubt intentionally ambiguous, is understood to express the complementary relation or delicate balance of the spirit and the craft of literature. However, the exact meaning of each of its two components, as well as their syntactic relation, have been interpreted in very different ways. See Valérie Lavoix, “Un dragon pour emblème: Variations sur le titre du *Wenxin diaolong*,” *ÉC* 19.1–2 (2000), pp. 197–247.

³⁸ Vincent Yu-chung Shih, *The literary mind and the carving of dragons: A study of thought and pattern in Chinese literature* (New York, 1959). See also Owen, *Readings in Chinese literary thought*, pp. 183–298; and the essays collected in Cai Zong-qi’s *A Chinese literary mind: Culture, creativity, and rhetoric in Wenxin diaolong* (Stanford, 2001).

³⁹ See Ronald Egan’s study “Poet, mind, and world: A reconsideration of the ‘Shensi’ chapter of *Wenxin diaolong*,” in *A Chinese literary mind*, ed. Cai Zong-qi, pp. 101–126.

medieval Chinese tradition of attaching an often autobiographically inspired statement to an individual author's collected writings.⁴⁰

Liu Xie wrote a sophisticated type of parallel prose (*pian wen*), a style that had been in vogue since the Jin dynasty. It is characterized by syntactic, metric, and phonic parallelism and an abundance of tropes and allusions, which can make this type of prose extraordinarily dense and difficult to translate.⁴¹ Liu's treatment of the topic in Chapter 35 of *Wenxin diaolong*, "Parallel Phrasing" (*Li ci* 麗辭), is characteristic of his overall method of criticism, which roots a literary phenomenon in natural or cosmological contexts as well as in the Confucian canon. His introduction of literary parallelism draws on the bilateral symmetry of human and animal bodies and cites the *Shang shu* (*Venerated Documents*) and the *Yijing* (*Book of Changes*). Liu then exemplifies his understanding of supreme parallel prose by moving through Chinese literary history and selecting passages that fit his model of four basic types of parallelism. Similar to Lu Ji's "Rhapsody on Literature," whose magnificent characterization of its topic is achieved by employing the process and means it describes, Liu Xie's chapter on parallel prose is written in that same style it attempts to characterize. His praise of the *Yijing*'s commentary on its first two hexagrams, *qian* 乾 and *kun* 坤, is a good example:

When setting out *qian*'s four virtues, then all sentences are interlocking; when [describing] the respective responses evoked by tiger and dragon, then all words are coupled; when [describing] *qian* and *kun* as easy and simple, then [we see] roundabout and interweaving; when [describing] the sun's and moon's movements; then [we see] alternate lines connected; although there may be extra sentences and words, parallelity is the overall intention.

The last part makes Liu Xie's attempt at matching content and form particularly plain to see, since the line about the occasional extra sentence or word in Liu's text is just such a deviation from parallel prose itself. Although Liu Xie's other examples are mostly taken from rhapsodies and poems of the Han dynasty, many Six Dynasties writers have left us outstanding pieces of parallel prose, from Lu Ji to Pan Yue, Yan Yanzhi, Shen Yue, and Ren Fang.

A contemporary of Liu Xie, Zhong Rong (also known as Zhong Hong, c.468–c.518), composed another ambitious, if much shorter, text that in its focus on the assessment and ranking of literary accomplishment exemplifies an important intellectual concern of the Six Dynasties period.⁴² Zhong's *Shi pin*

⁴⁰ See Antje Richter, "Empty dreams and other omissions: Liu Xie's *Wenxin diaolong* preface," *AM*, 3rd series 25.1 (2012), pp. 83–110.

⁴¹ See James Robert Hightower, "Some characteristics of parallel prose," in *Studies in Chinese literature*, ed. John L. Bishop (Cambridge, MA, 1965), pp. 108–139.

⁴² See John Timothy Wixted, "The nature of evaluation in the *Shih-p'in* (Gradings of Poets) by Chung Hung (A.D. 469–518)," in *Theories of the arts in China*, ed. Susan Bush and Christian Murck (Princeton,

(*Grades of Poets*, c. 513–518) consists of a poetological preface, taking up a third of the text, and an annotated list of more than 120 writers of pentasyllabic poetry. Each poet is assigned one of three grades and briefly characterized, sometimes with reference to previous criticism. Xi Kang, for instance, is summed up in the following words: “He rather resembles Cao Pi. He is too stern and absolute and openly flaunts his talents, which harms the delivery of the profound and elegant. But his metaphors are clear and far-reaching, he has excellent judgment, and is without fail one of the best.” Superficial as this approach may seem, it exerted a lasting influence on later critics who would invariably acknowledge Zhong Rong’s authoritative verdicts, be it only to contradict him—most famously for denying Tao Qian top rank. The preface is best known for its latter part, in which Zhong Rong dismisses the emphasis on tonal euphony that was upheld by Shen Yue and other Yongming-era poets. Among the critics who shared Zhong Rong’s disapprobation of certain trends in contemporary poetry was the historian Pei Ziye (469–530), a descendant of the eminent Pei Songzhi (372–451), whose extensive commentary to Chen Shou’s (233–297) *Sanguo zhi* preserves excerpts from many historical works that are otherwise lost. In a fragment that was later titled “Discourse on the Carving of Insects” (*Diaochong lun*), Pei Ziye reads the history of Chinese poetry since the canonical *Shijing* (*Book of Odes*) as a history of decline that set in during the Han dynasty and had by the mid-fifth century assumed alarming proportions.⁴³ Pei laments the prevailing disregard of the social and ethical dimension of poetry and accuses poets of pursuing literary ornateness not so much for its own sake, but for the sake of self-promotion.

Another crucial document of literary thought in China is Xiao Tong’s preface to *Wenxuan*, the anthology compiled under his auspices.⁴⁴ Xiao Tong starts his essay with an evocation of the invention of writing and literature (*wen*) at the dawn of civilization and their further development and diversification, which leads to a discussion of genres. While the four genres that Xiao Tong regarded to be most significant—two types of rhapsody (*fu* and *sao*), poem (*shi*), and eulogy (*song*)—are characterized in some detail, lesser genres, such as admonitions (*zhen*, *jie*), discourses, inscriptions, and dirges, are each distinguished by a brief phrase. A number of additional genres are then listed without comment, among

1983), pp. 225–264; as well as the full translation and study by Bernhard Führer, *Chinas erste Poetik: Das Shipin (Kriterion Poietikon) des Zhong Hong* (Dortmund, 1995).

⁴³ See Jansen, *Höfische Öffentlichkeit*, pp. 137–148; Tian, *Beacon fire and shooting star*, pp. 138–144.

⁴⁴ James R. Hightower, “The *Wen Hsüan* and genre theory,” *HJAS* 20 (1957), pp. 512–533; Knechtges, *Wen xuan*, Volume 1, pp. 1–91; and *idem*, “Culling the weeds and selecting prime blossoms: The anthology in early medieval China,” in *Culture and power in the reconstitution of the Chinese realm*, 200–600, ed. Scott Pearce, Audrey Spiro, and Patricia Ebrey (Cambridge, MA, 2001), pp. 200–241.

them memorial and preface. Since the catalogue of genres presented in Xiao Tong's preface is at odds with the categories of *Wenxuan* itself, a study of genre needs to take both the preface and the anthology's actual organization into account. In the latter part of his preface Xiao Tong discusses his criteria for the selection of texts for the *Wenxuan*, which amounts to a definition of "refined writing" (*wen*).

Sophisticated typological reflections on genre and the growth of libraries in early medieval China also led to the development of book classification systems, which first arose in the Han dynasty. An influential innovation was the division of literature into the four basic groups: canonical books (*jing*), historical works (*shi*), philosophical texts (*zi*), and literary collections (*ji*). Devised in the third century, the "Four Branches" (*sibu*) became the standard classification system in China following their use in the bibliographic monograph of the *Suishu* of 656. Ruan Xiaoxu's (479–536) preface to his otherwise lost catalogue *Qi lu* (*Seven Records*) gives an account of the history of book collecting and cataloguing.⁴⁵ The period also saw religious catalogue projects, for instance the no-longer-extant first catalogue of Daoist books by Lu Xiuqing (406–477), *San dong jingshu mulu* (*Catalogue of the Scriptures in the Three Caverns*, 471), and Sengyou's surviving *Chu Sanzang ji ji* (*Collection of Records on Translations from the Tripitaka*).

GENRES OF LIFE WRITING

Life writing in early China stood in the tradition of historical writing with its emphasis on biography and the public aspects of individual lives and their exemplary character. During the Six Dynasties period, biographical and autobiographical writing grew in volume and diversity and was increasingly used for decidedly literary endeavors, thus expanding the spectrum of established genres and their repertoire. Biographies not only continued to be a dominant part in the standard histories written between the third and sixth centuries, such as Fan Ye's (398–446) *Hou Hanshu*, Chen Shou's *Sanguo zhi*, Shen Yue's *Songsbu*, Xiao Zixian's *Nan Qishu*, and Wei Shou's (506–572) *Weishu*, but there were also a great number of independent compilations of thematic biographies focused on specific groups of people, which form mosaics of certain sets of values. The *Gaosbi zhuan* (*Biographies of High-Minded Gentlemen*), dedicated to the lives of extraordinary men living in reclusion, was compiled by Huangfu Mi (215–282), who himself resisted the call for

⁴⁵ See Xiaofei Tian, "Book collecting and cataloging in the age of manuscript culture," in *Early medieval China*, ed. Swartz et al. (New York, 2014), pp. 307–323; and Tian, *Beacon fire and shooting star*, pp. 86–95.

office throughout his life.⁴⁶ From fragments surviving in encyclopedias we know that biographies of filial sons were another popular topic throughout early medieval China.⁴⁷ Ge Hong (283–343/363), famous for his *Baopuzi* (*The Master Who Embraces Simplicity*), compiled the *Shenxian zhuan* (*Biographies of Divine Transcendents*), which can be read as a comprehensive early Daoist manual of ways to attain the state of transcendence or deathlessness.⁴⁸ Buddhist hagiography flourished as well, as the two collections *Gaoseng zhuan* (*Biographies of Eminent Monks*, 530) by Huijiao (497–554) and *Biqiuni zhuan* (*Biographies of Nuns*, c. 516) by Baochang (fl. 495–516) prove.⁴⁹

Six Dynasties biographical literature also included smaller commemorative genres. Apart from dirges, at which Cao Zhi and Pan Yue excelled,⁵⁰ there is also a considerable body of epitaphs or grave memoirs (*muzhi ming*), such as Ren Fang's epitaph for the wife of Liu Huan (434–489) (*Liu xiansheng furen muzhi*).⁵¹ Another genre that incorporated life writing is the sacrificial offering (*ji wen*).⁵² One of the most moving pieces is Tao Qian's "Sacrificial Offering to My Younger Sister, Madame Cheng" (*Ji Chengshi mei wen*), in which he mourned her early death in 405, remembering both her life and his own. Writing the autobiographical part of this text may have inspired Tao Qian to write "Sacrificial Offering to Myself" (*Zi ji wen*), a pioneering adaptation of this genre as entirely autobiographical. Tao's creative take on established genres also shows in his celebrated "Biography of the Master of Five Willows" (*Wu liu xiansheng zhuan*), an autobiography in the guise of a fictionalized biography.

The foremost early medieval collection of anecdotes—another standard type of historical and biographical writing—is *Shishuo xinyu* (translated as *New Account of Tales of the World* or *Traditional Tales and Recent Accounts*),

⁴⁶ See Keith N. Knapp's study "Heaven and death according to Huangfu Mi, a third century Confucian," *EMC* 6 (2000), pp. 1–31. Huangfu Mi compiled two other collections dedicated to the lives of recluses—*Biographies of Wise Men* (*Daren zhuan*) and *Biographies of Gentlemen in Reclusion* (*Yishi zhuan*)—neither of which have survived, as well as the *Biographies of Exemplary Women* (*Lienü zhuan*).

⁴⁷ See Keith N. Knapp, *Selfless offspring: Filial children and social order in medieval China* (Honolulu, 2005).

⁴⁸ Robert Ford Campany, *To live as long as Heaven and Earth: A translation and study of Ge Hong's "Traditions of divine transcendents"* (Berkeley, 2002).

⁴⁹ John Kieschnick, *The eminent monk: Buddhist ideals in medieval Chinese hagiography* (Honolulu, 1997); Kathryn Ann Tsai, *Lives of the nuns: Biographies of Chinese Buddhist nuns from the fourth to sixth centuries. A translation of the Pi-ch'i'u-ni chuan, compiled by Shih Pao-ch'ang* (Honolulu, 1994).

⁵⁰ See Robert Joe Cutter, "Saying goodbye: The transformation of the dirge in early medieval China," *EMC* 10–11 (2004), pp. 67–130.

⁵¹ Timothy M. Davis, *Entombed epigraphy and commemorative culture in early medieval China: A history of early Muzhiming* (Leiden, 2015), pp. 324–329.

⁵² The eulogistic genres in *Wenxuan* are introduced in Alan J. Berkowitz's study of a particular sacrificial offering, "Ji Yan Guanglu wen" by Wang Sengda (423–458); see "The last piece in the *Wenxuan*, Wang Sengda's 'Offering for Imperial Household Grandee Yan'," *EMC* 10–11.1 (2004), pp. 177–201.

composed under the auspices of Liu Yiqing (403–444), a nephew of the founder of the Liu-Song dynasty, Liu Yu (363–422, Emperor Wu, r. 420–422).⁵³ Earlier works of a similar character, such as Pei Qi's *Yulin* (*Forest of Tales*, 362) have not survived. *Shishuo xinyu* contains more than a thousand anecdotes about hundreds of historical personages of the second through fifth centuries, often shown engaged in “Pure Conversation” (*qingtan*), an elevated form of witty dialogue meant to demonstrate the protagonists' intellectual and verbal superiority. The anecdotes are subsumed under three dozen categories, which partly determine their interpretation, such as “Speech and Conversation,” “Quick Perception,” “Worthy Beauties,” and “Anger and Irascibility.” The overall emphasis on the evaluation and assessment of human character and ability stands in the tradition of texts such as Liu Shao's (c. 180–c. 245) *Renwu zhi* (*Treatises on Personalities*) and is closely related to inquiries into suitability for government office.⁵⁴ The importance of *Shishuo xinyu* can hardly be overestimated. Many of its anecdotes became emblematic of the “spirit of the Wei-Jin period,” and the book's overall organization was frequently emulated in later periods of Chinese history and in Japan.⁵⁵

Autobiography surged during the Six Dynasties period as well, whether in the form of specialized writings in different genres or as autobiographical interludes in other texts.⁵⁶ Although many autobiographical accounts were restricted to the public dimension of their author's life, private life was gaining importance, too. The self-revelation of previously hidden aspects of one's life characterizes autobiographical writings such as Xi Kang's letter to Shan Tao or Shen Yue's Buddhist confession (*Chan hui wen*), to name but two. The autobiographical potential of the preface has already been mentioned in connection with Wang Xizhi's Lanting preface and Liu Xie's postface to *Wenxin diaolong*. Both types—one attached to a poetry collection and the other to an individual author's collected writings—are prolific autobiographical genres. Outstanding examples of the latter type are Cao Pi's “Account of Myself” (*Zi xu*), which was part of his lost *Classical Discourses*; Jiang Yan's

⁵³ Richard B. Mather, trans., *Shih-shuo hsin-yü: A new account of tales of the world, by Liu I-ch'ing with commentary by Liu Ch'ün* (Minneapolis, 1976). See also the twentieth volume of the journal *Early medieval China* (2014), dedicated to *Shishuo xinyu* scholarship.

⁵⁴ See John K. Shryock's translation *The study of human abilities: The Jen wu chih of Liu Shao* (New Haven, 1937).

⁵⁵ Nanxiu Qian, *Spirit and self in medieval China: The Shih-shuo hsin-yü and its legacy* (Honolulu, 2001).

⁵⁶ Wolfgang Bauer, *Das Antlitz Chinas: Autobiographische Selbstdarstellungen in der chinesischen Literatur von ihren Anfängen bis heute* (Munich, 1990); Pei-yi Wu, *The Confucian's progress: Autobiographical writings in traditional China* (Princeton, 1990). Matthew V. Wells, *To die and not decay: Autobiography and the pursuit of immortality in early China* (Ann Arbor, 2009); and *idem*, “Self as historical artifact: Ge Hong and early Chinese autobiography,” *EMC* 9 (2003), pp. 71–103.

(444–505) “Account of Myself” (*Zi xu*), which was attached to a compilation of his own works;⁵⁷ and Xiao Yi’s “Authorial Preface” (*Zi xu*) to his *Master of the Golden Tower* (*Jinlouzi*). Among the most powerful autobiographical writings of the period are rhapsodies, such as Yu Xin’s (513–581) nostalgic “Rhapsody Lamenting the South” (*Ai Jiangnan fu*), written after the author’s involuntary exile to the North, and Yan Zhitui’s (531–c. 591) “Rhapsody on Contemplating My Life” (*Guan wo sheng fu*). Yan Zhitui’s most famous work, the *Yanshi jiaxun* (*Family Instructions of Mr. Yan*), intended as a manual for his own sons and their descendants and interspersed with autobiographical reflections throughout, is an impressive document of individual and familial self-confidence.⁵⁸

CITY, COUNTRYSIDE, AND WILDERNESS

Biographical and autobiographical reflection also infuses many of the contemporary writings about localities during this period. Six Dynasties literature betrays a strong appreciation of locality in the broadest sense of the word, including cityscapes and urban life, suburban landscapes and wilderness, travel and exploration. This rise in interest was partly fueled by the northerners’ exposure to the natural sceneries and local cultures of the South, partly by their feelings of displacement and nostalgia following their exile from the North, and partly by the loss of a stable political center, which contributed to the elevation of formerly marginal regions. The more acute awareness of locality that emerges in this period found expression in a variety of genres and modes.

Rhapsodies were sung about places as diverse as metropolises, suburbs, and mountains. A historical impetus drives Zuo Si, who in his “Rhapsody on the Three Capitals” tries to capture the vanished splendors of the capitals of the Three Kingdoms, as well as Bao Zhao (c. 414–466), whose “Rhapsody on a Weed-Covered City” (*Wu cheng fu*) laments the ruin of Guangling (modern Yangzhou).⁵⁹ Other rhapsodies about localities are clearly driven by autobiographical impulses, such as Xie Lingyun’s “Rhapsody on Living in the Mountains” about Xie’s large private estate in Shining, which in turn inspired

⁵⁷ See Paul W. Kroll, “On political and personal fate: Three selections from Jiang Yan’s prose and verse,” in *Early medieval China*, ed. Swartz et al., pp. 388–404.

⁵⁸ Albert E. Dien, “A sixth-century father’s advice on literature: Comments on chapter nine of *Yanshi jiaxun*,” *AM*, 3rd series 13.1 (2002), pp. 65–82; Mark Edward Lewis, “Writing the world in the *Family Instructions of the Yan Clan*,” *EMC* 13–14.1 (2007), pp. 33–80.

⁵⁹ David R. Knechtges, “Ruin and remembrance in classical Chinese literature: The ‘Fu on the ruined city’ by Bao Zhao,” in *Reading medieval Chinese poetry: Text, context, and culture*, ed. Paul W. Kroll (Leiden, 2015), pp. 55–89.

Shen Yue to write a “Rhapsody on Living in the Suburbs” (*Jiao ju fu*) about his estate outside Jiankang.⁶⁰ Pan Yue’s “Rhapsody on a Westward Journey” (*Xizheng fu*), composed on the occasion of a trip from Luoyang to Chang’an in 292, is tinged with autobiographical elements, too.

Localities were also the topic of specialized geographic and historical records. Yang Xuanzhi’s *Luoyang qielan ji* (*Account of the Monasteries of Luoyang* of 547) is a rich collection of local history, biography, lore, religion, and everyday culture in the capital region of the Northern Wei dynasty. Praised for its superb style of parallel prose and narrative imagination, it is a remarkable example of northern literary accomplishment.⁶¹ Another important author of the Northern Wei, Li Daoyuan (d. 527), incorporated an equally broad range of materials into a commentary, the *Shuijing zhu*, on the now lost *Shuijing* (*Canon of Waterways*). His *Shuijing zhu* is a substantial geographical work and important source of otherwise lost texts. Chang Qu’s (c. 291–c. 361) *Huayang guo zhi* (*Monograph on the States South of Mount Hua*) about the Chengdu plain has been described as the first extant local gazetteer. Geographical information is also part of Zhang Hua’s (232–300) *Bowuzhi* (*Treatise on Manifest Topics*), an encyclopedic compilation that truly does justice to its title.⁶²

Early medieval China also sees the rise of travel literature.⁶³ With their focus on presenting localities from the perspective of an individual writer’s experience, travel writings are evidence of the pervasiveness of autobiographical reflection as well as growing aesthetic and spiritual appreciation of landscape, also in its historical dimension. Although *shi* poetry was the major genre—with Tao Qian and Xie Lingyun as the most famous writers—travel and landscape were also depicted in rhapsodies and prose.⁶⁴ As far as prefaces are concerned, historically well-anchored prefaces such as the Lanting preface coexist with Tao Qian’s fictional report of a fisherman’s journey to an ideal world in the preface “Account of Peach Blossom Spring.” The “Preface to

⁶⁰ Mather, *The poet Shen Yüeh*, pp. 175–214.

⁶¹ There are two translations of this text; see W. J. F. Jenner, *Memories of Loyang: Yang Hsüan-chih and the lost capital (493–534)* (Oxford, 1981); and Yi-t’ung Wang, *A record of Buddhist monasteries in Lo-yang* (Princeton, 1984).

⁶² Michael Nylan, “Wandering in the ruins: The *Shuijing zhu* reconsidered,” in *Interpretation and literature in early medieval China*, ed. Alan K. L. Chan and Yuet-keung Lo (Albany, 2010), pp. 63–102. On the *Huayang guo zhi*, see J. Michael Farmer, *Huayang guo zhi*, in *Early medieval Chinese texts*, ed. Cynthia L. Chennault et al. (Berkeley, 2015), pp. 123–130. On the *Bowuzhi*, see Roger Greatrex, *The Bowu Zhi: An annotated translation* (Stockholm, 1987).

⁶³ See the introduction and Part 1 in Tian, *Visionary journeys*.

⁶⁴ David R. Knechtges, “Poetic travelogue in the Han *fu*,” in *Zhongyang yanjiuyuan di er jie guiji Hanxue huiyi lunwenji*, ed. Zhongyang yanjiuyuan (Taipei, 1989), pp. 127–152.

Poems Composed on an Excursion to Stone Gate” (*You Shimen shi xu*) is another outstanding example of the early travel report. Written by an anonymous author—possibly a disciple of the Buddhist monk Huiyuan (334–416), who was residing at Mount Lu and may have been among the party of travelers to Stone Gate—the preface is renowned for its association of landscape with Buddhist and Daoist ideas of enlightenment and transcendence.⁶⁵ It can also be read as a document of the activities of a literary circle, whose members took a strenuous hike with the explicit intention of composing poetry. Few of Xie Lingyun’s prose writings about travel and landscape have survived, but among the extant fragments is the preface to his *Monograph about Excursions to Famous Mountains* (*You mingshan zhi*). Letters are among the earliest Chinese travel reports, too, for instance Bao Zhao’s “Letter to His Younger Sister about Ascending the Bank of Great Thunder Lake” (*Deng Dalei an yu mei shu*), which, despite the author’s claim to have written it in haste, is a piece of elaborate parallel prose.⁶⁶ Accounts or records (*ji*) became a productive genre of travel literature as well, even if few of these texts have survived. Travelogues of a larger scale are also emerging, such as Faxian’s (c.337–c.422) *Foguo ji* (*Account of the Buddhist Kingdoms*, c.414), a first-person record of the author’s travels to India, Ceylon, and Sumatra, which Faxian undertook between 399 and 413 to visit places of religious importance and to search for Buddhist scriptures to take back to China.

LITERARY IMAGINATION AND NARRATIVE ART

It is no coincidence that major Six Dynasties critics such as Lu Ji and Liu Xie were fascinated by the creative process in general and the workings of the literary imagination in particular. The centuries between the Han and the Tang dynasties witness a surge and diversification of texts shaped by the flight of the literary imagination and an advanced grasp of the art of narrative, whether they were written in high registers, such as rhapsodies, or in lower registers, such as accounts of the strange. While the introduction of Buddhist and other Indic literary traditions may have played a certain role in this development, its foundations had undoubtedly already been laid by early Chinese writers, who have left us many works that are magnificent evidence

⁶⁵ Richard B. Mather, “The landscape Buddhism of the fifth-century poet Hsieh Ling-yün,” *JAS* 18.1 (1958), pp. 67–79.

⁶⁶ See the discussion and translation by Su Jui-lung in *Renditions* 41–42 (1994), pp. 18–24. Another famous epistolary travel text is Wu Jun’s (469–520) “Letter to Zhu Yuansi” (*Yu Zhu Yuansi shu*).

of their creativity and imagination, to mention only the anecdotes in the *Zhuangzi*, the *Chu ci*, and the rhapsodies.⁶⁷

Rhapsodies are among the most remarkable examples of early medieval literary imagination and narrative art. Cao Zhi's "Rhapsody on the Goddess of the Luo River" was explicitly written in the tradition of the "Rhapsody on a Goddess" (*Shen nü fu*) attributed to Song Yu (fl. c. 300 BCE). The enduring fascination of Cao's work rests not only on the diversity of literary and visual interpretations that it allows and has inspired over the centuries, but also on the imaginative presentation of the protagonist's quest for the spirit of the Luo river and his fleeting encounter with her among a crowd of other numinous beings (*ling*).⁶⁸ The fantastic encounter with transcendent realms and beings is also prominent in Sun Chuo's "Rhapsody on Roaming Heavenly Terrace Mountain" (*You Tiantai shan fu*), which shares this element with many other texts of both high and low registers that explore landscape, in particular mountains, both as manifestations of the transcendent and as abodes of transcendent beings. That Sun Chuo's rhapsodic "travel report" is not based on actual experience but rather on the author's inventiveness highlights the role of imagination in the composition of the work.⁶⁹

Several of the texts mentioned at the beginning of this chapter would also lend themselves to interpretations focusing on the workings of the literary imagination, such as the fictional travel report "Account of Peach Blossom Spring," the fictionalized autobiography "Biography of the Master of Five Willows," or the self-written "Sacrificial Offering to Myself," all by Tao Qian. To these could be added other creative adaptations of conventional genres, such as Kong Zhigui's (447–501) satirical "Proclamation to North Mountain" (*Beishan yuwen*), addressed to the natural forces of a mountain, or Shen Yue's "The Bamboo's Accusation of the Plantain" (*Xiuzhu tan ganjiao wen*), in which plant addresses plant. While prefaces, sacrificial offerings, biographies and the like are still on the radar of contemporary literary critics, even if they are not in all cases as high-register as rhapsodies, the short prose texts that later became known as "accounts of the strange" are usually excluded from literary reflection, mainly because of their low-register style that even incorporates elements of the vernacular, but also because of their subject matter.⁷⁰ Despite the

⁶⁷ The question whether the introduction of Buddhism caused a narrative revolution is discussed in articles by Victor H. Mair, Kenneth J. DeWoskin, and Wilt L. Idema in *CLEAR* 5.1–2 (1983), pp. 1–51.

⁶⁸ See Knechtges, *Wen xuan*, Volume 3, pp. 325–365.

⁶⁹ Richard B. Mather, "The mystical ascent of the T'ien-t'ai mountains: Sun Ch'o's *Yu-t'ien-t'ai-shan fu*," *MS* 20 (1961), pp. 226–245; Zornica Kirkova, "Distant roaming and visionary ascent: Sun Chuo's 'You Tiantai shan fu' reconsidered," *OE* 47 (2008), pp. 192–214. See also the chapter "Imaginary mountains" in Tian Xiaofei's *Visionary journeys*, pp. 43–51.

⁷⁰ For a study that takes this aspect into account, see Richard Vanness Simmons, "The *Soushen bouji* attributed to Tao Yuanming (365–427)" (MA thesis, University of Washington, 1986).

critics' neglect, these texts have enjoyed enormous popularity during the Six Dynasties period and indeed throughout imperial China. Not only were dozens of collections of accounts of the strange compiled in early medieval China alone, but also individual accounts found their way into many other texts—for instance the anonymous *Xijing zaji* (*Miscellaneous Accounts from the Western Capital*), Pei Songzhi's commentary on the *Sanguo zhi*, or Li Daoyuan's commentary to *Shuijing* mentioned above. Together they now form a rich corpus of early medieval narratives.⁷¹

Although accounts of the strange have been mined as sources of customs, ethics, and religious beliefs, texts of this noncanonical narrative tradition also deserve to be explored on an equal footing with other literary productions of their age. One reason for doing this is that a number of eminent literati are credited with such compilations: Cao Pi's *Lieyi zhuan* (*Tradition of Arrayed Marvels*), the Jin court historian Gan Bao's (d. 336) *Soushen ji* (*Accounts of the Search for the Supernatural*), Tao Qian's *Soushen houji* (*Sequel to Accounts of the Search for the Supernatural*), Liu Yiqing's *Youming lu* (*Records of the Invisible and Visible World*), Ren Fang's *Shuyi ji* (*Accounts Describing the Extraordinary*), Yan Zhitui's *Yuanhun zhi* ("Monograph about Ghosts with Grievances"), to list just a few. That several of these attributions are called into question may well be an expression of the wish to dissociate these elite writers from literary activities that are commonly regarded as lowly. Another reason for incorporating accounts of the strange into the study of other genres of Six Dynasties literature is that they share themes. The encounter with transcendents, spirits, and ghosts has already been mentioned. Travel to hell and—usually—back again plays a certain role in accounts of the strange too. Even stronger are the connections to life writing, not only in the form of the biography, as evinced, among others, in elements of Ge Hong's *Biographies of Divine Transcendents*, but also, less obviously, in the form of autobiographical inclusions within a number of these texts, which are important steps in the development of complex narrative personas and techniques.

Although the last several decades have brought about enormous development in Six Dynasties literary scholarship, the thousands of accounts of the strange still awaiting their full literary appreciation may stand in for the greater trove of literary texts that have come down to us from this period and are not yet well known in their literary qualities, humanity, and historical repercussions. Tapping into the unique sources of early medieval Chinese literature promises to be an immensely enriching experience that will change our perspective on the literature of earlier and later centuries alike in China.

⁷¹ See publications by Robert F. Campany, such as his *Strange writing: Anomaly accounts in early medieval China* (Albany, 1996).

Looking back upon the preceding centuries, the period of disunion provides a pivotal opportunity to study how literature inspired by Han dynasty classicism—much less monolithic in itself than is often assumed—developed and diversified under very different historical, social, and cultural conditions. It provides a forceful antidote to the idea that a strong central power is necessary to continue intellectual and artistic traditions that are valued as central to Chinese identity to the present day. Looking forward towards the Tang, on the other hand—again a period whose cultural heterogeneity is frequently overestimated—the study of Six Dynasties literature shows beyond doubt that many of the Tang’s great achievements were not realized by connecting to Han classicism alone, but built on the crucial developments of the four centuries following the Han.

CHAPTER 28

THE WORLD OF POETRY

Cynthia L. Chennault

INTRODUCTION

Early medieval authors set in place enduring elements of the poetic tradition. The most fundamental was to make a regular practice of composing lyric poetry (*shi*). During the Han dynasty (206 BCE–220 CE), the centerpiece of literary culture had been recitations of rhyme-prose (*fu*) whose dazzling rhetoric could extend for hundreds of lines. Relative to the lesser technical challenge of the brief lyric, rather few *shi* were written. Some were preserved as codas to the *fu* and underscored their praise for the government. The most impassioned poems, special to the Han, were songs (*ge*) of despair by the royal household and its associates when their lives or the state were endangered.¹ From the turn of the third century, however, the surviving record shows a remarkable increase in the number of poems by the educated elite,² and also an expansion thenceforward of their occasions. Poems would be written, for example, to commemorate banquets, to describe forays into sacred mountains and journeys to provincial posts, to express the aim of withdrawing from society as a recluse, to emulate the works of past masters, and to lament the deceased.

The expanded scope can be seen in the many situational and thematic headings by which the *Wenxuan* (*Selections of Refined Literature*, comp. c. 526) organized outstanding models of *shi*, and of these, the catchall category of

¹ Western Han (206 BCE–24 CE) songs of this kind whose source is in the *Hanshu* may have been written by Ban Gu (32–92), the principal compiler of that history, for the purpose of encapsulating the essence of tragic crises. Martin Kern, “The poetry of Han historiography,” *EMC* 10–11.1 (2004), pp. 23–66.

² Lu Qinli’s anthology of pre-Tang poetry, *Xian Qin Han Wei Jin Nanbeichao shi* (Beijing, 1983), contains 137 poems or poem fragments by fifty-eight authors active during the Western and Eastern Han’s (25–220) four centuries. By comparison, the section for the [Cao-]Wei dynasty (220–265), wherein poets allied with the Wei kingdom during the Han’s Jian’an era (196–220) are also placed, shows 498 pieces by thirty authors. There are additionally nine pieces by as many authors for the kingdoms of Shu (221–263) and Wu (220–280).

“miscellaneous verse” (*zashi*) was the largest.³ Even so, the *Wenxuan* editors excluded romantic and light verse, material that would be the forte of a later anthology, the *Yutai xinyong* (*New Songs from the Jade Terrace*, comp. c.534?). Regardless of subject, the works that accumulated over the lifetimes of individual authors made it possible to discuss traits of particular styles. Analyses of poetry’s forms, subgenres, and techniques, as well as theories about literature’s purpose, all took shape during the third through sixth centuries. It is said that during this span Chinese literary criticism attained its richest and most varied florescence.⁴

Conditions that influenced the intelligentsia to represent their experiences more frequently in verse are conjectural. New formulations of group or self-identity have sometimes been cited as factors. Eastern Han officials were recruited for their possession of Confucian virtues, and the government’s policy of rewarding pious behavior may have fostered the belief that a man’s virtue could be known not only by his actions but also through his poetry.⁵ Other members of the elite, having lost confidence in orthodox teachings about perfecting the social order, left public life and pursued their personal spiritual betterment or self-gratification. The upper class began increasingly to realize a social identity that was culturally based and independent of membership in the central government.⁶

At this time, reflections on the value of literary writings in the *Lunwen* (*Discourse on Literature*) by Cao Pi (187–226) gave novel attention to the expression of individual character. Earlier, the “Great preface” (*Da xu*, comp. first century CE) to the *Shijing* (*Book of Poetry*, comp. c.600 BCE) had declared that poetry “goes to that which is intently on the mind.” Taken in context, the maxim concerned the communication of universally held emotions and popular sentiment.⁷ As the preface elaborated, the quality of a state’s governance could be gauged by the tenor (*yin*) of the songs of its populace. Cao Pi more narrowly asserted that inherent in every author’s temperament there

³ Ninety-three of 443 pieces of lyric poetry belonged to this group. Authors of the Wei onward supplied the first examples for nineteen of poetry’s twenty-three groups. David R. Knechtges describes the categories in *Wenxuan*, Volume 1 (Princeton, 1982), pp. 26–27, 35–42. Selections of rhyme-prose (aka rhapsody) were fewer, but sufficiently diverse to be organized under fifteen subject headings. It should be noted that *fu* developed beyond the Han’s epideictic type and that abiding esteem for the genre was reflected in its being the first listed in the *Wenxuan*, as was its placement in the collected writings of individuals.

⁴ James J. Y. Liu, *Chinese theories of literature* (Chicago, 1975), p. 120.

⁵ Michael Nylan, “Confucian piety and individualism in Han China,” *JAOS* 116.1 (1996), pp. 1–2, 23–27.

⁶ Patricia Ebrey, “The economic and social history of the Later Han,” in *The Cambridge history of China*, Volume 1, *The Ch’in and Han empires 221 B.C.–A.D. 220*, ed. Denis Twitchett and Michael Loewe (Cambridge, 1986), pp. 637–648.

⁷ Liu, *Chinese theories*, pp. 68–70. The *Shijing* contains 305 anonymous songs, hymns, and eulogies of the Western Zhou (1046–771 BCE) and the Spring and Autumn (771–476 BCE) periods.

existed a particular genius or talent (*qi*) that was revealed in his writings. His discourse again emphasized the individual in proposing that a person's literary works could secure his immortality through their faithful transmission to future generations of the personality, joys, and achievements that end with death.⁸ One must beware, however, of transferring Western ideas of individualism to premodern China. The concept of an autonomous free agent responsible to a divine maker differed from the Chinese idea of a selfhood defined by relationships with family and society. Relational roles figured even in the conduct of eccentrics and hermits, who in spurning the mores of the sociopolitical world, usually saw themselves and were seen by others as participating in a tradition of past models.⁹ Also, although the classical interest in poetry's ability to mirror (or reform) political and moral realities was superseded by the understanding of poetry as a medium for personal expression, and later as a craft to be perfected, the idea of pragmatic value to government was not abandoned. Chinese literary criticism was eclectic. Prior to discussing the transcendence of mortality through one's writings, Cao Pi's "Discourse" declared that literary works enduringly attested to the splendor of the state.

By the fourth century, the ability to create *shi* was a hallmark of elite stature. Whereas Han dynasty lyricism often had as its backdrop the struggles of rival court factions to control the throne, an impetus for composing poetry after native rule settled south of the Yangzi in Jiankang (Nanjing, Jiangsu) was the competition for social prestige.¹⁰ Notwithstanding the stereotype that the same upper-class lineages continuously held sway over south China's regimes, the dominant families' composition was not static.¹¹ Nor did the advantage of pedigree guarantee success. To be accepted by one's peers, it was necessary to demonstrate worthiness of respect. Stories from the *Shishuo xinyu* (*A New Account of the Tales of the World*, comp. c.430) show that poetic ability was a form of cultural competence that won society's approval. These

⁸ Stephen Owen, *Readings in Chinese literary thought* (Cambridge, MA, 1992), pp. 57–72; see also Liu, *Chinese theories*, pp. 12–13, 70–72, 113, 120–121.

⁹ Nylan, "Confucian piety and individualism," pp. 23–24; Alan J. Berkowitz, *Patterns of disengagement: The practice and portrayal of reclusion in early medieval China* (Stanford, 2000), pp. 14–15, 204–209.

¹⁰ Graham Saunders, *Words well put: Visions of poetic competence in the Chinese tradition* (Cambridge, MA, 2006), pp. 112–113, 134, 149.

¹¹ Of the top émigré lineages that in succession controlled Eastern Jin (328–420) policy, only the Langye Wang combined political and social prominence up to the mid-sixth century. See Dennis Grafflin, "The great family in medieval south China," *HJAS* 41.1 (June 1981), pp. 65–74. Members of the dynasty's other most renowned lineage, the Chenjun Xie, were initially scorned by better-established families and their presence in high office declined sharply after the Eastern Jin. Jean-Pierre Diény, *Portrait anecdotique d'un gentilhomme chinois, Xie An (320–385), d'après le Shishuo xinyu* (Paris, 1993), pp. 13–18; also Cynthia L. Chennault, "Lofty gates or solitary impoverishment? Xie family members of the Southern Dynasties," *T'oung Pao* 85 (1999), p. 253, Table 1.

narratives also illustrate the premium placed upon spontaneity. Speakers of poems at social gatherings recite without hesitation, whether in response to a challenge or as comment on the topic of conversation at hand. Quick facility was a skill trained from childhood. One of the *Shishuo xinyu* anecdotes features the Eastern Jin's cultural doyen, Xie An (320–385), leading the family's youngsters in an impromptu poem inspired by a sudden snowfall.¹²

Much of the following centuries' poetry was likewise composed ad hoc before a discerning audience of connoisseurs, albeit with the setting of private residences replaced by the palace grounds or a princely salon. Eminent officials of the fifth and sixth centuries took great pride in the talent of their entourages, and verses written by command of a superior became a staple in the *oeuvres* of literati who held office. Naturally, one's reputation spread also through poems unrelated to bureaucratic service. In general, it seems that ostensibly private writings were not intended to be kept from circulating. The competition for prestige rose to a national level during *détentes* when ambassadors from North and South sparred in contests of poetic virtuosity. While territorial sovereignty remained undecided on the battlefield, engagements in the arena of poetry allowed the contenders to report cultural victories.

As a prisoner of war who lived to serve four dynasties, Yan Zhitui (531–591+) spoke from experience when exhorting his descendants to be adept in composition. Through scholarship and the ability to write well, they would find respectable employment anywhere in the face of turmoil and prevent the family's descent into the commoner class. Conversely, Yan warned about certain Liang dynasty noblemen who in a peaceful era relied upon others to provide banquet poems in their names. After the fall of the capital to Hou Jing (d. 552), they lacked the means to support themselves and “wandered about until they died in a ditch or stream.”¹³

This chapter highlights major developments in third- through sixth-century verse and includes a sample of works by authors of the period. It is necessarily a partial overview. Fuller discussions of the poets, themes, and prosodic features mentioned here are referenced in the notes, which focus upon publications in English and other Western languages.

YUEFU AND SHI OF THE WEI STATE AND DYNASTY

The breakaway state of Wei, headed by Cao Cao (155–220), was the center of literary innovation during the third century. Seeking capable supporters, the

¹² Saunders, *Words well put*, pp. 135–140. Richard B. Mather, trans., *Shih-shuo hsün-yü: A new account of Tales of the world* (Ann Arbor, 2002), p. 67.

¹³ Teng Ssu-yu, trans., *Family instructions for the Yen clan* (Leiden, 1968), pp. 53–54.

warlord announced that ability (rather than virtue) would be the criterion for granting office. His edict “Seeking the Worthy” instructed his counselors: “My several men! Assist me in bringing to light and raising up the unorthodox and the lowly. As long as a man be talented he is to be recommended.”¹⁴ Of the writers at the Wei capital at Ye (Linzhang, Hebei), the “Seven Masters of the Jian’an” (*Jian’an qi zi*) was China’s first known literary coterie.¹⁵ Their commemorations of feasts and outings suggested a close-knit community and intimate relationship with political authority that would be much idealized in later centuries. A recurring wish in the poems, that the joy of the occasion could be prolonged forever, may reflect the preoccupation throughout the late second and third centuries with life’s brevity and uncertainties. Different in spirit but directly mirroring the period’s social upheaval, Wei poetry also portrayed the widespread suffering caused by warfare and famine.

Many lyrics by Cao family members and writers under their patronage were songs that featured the same themes and imagery as those in the anonymous popular tradition. The label *yuefu* (or *yuefu shi*) was later applied to all musical forms of *shi*.¹⁶ *Yuefu*’s stylistic traits were related to the genre’s originally being an entertainment accompanied by music at the least, and potentially by dance and dramatic enactment. Plain diction and straightforward syntax were the norm—that is, for the lyrical, non-ceremonial *yuefu* in the style of “folk songs”¹⁷—so that the performance could be readily understood. *Yuefu* shared

¹⁴ From the first of three edicts by this title, issued in 210 CE (*Sanguo zhi* 1.32). Translated fully by Paul Kroll, “Portraits of Ts’ao Ts’ao: Literary studies of the man and the myth” (PhD dissertation, University of Michigan, 1976), pp. 18–19.

¹⁵ For the “seven masters of the age” whom Cao Pi identified, see Owen, *Readings in Chinese literary thought*, pp. 58–63. As a literary period, the Jian’an era (note 2) extended until Cao Zhi’s death in 232.

¹⁶ Besides lyrical songs, *yuefu* designated hymns for state sacrifices and other ceremonial occasions (aka “ritual *yuefu*”). In standard use by the sixth century, the term derives from the name of the agency, the Music Bureau (*yue fu*), which was tasked by Han Emperor Wu (r. 141–187 BCE) to furnish music and texts for rituals and to collect regional songs and music. Guo Maoqian (fl. twelfth century) arranged the genre’s largest compilation, the *Yuefu shiji*, mainly by types of musical instrumentation, although the music for it was by then lost. See Joseph R. Allen, *In the voice of others: Chinese Music Bureau poetry* (Ann Arbor, 1992), “Materials: The genre defined and redefined,” and esp. pp. 57–59, for the hypothesis that the concept of *yuefu* as a genre emerged from a heightened period of fourth- to fifth-century literati compositions, and that the anonymous pieces were secondarily folded into the category.

¹⁷ Studies in recent decades have challenged assumptions popularized by early twentieth-century critics. To wit: (1) anonymous *yuefu* are no longer thought necessarily to be “folk songs” from a purely oral tradition; at the least, they would have been polished by lettered specialists before being performed. See Charles H. Egan, “Were yüeh-fu ever folk songs? Reconsidering the relevance of oral theory and balladry analogies,” *CLEAR* 22 (2000), pp. 31–66; and for a more recent view of oral-formulaic composition, Alexander Beecroft, “Oral formula and intertextuality in the Chinese ‘folk’ tradition (*yuefu*),” *EMC* 15 (2009), pp. 23–47. (2) The difficulty of dating anonymous verse more closely than within a frame of centuries is now recognized as a flaw in taking specific pieces as the inspiration for literati *yuefu*. Even if traditional suppositions about time period are valid, including assignments to the Han dynasty, the principle of imitative variation that gave coherence to the genre was most extensively realized in the

with *shi* the characteristics of having an undefined length and of the two lines of a couplet forming a unit of semantic meaning, with rhyme at the end of even-numbered lines. But *yuefu* frequently included multiple topics or disparate perspectives upon the same subject, as well as distinct speakers (as in narrative songs with plural *dramatis personae*). Segments presenting different topics or points of view were commonly in the form of quatrains (stanzas of four lines), and marked by changes in the rhyme sound. In keeping with their melodies, the lines of *yuefu* were more apt to be irregular in length, ranging from three to ten syllables.¹⁸ *Shi* were typically written in the four-syllable line of the *Shijing* or the five-syllable line increasingly employed by Wei authors, and their narratives were from the perspective of a single speaker.

An interpretive difference between *shi* and *yuefu* was the perceived relationship between the author and the work. The persona of a *shi* was identified with the historical author and the poem was assumed to concern actual events. The speaker (or main protagonist) of a *yuefu* was a generalized figure—for example, the traveler far from home, soldier on campaign, and abandoned wife—and the song was not usually grounded in a specific time and place. In adopting a fictive identity, poets could imaginatively explore situations remote from their experience. By the same token, the dissociation with the historical author made *yuefu* the preferred medium for sentiments that were politically risky or considered unseemly to own in *shi*'s autobiographical voice (such as grievances against authority and sexual attraction). Exceptions abounded, however, to the distinctions between *yuefu* and *shi*. Medieval critics did not always agree on how to categorize a work. The generic label ultimately attached to it could depend on the corpus of writings in which it was preserved.¹⁹ Moreover, regarding Wei-period *shi*—the lyrical genre for which biographic authenticity was assumed—modern scholarship has found that, to a large degree, *shi* of the late Han through Wei shared with *yuefu* certain stock expressions and recurrent

overlapping of subject matter and language among the literati's works, which far outnumber putatively earlier models (Allen, *In the voice of others*). (3) Attributions of anonymous poems to the Han, by fifth- and sixth-century literary historians, could reflect the need to construct a "history of origins" for later poetry whose provenance was known. See Stephen Owen, *The making of early Chinese classical poetry* (Cambridge, MA, 2006), pp. 23–72.

¹⁸ *Yuefu* that were imitative on musical grounds alone, as inferred from their lacking thematic connection to other poems with identical or similar titles, are almost exclusively associated, however, with the Wei-Jin period. Allen, *In the voice of others*, p. 59.

¹⁹ A well-known case is the group of pentameter lyrics that became known as the "Nineteen Old Poems" (*Gushi shijiu shou*). The *Wenxuan* included these anonymous pieces as "old poems" (*gu shi*), but medieval critics elsewhere attributed certain pieces to authors active from the Western Han to the Jian'an era or quoted passages from them as excerpts from anonymous *yuefu*. See Owen, *The making of early Chinese classical poetry*, pp. 31–32, 39–41. Allen (*In the voice of others*, pp. 69–98) examines intersections between these poems and the *yuefu* subset titled "Watering Horses at the Long Wall Spring."

topics, and even a rough predictability in the order of topics by which larger themes were constructed.²⁰ Although originality of contents cannot be claimed for poems that remixed materials from a common repertoire, there were, of course, differences of talent in realizing the final work.

The “Seven Laments” (*Qi'ai shi* 七哀詩) by Wang Can (177–217), a member of the Seven Masters of the Jian'an, is an example of *shi* that creatively incorporated elements of a shared poetic culture.²¹ This series of three poems dates from around the year 195 when Wang Can left Chang'an (Xi'an, Shaanxi) and traveled through areas ravaged by warfare to place himself under the protection of Liu Biao (d. 208), military governor of Jingzhou (in Hubei). It thus precedes by some fifteen years his joining Cao Cao's regime. Despite Wang Can's purportedly eyewitness account, incidents in his “Seven Laments” can be found in other works. To take the first of the poems as an example, Wang's observation of the unburied dead outside the gates of the western capital (“White bones cover the level plains”) is almost identically worded in Cao Cao's “Wormwood Village.”²² Known also in other poetry is the event of a desperate woman's abandoning her child which, in Wang's *shi*, occurs toward the poem's end:

Upon the road there was a starving woman,
Who left the baby at her breast in the grass. 10
Looking back, she heard him wailing,
Wiping away tears, she would not return.
“I don't yet know where I will die,
How can I look after us both?”
Driving on my carriage, I left them behind, 15
I could not bear to hear such words.²³

²⁰ Owen, *The making of early Chinese classical poetry*, pp. 73–138. Topics are defined as “figures of thought” that can be ideas (such as the claim “life is brief”), as well as actions and circumstances (for example, topics associated with the theme “sleepless at night” include putting on clothes, pacing, singing, moonlight, and breeze). Some topics were shared by different themes and their occurrence could lead into a new theme within the same poem.

²¹ “Seven Laments,” the title of an unsigned late Han *yuefu*, referred to “the seven senses” all being afflicted by the period's chaos and disorder—according to commentary for a *shi* by the same name preceding Wang's set of pentameter verses, in Xiao Tong, *Zengbu Liuchen zhu Wenxuan* (Taipei, 1977), 23.19a.

²² Cao's *yuefu* is traditionally thought to date from a campaign he undertook in the year 190. Jean-Pierre Diény, *Les poèmes de Cao Cao, 155–220* (Paris, 2000), p. 38, n. 6, notes the same image of skeletal remains in two other works. The discussion below of Wang Can's poem draws from Ronald Miao, *Early medieval Chinese poetry: The life and verse of Wang Ts'an (AD 177–217)* (Wiesbaden, 1982), pp. 126–133; and David R. Knechtges, “From the Eastern Han through the Western Jin (AD 25–317),” in *The Cambridge history of Chinese literature*, ed. Kang-i Sun Chang and Stephen Owen, Volume 1 (Cambridge, 2010), p. 169.

²³ The translation, with some changes, is based on J. D. Frodsham and Ch'eng Hsi, *An anthology of Chinese verse: Han, Wei, Chin, and the Northern and Southern Dynasties* (Oxford, 1967), pp. 26–27. Due credit for subsequent translations, including those by myself, is noted.

The shift to another speaker's perspective was common in *yuefu*. In this case, however, the woman's tearfully explaining why she turned her back on her infant parallels an episode Wang Can described at the start of his journey, of his own leave-taking from family and friends. The progression to the analogous but more grievous rupture of the bond between mother and child, marking the utter breakdown of normal human relations, is a use of parallel events more likely in *shi*. So too the reflective analysis in the poem's final lines (not translated in the excerpt). After leaving the place of the child's abandonment, Wang Can alludes to an ancient poem's longing for the peaceful stability of a bygone era and its worthy kings who have disappeared. His conclusion speaks to intellectuals familiar with the textual references and who, as fellow members of the ruling class, should understand the weight of his despair.

Cao Cao's surviving poems are in the *yuefu* style, and their speakers' identities generic.²⁴ Yet he took familiar combinations of events in a new direction, and his idealizations of methods of governance in some pieces plausibly projected a legacy for which he himself hoped to be known.²⁵ The quest for immortality was a favorite theme, and in the second of two poems called "Ballad of Qiuhu" (a *yuefu* title associated with the theme), the speaker's aspiration to roam the heavens is checked by doubt regarding the success of persons alleged to have transcended their human form. He then reflects upon the majesty of Heaven's agent on earth, a quasi-divine "Great Man" who rules "ten-thousand domains," and implies that a man ought to use his brief life span to assist that king during a disorderly age. Contradicting this purpose, the poem's last section argues for clinging to the moment to make merry (a standard exhortation in banquet *yuefu*).²⁶ The conflicting responses to mortality combine more easily in the festal setting of Cao's "Short Song No. 2." Epicurean reasoning extends from the opening couplet ("Facing ale, we should sing / How long is man's life?") through the second stanza's argument that drinking is the only way to dispel life's sorrows. The recommendation is a link to the remaining five stanzas' disclosure of the anxieties of those present

²⁴ Besides twenty pieces collected in *Yuefu shiji*, there are poem fragments related to the popular song tradition. Diény, *Les poèmes de Cao Cao*, pp. 175–180.

²⁵ Traditional critics went further to correlate Cao's *yuefu* with incidents in his career. In Shen Deqian's (1673–1769) judgment, "The borrowing of old *yuefu* to describe contemporary affairs began with Lord Cao." *Gushi yuan* (Hong Kong, 1973), 5.2a (annotation of "Wormwood Village"; see note 19 above). For discussions of the poems mentioned below, see Owen, *The making of early Chinese classical poetry*, pp. 149–153, 197–200; and Diény, *Les poèmes de Cao Cao*, pp. 97–103, 108–117.

²⁶ In performance, different singers probably spoke for the two positions. Abrupt disjunctures in *yuefu* when read as bare texts would have been reconciled by elements of their staging (Egan, "Were yüeh-fu ever folk-songs?," p. 66). In *The making of early classical Chinese poetry*, Owen identifies unexpressed connections of imagery between topical segments that should have been understood in their time.

at the banquet. In the interweaving of their needs, the remedy of a beneficial alliance emerges. The guests, despite their worthiness, lack security (as figured in the images of a few bright stars in the night sky, and of birds seeking a place to roost). The host, a powerful lord, repeatedly avows his esteem for them. The final couplet, in the host's voice, remembers the Duke of Zhou (fl. eleventh century BCE), who successfully rallied supporters to quell rebellions against the dynasty ("The Duke of Zhou spat out what he was chewing / All under Heaven turned their hearts to him").²⁷ Cao's reference to that hero's solicitude for learned visitors (such that he would straightaway drop any activity to receive them) aptly employs an image of feasting, or rather its opposite, to say as much about the host's charisma as a leader as about the urgency of political community.

Cao Zhi's (192–232) extraordinary talent was known from an early age, and he grew to master practically every literary genre. He took wide liberties in exceeding the bounds of poetic formulas, and is also recognized for infusing pentameter verse with a more elevated diction that spurred its acceptance by the elite as a vehicle for serious expression. Banquet poems and other *shi* of his youth suggest a carefree life. Yet there may have been a rivalry between himself and his older brother Cao Pi, and their relationship could only have worsened when friends of Cao Zhi beseeched their father Cao Cao to name him the Wei Kingdom's heir. Cao Pi straightaway had them executed after establishing the Wei dynasty in 220. Wary in general of challenge from his relatives, he assigned them to fiefs far from Luoyang.²⁸ Cao Zhi's "Poems Presented to Biao, Prince of Baima," a suite of seven pentameter verses, reflects his later career's adversity. The suite dates from 223, when Cao Zhi and other family members were allowed to partake in seasonal rites at court. As his preface relates, their reunion was overshadowed by the unexpected death in Luoyang of a sibling who had accompanied himself and Cao Biao to the capital, and later, by an order that he and Biao travel by different routes back to their territories.²⁹ The verses use typical images of obstruction between parted lovers (impassable rivers, steep roads, broken bridges) to imagine a journey that has not yet begun. The projected journey is thus a framework to situate the poet's complex feelings at the point of his

²⁷ *SJ* 33.1518. For Cao Cao's historical models and political ideals, see Diény, *Les poèmes de Cao Cao*, esp. pp. 25–65.

²⁸ Upon succeeding his father, Cao Pi made the Eastern Han capital of Luoyang the seat of his government.

²⁹ The reason for the order, unstated in the preface, must have been Cao Pi's wish to prevent opportunity for collusion. See Hans H. Frankel's discussion in "Fifteen poems by Ts'ao Chih: An attempt at a new approach," *JAOS* 84 (1964), pp. 1–14. For the reflection of Cao Zhi's struggles in his works, see Yanfang Tang's essay in *Classical Chinese writers of the pre-Tang period*, ed. Curtis Dean Smith (Detroit, 2011), pp. 34–41.

departure. Stage by stage, dramatic changes in the terrain (marked by sights variously realistic or symbolic) underlie psychological moods (bitterness, pensive melancholy, manly resolve, etc.) that conclude in the last verse's resignation to fate and farewell to his brother.

Cao Zhi's *yuefu* about the quest for immortality describe delightful sojourns in Heaven. His protagonists do not necessarily require intermediaries to reach that precinct but may enter it effortlessly and interact as familiars with the immortals. Some traditional critics correlated the pleasure-seeking drive in these works with the youthful dissipation recorded in his biography.³⁰ A different biographical reading of Cao Zhi's seekers of immortality is that their abilities, like those of the valiant knights-errant in other of his *yuefu*, represented a wished-for empowerment that he could not achieve during his life.

Ruan Ji (210–263), the leading poet later in the Wei, was one of the lyrical tradition's most enigmatic authors. His major work is an assortment of eighty-two pentameter verses that he called "Poems Singing of Feelings" (*Yonghuai shi*). These lack subtitles and are identified by numerical sequence in his *oeuvre*. The often anthologized "Poem 1," a variation on the theme of insomnia, conveys an existential loneliness but for the speaker's communion with the natural world.³¹ Its melancholy can be directly appreciated. Some poems are so heavily allusive, however, as to be incomprehensible unless taken as covertly protesting the political order after the Sima family seized power.³² Ruan Ji's advocacy of *xuanxue* (the Dark Learning, aka neo-Daoism) has bearing on the many poems satirizing humankind's flaws. He and his friend Xi Kang (aka Ji Kang, 223–262)—who was posthumously lionized as ringleader of the "Seven Sages of the Bamboo Grove"³³—wrote essays expounding the philosophy's guiding principle of naturalness (*ziran*). In Ruan Ji's belief, the world had existed in peaceful equilibrium until judgments about the relative value of things engendered conflict, as instanced in the desire to dominate others.³⁴ His most acerbic criticisms were directed toward persons who were esteemed

³⁰ Owen, *The making of early classical Chinese poetry*, pp. 143, 169–173.

³¹ Owen, *The making of early classical Chinese poetry*, pp. 80–81; and Donald Holzman, *Poetry and politics: The life and works of Juan Chi, A.D. 210–263* (Cambridge, 1976), pp. 229–232. For discussion of other poems mentioned below, see Holzman's finding list, pp. 303–305.

³² Yan Yanzhi (384–456) remarked that the obscurity of Ruan Ji's poetry must owe to his constant fear of disaster befalling him. Cited in Xiao Tong, comp., *Wenxuan* (Taipei, 1967), p. 23.2b. Holzman details historical conditions in *Poetry and politics*, esp. pp. 34–72.

³³ For the members' transgressive behavior and apocryphal assembly as a group, see Étienne Balazs, "Nihilistic revolt or mystical escapism," in *Chinese civilization and bureaucracy*, ed. Arthur F. Wright (New Haven, 1964), pp. 226–254.

³⁴ Alan Chan, "Neo-Daoism," in *The Stanford encyclopedia of philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2017/entries/neo-daoism>; and Timothy Wai Keung Chan, *Considering the end: Mortality in early medieval Chinese poetic representation* (Leiden, 2012), pp. 65–96.

by the world's corrupt standards. For instance, he compared pompous hypocrites at court who bowed deeply during rituals to musical chimes bent at right angles (Poem LXVII). Other satires, often told from the first-person point of view, presented cautionary tales about straying from the purpose of living meaningfully—for example, a scholar immersed in his books, aspiring to win lasting reputation (Poem xv), and a *bon vivant* devoted to pleasure (Poem v), awaken too late to life's brevity and regret wasting precious years in vain pursuits.

Poem VI offers a positive model in the conduct of the Marquis of Dongling (fl. second century BCE), who was reduced to commoner status after the Han dynasty overthrew the Qin.³⁵ His contentment to support himself by growing melons in the capital's periphery parallels Ruan Ji's resolve, after the regent Sima Yi (179–251) usurped authority, to avoid high office while not absenting himself totally from the public sphere:

I heard long ago about the melons of Dongling,
That grew outside the Green Gate [of Chang'an].
Patch on patch, they crowded down to the footways,
Big and small, like mothers and babies entwined.
So brightly their colors sparkled in the morning sun! 5
Visitors from all four corners gathered there.
A grease-fed flame burns itself out,
And great wealth causes worry and harm.
One can live out his years in homespun clothing—
How could favor and emoluments be relied upon?³⁶ 10

Some critics contend that Ruan Ji faulted the marquis for not fleeing far enough from visibility and becoming overly prosperous through his melons. Debate on such points, even in the case of seemingly straightforward poems, could owe to the overall pessimism of the “Poems Singing of Feelings” as well as to their inducing readers to probe deeply the choices they make. Zhong Rong (469?–518), author of the *Shipin* (*Gradings of Poetry*), commented that Ruan Ji “caused people to forget their petty narrowness and reach out for what is distant and great.”³⁷

THEMATIC DIVERSIFICATION DURING THE WESTERN AND EASTERN JIN

The Western Jin (265–317) saw a large expansion of poetry's themes. First in order was a revival of classical subject matter. Early in Sima Yan's reign (r. 265–290), the dynasty undertook a reform of ritual *yuefu* for the purpose

³⁵ For the marquis Shao Ping, see SJ 53.2017; for discussion of the poem, see Holzman, *Poetry and politics*, pp. 116–117.

³⁶ Translation mine. ³⁷ *Shipin jizhu*, ed. Cao Xu (Shanghai, 1994), 1.123.

of restoring the ancient Zhou dynasty's liturgical practices. The musicologist Xun Xu (c. 221–289) was joined by learned poets in discussions about the authentic sounds of antiquity, debates that addressed questions of instrumentation, lyrics, and choreography. One of Xun's cohorts was Fu Xuan (217–278), author of fifty-three sacrificial and formal festal songs, and an essay on "Rites and Music," among numerous other writings about Confucian ideals and practices. Another principal was Zhang Hua (232–300), compiler of the *Bowu zhi* (*Treatise on Manifold Topics*), who submitted a comprehensive opinion on the performance of the imperial Fengshan sacrifices, and likewise composed ritual *yuefu*.³⁸

The classical revival impacted non-ceremonial works as well. Fu Xuan's son Xian (239–294) wrote *shi* that distilled teachings from the *Classic of Filial Piety*, the *Analects*, and other works of the Confucian canon. A group of *shi* by Shu Xi (c. 263–c. 302), an expert in ancient calligraphy, supplied texts for pieces from the *Shijing* for which only the titles remained.

Poems praising the Sima rulers also copiously referenced the canon. Whereas works about classical subjects and panegyric verse were naturally written in four-character lines, the cadence of antiquity was very broadly practiced. It was, for example, the usual meter for exchanges between friends. Approximately half of all Western Jin *shi* were in the four-character form. Poets sometimes created two versions of a piece under the same title, pairing a more formal tetrameter poem with one in five-character lines. The historian Zhi Yu (d. 311) echoed the contemporary reverence for antiquity in an essay wherein he opined that the four-character line was paradigmatic of melodic elegance, and that the *Shijing* eulogies (*song*, also known as "lauds") were the finest examples of poetry because they pronounced the virtue of sagely kings of yore.³⁹

Proud attachment to one's homeland was a subject following from the Jin conquest in 280 of the Wu kingdom and the renewed contact of elite lineages that had for generations been separated. A consciousness of the South's cultural distinctiveness pervaded the writings of Lu Ji (261–303), whose forebears led battles against the Jin and who reluctantly went to Luoyang (in Henan) in 289 at the emperor's invitation. Some court officials welcomed his talent but others insulted him because of his background. The mixed response was epitomized in a poem commissioned a few years later by the

³⁸ Howard L. Goodman, *Xun Xu and the politics of precision in third-century China* (Boston, 2010). For Zhang Hua's life and *oeuvre*, see J. Michael Farmer's essay in *Classical Chinese writers*, ed. Smith, pp. 311–317.

³⁹ The essay was reconstructed from Zhi Yu's lost anthology, the first to treat multiple genres. Wendy Swartz, "Zhi Yu's 'Discourse on literary compositions divided by genre,'" in *Early medieval China: A sourcebook*, ed. Wendy Swartz et al. (New York, 2014), pp. 274–286.

powerful Jia Mi (d. 300) to celebrate Lu Ji's return from a provincial assignment. Its author Pan Yue (247–300) called the defeated Wu Kingdom and its rulers fraudulent, and suggested that the Jin's ability to attract Lu Ji's service proved its benevolent wisdom. While praising Lu Ji's stylistic refinement, the poem also insinuated that as a transplant in the North, he had lost his formerly noble character. Lu Ji's reply, whose format matched Pan Yue's eight verses in tetrameter lines, sidestepped the issue of Wu's defeat to put its history in an honorable light. Countering the insult to his personal dignity, he gave an image of himself as the copper that was anciently a prized form of Wu's tribute to the northern heartland (in replacement of Pan's image of the southern sweet-peel tangerine mutated into a northern "coolie orange").⁴⁰

Lu Ji's *yuefu* "Song of Wu" began with a procedure of rhyme-prose that bade the audience listen carefully to the words that followed, before succinctly highlighting the Wu Kingdom's merits (of kinds conventional in *fu*, such as its capital's imposing buildings and founders' accomplishments) and then naming the distinguished lineages (including the Lu), scholars, and military heroes who hailed from his homeland of Wu commandery (Suzhou, Jiangsu). He wrote rhyme-prose as well as lyric poetry that dwelt on his longing to return home. Examples of the latter, along with *shi* by Pan Yue and his nephew Pan Ni (c. 251–c. 311) headed the category of "Travel" (*xingliu*) poetry in the *Wenxuan*. All the poems are from the perspective of an official assigned away from the capital, and some expressed misgivings that the posting signaled a downturn in the author's career. The dominant emotion, however, is homesickness, whatever interest the new environment might offer—as Pan Yue reflected after arriving in Huai district (Wuzhi, Henan) as its magistrate:

White waters rush past the courtyard,
Green pagoda trees grow on each side of the gates.
Truly this is beautiful, but it is not my land,
It only rouses my hopes for returning home.⁴¹

Differing in regard to travel poetry's retrospective yearning, Western Jin verses on the theme "beckoning the recluse" (*zhaojin shi*) showed their

⁴⁰ David R. Knechtges discusses their exchange in his "Sweet-peel orange or southern gold? Regional identity in Western Jin literature," in *Studies in early medieval Chinese literature and cultural history*, ed. Paul W. Kroll and David R. Knechtges (Provo, UT, 2003), pp. 33–44. For a full translation with analysis of Lu Ji's *yuefu* mentioned below, see Knechtges, "Southern metal and feather fan: The 'southern consciousness' of Lu Ji," in *Southern identity and southern estrangement in early medieval Chinese poetry*, ed. Ping Wang and Nicholas Morrow Williams (Hong Kong, 2015), pp. 23–26.

⁴¹ Translation by Chiu-Mi Lai, "River and ocean: The third-century verse of Pan Yue and Lu Ji" (PhD dissertation, University of Washington, 1990), p. 159. This poem is in pentameter lines, as are all others discussed below, unless otherwise noted. Sujane Wu, "Pan Yue," in *Classical Chinese writers*, ed. Smith, pp. 131–134.

protagonists hiking into Nature in search of gentlemen-in-retirement. By asserting that the natural world's wonders surpassed the benefits of civilization, the poems reversed the meaning of the original "Beckoning the Recluse" in the *Chu ci* (*Songs of Chu*, comp. second century CE) which endeavored to lure a prince back to his palace from the dangerous wilds.⁴² The first couplet in the following excerpt from an example by Zuo Si (c.253–c.307) would be referenced in countless later writings:

Not required are strings or woodwinds,
For mountain waters possess clear tones.
What would be served awaiting whistle or song,
When thick coppices intone poignantly themselves?⁴³

The authors of such poems, all office holders, unlikely took walking sticks in hand to seek the company of actual hermits. Their pieces probably represented an idealized liberation of the spirit. Some could have been composed at the magnificently landscaped estate of Shi Chong (249–300).⁴⁴

Zuo Si was not from a distinguished family. Lu Ji doubted that this "northern lout" (*cangfu*) could write a "*Fu* on the Three Capitals" worth reading,⁴⁵ and it was only after influential contemporaries added prefaces and commentaries that the rhapsody won due acclaim. Zuo's "Poems on History" (*Yongshi shi*), a theme Ban Gu originated, objected to the advantage enjoyed by the elite. The second of the eight poems represented the lowborn by pine trees in a ravine overshadowed by tiny shoots on a mountaintop, and then remarked,

Sons of great houses step lightly to high office,
While fine talents are submerged as petty aides.
The lay of the land is what brought this about,
It was long in the making, not done in a single day.⁴⁶

These lines inveighed against the privileged access to office granted certain gentry lineages upon whom governments ever since the Eastern Han had relied to defend and administer their home regions.

⁴² The *Chu ci* and the *Shijing* were the primary repositories of pre-medieval verse. Some of the *Songs*' pieces were traditionally attributed to Qu Yuan (340?–278 BCE) and Song Yu (c.290–c.223 BCE), but most are ritual songs from the shamanistic tradition of Zhou dynasty Chu, centered in Hubei and Hunan. For the original "Beckoning the Recluse," see David Hawkes, *The Songs of the South* (London, 1985), pp. 243–245.

⁴³ Translation of the poem (here in excerpt) by Alan J. Berkowitz, "Courting disengagement: 'Beckoning the recluse' poems of the Western Jin," in *Studies in early medieval Chinese literature and cultural history*, ed. Kroll and Knechtges, pp. 81–115.

⁴⁴ Berkowitz, "Courting disengagement," pp. 111–115; and Antje Richter, "The world of prose literature," in this volume.

⁴⁵ Knechtges, "Sweet-peel orange or southern gold," p. 50. ⁴⁶ Translation mine.

Western Jin authors also wrote poems empathizing with the suffering of abandoned wives. Zhang Hua's "Poems of Feeling" credited them with a reflectiveness unusual for the subject when he imagined their memories and observations. Also notable are poems that Lu Ji penned on behalf of wives whose husbands were stationed in Luoyang. Their anxiety that the charms of the city's captivating ladies could cause their husbands' estrangement from them may be related to the fascination Lu expressed in prose as an alien to the northern capital.⁴⁷ Fu Xuan's *yuefu* "A Bitter Fate" radically exposed society's injustice to women by treating a wife's losing favor to a concubine as but one of the serial humiliations that anyone born female was doomed to accept without complaint. Pan Yue sent affectionate poems to his wife and among the many threnodic writings in which he excelled, his lyrics lamenting her death were all the more moving for the admission that despite multiple efforts and the passage of time, he remained unreconciled to the loss.⁴⁸

Poets of influence were sparse in the Eastern Jin (318–420). Many perished during the Disturbances of the Eight Princes and the invasions that drove Chinese rule from north China. Another reason fourth-century poetry is slimly represented in anthologies was that *xuanxue* became a prime topic. Critics' distaste for what they deemed dry philosophizing caused metaphysical verse to be poorly preserved. Of the few extant poems by the polymathic Guo Pu (276–324), credited with introducing metaphysics into belles lettres, the group titled "Wandering in Transcendence" (*Youxian* 遊仙) was exceptional in picturing a fancifully enticing empyrean full of motion and radiant colors. Some pieces were concerned less with mystical roaming than with fleeing an impure society in turmoil. Sun Chuo (c. 314–371), the major philosophical thinker at court during the next generation, was a disciple of the monk Zhi Dun (314–366) and blended Mahayana Buddhist doctrines with *xuanxue*'s synthesis of Confucianism and Daoism. His study of Buddhism may have influenced the emphasis his writings gave to functions of the mind. In his "Preface to the Lanting Collection," which followed Wang Xizhi's (303–361) essay, contemplation of the abstract principles instantiated in Nature was the means to reach the enlightened realization that all phenomena in the cosmos are equal.⁴⁹ An understanding of the commonality of things figured also in

⁴⁷ Xiaofei Tian, "Fan writing: Lu Ji, Lu Yun, and the cultural transactions between North and South," in *Southern identity and southern estrangement in early medieval Chinese poetry*, ed. Ping Wang and Nicholas Morrow Williams (Hong Kong, 2015), pp. 43–78.

⁴⁸ Chiu-mi Lai, "River and oceans," pp. 167–173, 295–300, 320–332.

⁴⁹ For the famous literary gathering, see Antje Richter, "The world of prose literature," Chapter 27 in this volume. Wendy Swartz compares the prefaces by Wang Xizhi and Sun Chuo in "Revisiting the scene of the party: A study of the Lanting Collection," *JAOS* 132.2 (2012), pp. 275–300. Paul W. Kroll discusses Sun's syncretic thought in "Poetry on the mysterious: The writings of Sun Chuo," in *Early medieval China*, ed. Swartz et al., pp. 230–244.

Sun Chuo's tempering the absolute rejection of public life by *xuanxue's* radical wing. He maintained that service in government was no different from reclusion, provided that a person "embodied the mysterious, and understood the remote."⁵⁰ A passage from a tetrameter verse that Xie An presented to Wang Huzhi (fl. 330–360s), a fellow practitioner of "pure conversation" (*qingtan*), implied agreement with Sun's stance:

My benevolent friend and I
 Are neither muddied nor boxed.
 Our silence is not of cliff-top caves;
 Our speech is not about quagmires.
 The oak never departed the village shrine;
 Zhou never bolted from a clerkship. 5
 [As for the] obscuring bustle and din—
 Controlling it lies in cognition.⁵¹

In Xie An's telling, he and his friend eluded ideological definition. The first couplet refers to a tortoise's choice between frolicking in the mud and having its carcass stored in a box and venerated (*Zhuangzi*, Chapter 17); the second, likewise contrasting Daoist and Confucian biases, refers to the silence of a hermit and the exegesis by orthodox scholars of problematic passages in canonical texts; the third draws a parallel between a majestic oak tree's willingness to stand beside a humble village altar (*Zhuangzi*, Chapter 4) and the fact that Zhuang Zhou (aka Master Zhuang, d. c. 286 BCE)—after whom the *Zhuangzi*, a founding text of philosophical Daoism, was named—had been willing to hold office.⁵² The fourth couplet, describing composure in the face of external pressures or distractions, introduces a section (not translated here) about the mind's power to discern the interconnected unity of things that underlies superficial appearances.

The diction of poetry in four-character lines had the same range as pentameter verse. Language varied from the plain and ordinary, as in the example above by Xie An, to the ornate expressions and recondite allusion of formal

⁵⁰ Mather, *Shih-shuo hsin-yü* IV.91 (commentary, p. 147); see also his discussion of Sun Chuo's thought in his introduction, pp. xxii–xxiv.

⁵¹ Excerpted from "Poem to Wang Huzhi," the fourth of six stanzas. Translation mine but indebted to the version by David Zebulun Raft, "Four-syllable verse in medieval China" (PhD dissertation, Harvard University, 2007), p. 344. Wendy Swartz discusses Xie and Wang's exchange, and the latter's career and dates, in her study of Dark Learning's poetic topics, "Trading literary competence: Exchange poetry in the Eastern Jin," in *Reading medieval Chinese poetry*, ed. Paul W. Kroll (Leiden, 2015), pp. 8–24. It should be noted that words in classical Chinese were monosyllabic. Also, the original did not contain articles required in English ("the," "a"), and possessive adjectives ("my," "our") and prepositions ("of," "about," etc.) were implied by context.

⁵² For the parables about the tortoise and the oak tree, see Burton Watson, *The complete works of Chuang Tzu* (New York, 1968), pp. 187–188, 63–65.

pieces presented at court. Another trait in common was that the two lines of a couplet were usually parallel in structure. For example, the sequence of the parts of speech in Xie's second couplet is: noun (one syllable) + negative copula ("is not," one syllable) + noun phrase (two syllables). In both meters a caesura (major pause between the words of a line) occurred after the second syllable. This gave the four-character line an evenly balanced rhythm.⁵³ The crucial difference between the forms was that pentameter poetry's "extra syllable" enlarged a line's semantic content and allowed more complex variation in its grammatical construction. Generally, a five-character line formed a full sentence but one of four syllables often depended upon the next line to complete a thought—as in the first and fourth couplets of Xie's verse. Pentameter poetry's eventual dominance over the four-character form, occurring during an epoch when the practice of autobiographical lyricism grew, probably owed to its greater expressive capacity.⁵⁴

South China's *yuefu* focused upon romantic love and were primarily in the form of pentameter quatrains. Their subject and brevity may hark back to the southern courtship custom of young men and women gathering to exchange flirtatious banter through improvised duets.⁵⁵ Because southern songs and their music were popular at the Eastern Jin court as well as in gentry households (which commonly kept troupes of songstresses to provide entertainment for the family), the majority of pieces show a mixture of folk and literary traits. The chanteuses, who were of low social status, must have adapted lyrics to the expectations of the upper class, but at the same time their patrons composed *yuefu* copying features of the popular style—such as colloquialisms and ideas that turned on clever puns (e.g., *si* 絲 "silk thread" / *si* 思 "loving thoughts" and *pi* as "piece of cloth" / "mate"). Literati variations on southern quatrains would be immensely popular during the late Southern Dynasties and include more sophisticated language and elements of the natural landscape.

NATURE POETRY, YUEFU, AND OTHER LYRICS OF THE LIU-SONG

Active during the Liu-Song (420–479) were three poets whose originality is routinely highlighted in synopses of early medieval lyricism. In chronology the first was the quintessential gentleman-in-retirement Tao Qian

⁵³ Raft ("Four-syllable verse," pp. 18–22 *passim*) compares the Chinese tetrameter's rhythm to "Tyger, tyger burning bright, / In the forests of the night" (William Blake, 1757–1827; "The Tyger"), and the pentameter's rhythm to "The curfew tolls the knell of parting day / The lowing herd winds slowly o'er the lea" (Thomas Gray, 1716–1771; "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard").

⁵⁴ Raft, "Four-syllable verse," pp. 27–32, 376–377.

⁵⁵ Daniel Hsieh discusses the southern songs' origin, styles, and development in *The evolution of juefu verse* (New York, 1996), pp. 95–136.

(365?–427). His great-grandfather had been a Western Jin minister, and his biography (*Songsbu* 93) explains that his leaving office in 405 was motivated in part by the rising dominance at court of the army general (and future usurper) Liu Yu (363–422).⁵⁶ Some of Tao Qian's lyrics suggest that had circumstances been different, he would have remained in office. Nonetheless, the reasons he gave for returning to his family's homestead to support himself by farming were unrelated to politics. He said, for instance, that his "instinct was all for freedom" and that he could not bear to "bow [to a superior] for five pecks of rice" (humiliate himself for the sake of a low position's emolument).⁵⁷

Almost all of Tao Qian's approximately 130 lyrics, many of which are dated and have prefaces, were evidently written after he retired. Due to their setting, he was dubbed the founder of farmstead poetry (*tianyuan shi*).⁵⁸ Tao Qian enlarged poetry's scope by writing about the ordinary activities of the life of a scholar turned farmer (e.g., harvesting rice, moving to a new home, reading books, playing the lute, drinking with like-minded friends, and enjoying the company of his family). He also described periods of dire poverty and self-doubt but expressed the ability to weather these crises with his principles and appreciation for life intact. His plainspoken, conversational manner gave readers the conviction they knew him personally. Yet a subtle intellectuality informed his poetry. For example, the frequently anthologized "Poems after Drinking Wine, No. 5" appears to affirm the *xuanxue* belief in the equanimity achieved by "understanding the remote."

I built my cottage in the realm of men,
And hear no clatter from horse or carriage.
You may ask, "How is this done?"
When the mind is remote, the place naturally is far.
Picking chrysanthemums below the east hedge, 5
Distantly I catch sight of South Mountain.
Mountain vapors are lovely in the twilight of the day;
Flying birds join together in going home.
Amid these things, there is true meaning,
About to explain it, I have forgotten the words.⁵⁹ 10

⁵⁶ *SsS* 93.2288–2289.

⁵⁷ From the preface to "The Return," trans. James R. Hightower, in *idem*, *The poetry of T'ao Ch'ien* (Oxford, 1970), p. 268; and from Tao Qian's biography, *SsS* 93.2287.

⁵⁸ The generic term may date from the twelfth century. Charles Yim-tze Kwong, *Tao Qian and the Chinese poetic tradition: The quest for cultural identity* (Ann Arbor, 1994), p. 236, n. 41. The number of Tao Qian's poems is estimated because a few may be falsely attributed. The main issues of authenticity, however, concern variant texts of the poems and contradictions among versions of his biography (including his own accounts). See Xiaofei Tian, *Tao Yuanming and manuscript culture: The record of a dusty table* (Seattle, 2005).

⁵⁹ Translation mine, but with unavoidable duplications of wording with other renderings. Besides studies about Tao Qian cited in these notes, see the bibliographies for A. R. Davis, *T'ao Yuan-ming: His works and*

The spiritual detachment that can make a place “far” (line 4) is echoed in the later descriptive “distantly” (line 6). Further suggesting liberation from the physical environment’s usual claim on one’s consciousness is the evanescence of the poem’s substantive imagery: flowers bring to mind their ephemerality when they are plucked; a hedge’s barrier is broken by a glance to the horizon; a mountain’s bulk turns to mist; homing birds disappear to unseen nests. No single moment is important in itself (“amid these things,” l. 9). Critics are agreed that the poem expresses a profound sense of belonging in the natural order, the ineffability of which cites the *Zhuangzi*.⁶⁰ Some suspect that the “true meaning” discovered by Tao Qian encompasses an acceptance of mortality. Images implying anxiousness about death are the chrysanthemums (whose petals, steeped in a tonic, were thought to promote long life) and the South Mountain (a symbol of Nature’s perdurance that by contrast evoked man’s transience).⁶¹ The last detail of birds “going home” recalls the teaching of the *Zhuangzi* that death was simply that phase in life’s cycle when man returns to his original state of nonexistence.⁶² Although the *Zhuangzi*’s analogy with the progression of the seasons is not given in Tao’s poem, lines 5–8 subtly mark the sun’s movement in the sky from east to south, and to the western dimming of its light.

The sway in government of the top émigré families was weakened by the Liu-Song’s policy of appointing their members to honorable positions while undercutting their decision-making authority.⁶³ No poet had more difficulty negotiating this change than the headstrong Xie Lingyun (385–433). Discontented with assignments that solely acknowledged his literary talent, he twice resigned office, was several times cashiered or exiled for malfeasance, and finally was executed on the allegation of treason.⁶⁴ In some poems he

their meaning (Cambridge, 1984); Wendy Swartz, *Reading Tao Yuanming: Shifting paradigms of historical reception (427–1900)* (Cambridge, MA, 2008); and Robert Ashmore, *The transport of meaning: Text and understanding in the world of Tao Qian (365–427)* (Cambridge, MA, 2010).

⁶⁰ Watson, *Chuang Tzu*, p. 302: “Words exist because of meaning; once you’ve gotten the meaning, you can forget the words.” James J. Y. Liu comments that one of the meanings of the verb *bian* (translated here as “explain”) is “to make distinctions,” and that Tao Qian, having achieved a sense of reality as an undifferentiated whole, is unable to convey this experience in words (which inevitably make distinctions). He resolves the problem by accepting Zhuang Zi’s advice. See Liu, *Language, paradox, poetics: A Chinese perspective* (Princeton, 1988), p. 43.

⁶¹ Hightower, *T’ao Ch’ien*, pp. 131–132. Also the commentary of Wang Yao, cited in Gong Bin, ed., *Tao Yuanming ji jiaojian* (Shanghai, 1999), p. 221, n. 3.

⁶² From the anecdote of Zhuangzi’s refusal to mourn his wife (Watson, *Chuang Tzu*, pp. 191–192).

⁶³ Chennault, “Lofty gates,” pp. 286–287, 292–299 *passim*.

⁶⁴ J. D. Frodsham provides the fullest discussion of Xie Lingyun’s career and poetry in *The murmuring stream: The life and works of the Chinese nature poet Hsieh Ling-yün (385–433)*, Duke of K’ang-Lo (Kuala Lumpur, 1967).

identified with Qu Yuan, the banished patriot of the *Chu ci*.⁶⁵ Contradictorily, Xie Lingyun was equally ambitious to find spiritual enlightenment in Nature's pristine realm. His poems, of which 112 full pieces and fragments remain, expressed exhilaration in the beauty of an untouched wilderness that he described in profuse detail. It was a trend of the times to use realistically convincing imagery to concretize the metaphysical understanding of Nature. As the critic Liu Xie (fl. late fifth–early sixth centuries) noted, "During the early Song, Laozi and Zhuangzi retreated to the background, and mountains and rivers flourished."⁶⁶ Xie Lingyun ingeniously epitomized the trend, and for his powerful creativity and influence he became known as the forefather of landscape poetry (*shanshui shi*; lit. "the poetry of mountains and rivers").⁶⁷

A verse recounting an exploration of a vast estate inherited from his grandfather Xie Xuan (343–388), "What I Beheld When Crossing the Lake from South Mountain to North Mountain," shows Xie Lingyun's characteristic style. Each of its eleven couplets has a distinct syntactic structure, a variation in phrasing that he deployed to define his changing outlook on the terrain as he moved through it, and to suggest the endless variety of relationships among the scene's elements. On the other hand, he emphasized the cosmic order's unity by pairing things that belonged alternately to "water" and "land" within the lines of couplets. This antithetical symmetry, emblematic of the interactive forces of *yin* and *yang*, is seen in all but the third couplet of the excerpt below:

Below I looked at the tops of towering trees,	
Above I heard the crash of merging torrents.	
Rocks lay crosswise—the water's course divided;	
Forests were dense—the footpath's traces buried.	10
What has been stirred by the workings of "Release"?	
Everywhere flourishes with the growth of "Pushing Up."	
Early bamboos are wrapped in green sheaths,	
New rushes enfold purple shoots.	
Seagulls frolic on springtime shores,	15
Wild pheasants wheel on warm gusts.	⁶⁸

⁶⁵ Francis A. Westbrook discusses references to Qu Yuan (see note 42 above) in "Landscape transformation in the poetry of Hsieh Ling-yun," *JAOS* 100.3 (1980), pp. 244–245, 249–253 *passim*.

⁶⁶ Vincent C. Shih, trans., *The literary mind and the carving of dragons* [Wenxin diaolong] (Taipei, 1970), p. 48. Some features of Xie's method pre-dated the Liu-Song. For a useful comparison with Zhang Xie (d. 307), see Kang-i Sun Chang's discussion of Zhang Xie (d. 307) as a Western Jin practitioner of some features of Xie's descriptive method, in *Six Dynasties poetry* (Princeton, 1986), pp. 54–57.

⁶⁷ Xie's stylistic impact was traditionally acclaimed (Frodsham, *Murmuring stream*, pp. 86–87) but *shanshui shi* is a modern coinage. His poems in the *Wenxuan* are mainly grouped in the "Sightseeing" and "Travel" sections.

⁶⁸ Translation mine. Discussion from Westbrook, "Landscape transformation," pp. 239–241; and Wendy Swartz, "Naturalness in Xie Lingyun's poetic works," *HJAS* 70.2 (2010), pp. 370–374.

Xie Lingyun's moments of elation were hard-won. At times insights from classical texts resolved physical or mental impasses. In this poem, following uncertainty about the way forward (lines 9–10), the inspiration of hexagrams 40 (*xie*) and 46 (*sheng*) from the *Yijing* (*Book of Changes*) triggers an expanded vista and awakening to Nature's beauty. Xie Lingyun's sudden transformations of perspective may have been related to his embrace of the Buddhist doctrine of instantaneous enlightenment (*dunwu*). Nevertheless, it somehow remained necessary to his spiritual self-realization to have a companion who shared his aesthetic rapture. The poem's conclusion (not translated here) expresses longing for that ideally appreciative soulmate.

Bao Zhao (414?–466) was China's first great master of *yuefu*. He acknowledged the genre's legacy of interconnected variations by prefacing his titles with the words “in place of” (*dai*) or “in imitation of” (*ni*).⁶⁹ Yet his works were not interchangeable with past models. Their strongly personal tone and new techniques paved the way for future practices. Many of his *yuefu* concerned the hardship of serving in the army, and he was later credited with founding “frontier poetry” (*biansai shi*), a thematic subgenre that came into vogue during the Tang (618–907). Liu-Song poems about campaigning were rare. The extent to which tours of duty in the provinces as a minor aide and military adjutant affected his *yuefu*'s contents is difficult to judge.⁷⁰ A departure from most antecedents of the Cao-Wei period was that the soldiers of his poems often spoke movingly in their own words about their travails. Their accounts sometimes voiced the spirit of self-sacrificing loyalty, but there are also pieces that protested long years of unrewarded suffering and even their superiors' incompetence.⁷¹

His descriptions of borderlands in the North, as well as deep South, reflected the current ideal of skillful verisimilitude (*qiaosi*).⁷² In distinction to Xie Lingyun's realism, however, he was fond of using startling similes to capture the appearance of things. Bold comparisons from “In Place of ‘Going

⁶⁹ Although *ni* was commonly used in the titles of imitative *shi*, Bao first systematically applied it to *yuefu*. For distinctions among *ni*, *dai*, and other prefixes, see Allen, *In the voice of others*, pp. 24–29. On the Liu-Song's imitative poetry, see Xiaofei Tian, “From the Eastern Jin through the early Tang (317–649),” in *Cambridge history of Chinese literature*, ed. Chang and Owen, pp. 226–229.

⁷⁰ Bao described northern frontiers of the Han dynasty that he could have known only through texts. He did serve, however, in contemporary buffer zones and the southern hinterland of Fujian. In 451 he participated in the defense of Jingkou (Zhenjiang, Jiangsu). In 464 he was posted to the stronghold of Jiangling (Jingzhou, Hubei), as military adjutant to a young prince involved in an unsuccessful rebellion. He and other of the prince's staff were killed by imperial troops.

⁷¹ Jui-lung Su discusses their perspectives in “Versatility within tradition: A study of the literary works of Bao Zhao (414?–466)” (PhD dissertation, University of Washington, 1994), pp. 215–237.

⁷² Chang, *Six Dynasties poetry*, pp. 51–54; Swartz, “Naturalness in Xie Lingyun,” pp. 359–360. Verisimilitude also characterized Bao's *shi*, which outnumber his eighty-four *yuefu* but were regarded less highly.

out of Ji's North Gate" occur in a bird's-eye view of infantry climbing the narrow paths of a mountain and then crossing a ravine:

Like columns of geese, they followed rocky trails;
As fish pierced together, they crossed a soaring bridge.

And later, in the description of a violent windstorm:

Fierce gales arose, battering the border pass;
Sand and grit spontaneously swirled up.
The coats of the horses recoiled like a hedgehog's spines;
Our bows trimmed with horn could not be drawn.⁷³

Another area of Bao Zhao's originality was to improvise upon south China's folk quatrains. The love songs were enjoyed as a diversion in elite circles but the four-line stanza was shunned as a format for serious creative effort because of its connection with the demimonde of professional songstresses. Bao Zhao was born into a lower-rung gentry family and may not have felt inhibited by high society's prejudice. In any case, the enthusiasm for southern tunes on the part of royal household members must have encouraged his experiments.⁷⁴ Some of his romantic quatrains were in the originals' forthright style; others were more nuanced pieces whose crisp diction and delicate imagery foreshadowed "palace-style verse" by literati of later ages.⁷⁵ "Songs of the Restoration," written for Emperor Xiaowu's (r. 453–464) enthronement, mixed eulogistic quatrains with ones about a lady's amorous yearning. Sentiments of the boudoir here stood for an official's devotion to his ruler. In the last of the suite's ten stanzas, the wish that the emperor's reign be "strongly hued and shining without end" (*cai zhao wu qiongji* 采照無窮極) was a pun imploring the new ruler to "select (*cai* 採) [Bao] Zhao endlessly [for office]."

"In Imitation of 'Wayfaring Is Hard'" is considered his *chef d'oeuvre*. The eighteen poems feature protagonists of different backgrounds and were probably composed on separate occasions. Common threads are frustration at the injustice of fate and a consciousness of life's transience. The seven-character line predominates, with five pieces wholly in this meter. The heptasyllabic meter, which may have originated in popular ballads, had been deemed "a

⁷³ My translation is based upon Su, "Versatility within tradition," pp. 235–236.

⁷⁴ Jui-lung Su, "Patrons' influence on Bao Zhao's poetry," in *Studies in early medieval Chinese literature*, ed. Kroll and Knechtges, pp. 303–329. See also Su's "Bao Zhao," in *Classical Chinese writers*, ed. Smith, pp. 18–23.

⁷⁵ Hsieh's analysis of Bao's style (*Evolution of jueju verse*, pp. 153–166) notes a few other Liu-Song authors of quatrains. My discussion below gives sixth-century examples of palace-style verse.

form that is minor and uncouth" (*ti xiao er su* 體小而俗).⁷⁶ Bao Zhao here again defied conventional practice.

Yan Yanzhi first drew notice for verses celebrating Liu Yu's recapture of Luoyang in 416. Along with Xie Lingyun and Bao Zhao, he had a distinct style that attracted followers, but its dense allusions and formality were narrowly suited to state occasions.⁷⁷ His most emotionally charged lyrics, "Poems of the Five Gentlemen," were from a rustication in Yongjia (Zhejiang) and sympathized with the unjust treatment of the Sages of the Bamboo Grove. Emperor Wen (r. 424–453) forgave Yan for evidently complaining about his own plight, and he later returned to court and held high office. Jiang Yan (444–505), whose career spanned three dynasties, excelled in composing poetry in the styles of past masters. An example is his "Poems Singing of Feelings," whose purpose, he explained, was to satirize the reckless ambition of the Prince Liu Jingsu (d. 476). Probably of later date, his thirty "Poems in Heterogeneous Styles" were a virtuosic achievement that captured the spirit of works from the "Nineteen Old Poems" down to authors of the generation preceding his own.⁷⁸ The *Wenxuan* included the whole series.

POETRY OF THE SOUTHERN QI AND LIANG SALONS

The Southern Qi (479–502) ushered in a time of prosperous stability when scholarship and belletristic endeavors were supported at a level unprecedented since the Western Jin. Their foremost sponsor during Emperor Wu's Yongming reign (483–493) was his second son, the Prince of Jingling (Xiao Ziliang, 460–494). Among the literati who flocked to the prince's villa in Jiankang's outskirts, the leading poets of his "Eight Companions"⁷⁹ differed from past members of coteries in espousing a common artistic aim—to heighten belles-lettres' sensuous appeal through stylistic reform. Their elder

⁷⁶ For Fu Xuan's disparagement (Lu, *Xian Qin Han Wei Jin Nanbeichao shi*, Volume 1, p. 573), see Su, "Versatility within tradition," p. 266. Frodsham and Cheng fully translate the set, in *Anthology*, pp. 142–153.

⁷⁷ Xiao Zixian (489–537) described the emulation of the three poets' styles, *NQS* 52.908. For examples of Yan's public style, see Fusheng Wu, *Written at imperial command: Panegyric poetry in early medieval China* (Albany, 2008), pp. 90–93; for Yan's life and *oeuvre*, Jui-lung Su's entry in *Classical Chinese writers*, ed. Smith, pp. 273–276.

⁷⁸ The thirty poems are the main subject of Nicholas Morrow Williams's *Imitations of the self: Jiang Yan and Chinese poetics* (Leiden, 2015). An earlier discussion is by John Marney, *Chiang Yen* (Boston, 1981), pp. 69–130.

⁷⁹ The "Eight Companions of Jingling" (*Jingling ba you*) are named in the biography of the Liang founder Xiao Yan (464–549). *LS* 1.2. Thomas Jansen discusses debates and other activities at the prince's villa in *Höfische Öffentlichkeit im frühmittelalterlichen China: Debatten im Salon des Prinzen Xiao Ziliang* (Freiburg, 2000). His appendix identifies seventy-one literati and twenty-five monks associated with the prince or his projects.

spokesman, Shen Yue (441–513), advocated that literary writings present to the reader three kinds of ease (*san yi*): ease in perceiving the topic, in understanding the words, and in reciting aloud.⁸⁰ The last recommendation, about the euphony of sounds uttered in sequence, was separately formulated in respect to poetry as the “eight maladies” (*ba bing*) to be avoided. Expressed in positive terms, avoiding the first four of these ensured that words of different tones would pleasingly offset each other in any given line as well as within the two lines of a couplet.⁸¹ Attention to the aesthetics of tonal pattern grew from a project of the Prince of Jingling, a devout Buddhist, to reproduce in Chinese the meters of Sanskrit hymns. Translators found that positioning words of different tones in contrastive arrangements could mirror the sacred songs’ cadences.⁸² Although Southern Qi authors imperfectly followed the guidelines, their partial realizations presented a new mode of verse that people of the time called the “Yongming style” (*Yongming ti*).⁸³ Gradually the guidelines’ principles became widely accepted and led to the Tang dynasty’s tonally regulated octave (*lüshi*).

Salon poetry had a brief format. Excluding quatrains, the verses were mainly in eight lines. Concision was fitting for gatherings featuring multiple recitations, particularly if the purpose was to showcase quick-witted skill rather than to communicate “that which is intently on the mind.”⁸⁴ Detachment from personal circumstances can be seen also in clever works that do not appear to have been communally created. Examples by Wang Rong (467–493), whom the critic Zhong Rong blamed for initiating prosodic constraints that “crippled” poetry’s natural flow,⁸⁵ include a palindromic poem, a piece consisting entirely of alliterative syllables, and two poems that respectively incorporated in every line the name of a medicine or a star.⁸⁶

⁸⁰ Stated by Yan Zhitui; Teng, *Family instructions*, p. 96.

⁸¹ The description of the flaws (of which the last four concerned internal rhyme, alliteration, and homophony), ascribed to Shen Yue, was preserved in a compilation by a ninth-century Japanese monk for which the standard reference is Richard Wainright Bodman’s “Poetics and prosody in early medieval China: A study and translation of Kūkai’s *Bunkyo hifuron*” (PhD dissertation, Cornell University, 1978). For synopses, see Richard B. Mather, *The poet Shen Yue (441–513): The reticent marquis* (Princeton, 1988), pp. 57–59; and Meow Hui Goh, *Sound and sight: Poetry and courtier culture in the Yongming era (483–493)* (Stanford, 2010), pp. 22–35.

⁸² Victor H. Mair and Tsu-lin Mei discuss correspondences between the structure of the hymns and tonally patterned Chinese verse in “The Sanskrit origins of recent style prosody,” *HJAS* 51.2 (1991), pp. 375–470.

⁸³ From Lu Jue’s (472–499) biography, *NS* 48.1195.

⁸⁴ For comparison, see the sample of longer poems from Cao-Wei gatherings in Robert Joe Cutter, “Cao Zhi’s (192–232) symposium poems,” *CLEAR* 6.1–2 (1984), pp. 1–32.

⁸⁵ Stated in the *Shipin*; see Mather, *Shen Yue*, 60.

⁸⁶ For annotated translations, see Richard B. Mather, *The age of eternal brilliance: Three lyric poets of the Yongming era (483–493)*, Volume 2 (Leiden, 2003), pp. 461–468; for a linguistic analysis of the palindrome, see Meow Hui Goh, “Tonal prosody in three poems by Wang Rong,” *JAOS* 124 (2004), pp. 66–68.

Odes on objects (*yongwu shi*) were the most popular kind of impersonal verse, and those composed upon a predetermined topic exemplified the competitive zeitgeist of the Yongming era. After a general topic (such as “musical instruments”) was assigned,⁸⁷ poets vied to be the first to come up with an ode about something belonging to the category. The successful poet did not announce what he was about to depict but gave clues in his poem by which listeners could deduce its identity. Each recitation thereafter, while ideally reflecting recognition of an object earlier described, sang the praises of something new. The topic of “Things Seen from One’s Seat” was thus addressed by Liu Yun (465–517), an aide to the Prince of Jingling:⁸⁸

I reflected the sun at the edge of a flat shoal,
Tossed in the wind beside a green pool.
Though lacking “the thread from a single cocoon,”
I was blessed with “the color of a blue robe.”
Upon silk sleeves light dust barely settles,
Her ivory couch is spread with pretty jewels;
Deep into the night while your lord is drinking,
Pray rest on me, fair lady, now and then.⁸⁹

Liu’s description of the object’s waterside origin in lines 1–2 suggests its present appearance as something with an even surface and distinct boundary. Lines 3–4 hint it is something woven. They also associate the object with the trait of youthful gentility: although its fibers are not so fine as the long silk filaments which provided immortal maidens with seamless gowns, they are imbued with the same color as the blue robe that was the garb of young scholars.⁹⁰ Lines 5–6 place it in an upper-class home, and from the clue “ivory couch” listeners should have guessed that it is a mat made of rushes that is used to cover a bed. This is confirmed in lines 7–8, when the object invites its owner (perhaps a dancer, by the mention of her silk sleeves) to lie down on it. The gathering’s next recitation was by Xie Tiao (464–499), whose stature as one of

⁸⁷ Things in nature, such as trees and plants, were the odes’ principal subject. Kang-i Sun Chang, *Six Dynasties poetry*, pp. 123–125, observes, however, that the predetermined topics at the gatherings attended by Xie Tiao (discussed below) all concerned small, manmade things housed in a luxurious environment. Rhyme-prose *yongwu* pre-dated the lyrical subgenre, on whose history see David R. Knechtges and Taiping Chang, *Ancient and early medieval Chinese literature: A reference guide*, Volume 3 (Leiden, 2014), pp. 1956–1962.

⁸⁸ For Liu Yun’s career and *oeuvre*, see Knechtges and Chang, *Ancient and early medieval Chinese literature*, Volume 1 (Leiden, 2010), pp. 592–594.

⁸⁹ Translation mine. Xie Tiao’s collected works list Liu’s poem as the third response to the topic. The subtitle (“A Mat”) was probably added after all the recitations. The discussion below is adapted from my “Odes on objects and patronage during the Southern Qi,” in *Studies in early medieval Chinese literature*, ed. Kroll and Knechtges, pp. 331–398.

⁹⁰ Allusions are to Sima Xiangru’s “Rhyme-Prose on the Shanglin Park” (*Zenghu Liuchen zhu Wenxuan*, 8.16b) and the *Shijing*, “Your Collar” (Mao shi #91), respectively.

early medieval China's best talents owed partly to his emotional resonance. His ode also took rushes as the object's raw material but heightened the drama of their situation. They are credited with a pure virtue that would have been obscured by the aggressive overgrowth of other plants had a lady not gathered them up in time, and the clue crucial to understanding their fabrication into a tray—"[You] who offer a gold goblet to the Throne of Jade" (line 6)—tells that their rescuer attends the emperor. As in Liu Yun's final couplet, the object asks to be used. Xie's follow-up reworked imagery from Liu's poem into a more urgent request, however: "My only wish is to be swept by your silk gown / Please don't let a pale dust collect on me." Nothing of an author's personal identity can be gleaned from the interplay of ideas in such contests. Yet the standard narrative of *yongwu shi* that are known to have been created collectively may have allegorized a historical phenomenon—that is, the influx into Jiankang of capable men who strove to impress a prince or high official with their abilities, and hoped through his favor to find employment in the court's privileged sphere.⁹¹

The Yongming decade that ended with Emperor Wu's death was soon followed by the Prince of Jingling's demise and purges of the royal family approved by the regent Xiao Luan (the future Emperor Ming, r. 494–498). Shen Yue wisely requested during this time to be posted to the provinces. On the way to govern Dongyang commandery (Jinhua, Zhejiang), he stopped to explore a mountain and penned a verse pondering his long desire to quit office. His conclusion (lines 11–14) differed from earlier eremitic poetry by holding that serving with colleagues in the bureaucracy was an equally compelling and honorable choice:

I will forget about returning; I belong with orchids and wild pears!
But then—I cherish salary and living among fragrant herbs and iris.
Fondly culling triple-blooming polypores,
I waver in uncertainty, and gaze after the Nine Transcendents.⁹²

Despite wanting to retire and dedicate himself wholly to disciplines of the Daoist religion's Celestial Masters sect (*Tianshi dao*), Shen Yue believed that reclusion was justified only by unpropitious political conditions—an opinion consistent with the Southern Qi's renewed emphasis upon the duty of educated men to serve the state.⁹³ In contrast to his friend's dilemma, when Xie

⁹¹ For efforts made by some of the "Eight Companions" and others, see Chennault, "Odes on objects," pp. 353–366.

⁹² Excerpt from "Setting Out Early from Mount Ting," translated by Mather, *The age of eternal brilliance*, Volume 1, pp. 164–165.

⁹³ Berkowitz, *Patterns of disengagement*, pp. 171–183. Shen Yue likely wondered how long the turbulence in Jiankang would last. He returned after an amnesty was declared. Mather, *Shen Yue*, pp. 121–122.

Tiao oversaw Xuancheng commandery (Anhui) as its governor (*taishou*), he forged for himself the persona of a “governor-in-hiding.” A verse he sent Shen claimed that even as chief administrator of a strategically vital region, it was possible to live as a recluse:

Huaiyang guarded the state as by the crook of an arm,
Still, one could lie there in high-cushioned ease.
All the more so in the curve of these southern hills—
How does it differ from perching in deep reclusion?⁹⁴

Certainly, the comfort depicted here belied the hardscrabble subsistence of actual recluses. Main components of Xie Tiao’s poetic idealizations were to be sequestered from political upheaval and to find time apart from the routine of administrative tasks to contemplate the beauty of the countryside surrounding his headquarters. This example’s next section implies ample leisure. Timely rainfall has ensured a good harvest, and disputes referred to his judgment have been rare:

Cloudy skies on end have prospered the farming season, 5
Straw rain hats and coats mass in tilled fields to the east.
My lofty pavilion stays shut throughout the day,
On weed-grown steps contentious words are few.

Xie Tiao once said, “Good poems are round in beauty, rolling and turning like a bead.”⁹⁵ His own supple elegance and fluidity, honed in brief verses at social gatherings, could be sustained in longer works as well. The present poem’s twenty lines are structured as a series of five quatrains, yet each scene leads naturally to the next in frames whose scope becomes progressively smaller (from the pavilion’s outlook over distant fields to delicacies laid on a table inside the building) and more introspective. In the final segment, the poet’s rueful admission of his lack of accomplishment—either as recluse or as governor—returns to the conceit of fused identities with which the piece began. Xie Tiao was the first poet to frequently mention the demands of provincial service. Tang dynasty poets called him “Warden Xie,”⁹⁶ and the

⁹⁴ From “Lying Sick in My Commandery, for Shen of the Department of State Affairs,” fully translated by Chennault, “Xie Tiao,” in *Classical Chinese writers*, ed. Smith, p. 258. The first couplet conflates two incidents. The court official Ji An (d. 112 BCE) pleaded illness to avoid being sent to Huaiyang commandery, but the emperor replied he could govern it from his bed; *HS* 50.2321–2322. When Ji Bu (fl. second century BCE) was summoned from Hedong (northeast of Chang’an, Shaanxi), he anticipated a top-level promotion. The emperor instead returned him there, equating the commandery’s importance with the limbs that defend the body, i.e., “the upper leg through the knee, and upper arm through the elbow.” *HS* 37.1977. My translation paraphrases the idea.

⁹⁵ Quoted by Shen Yue, *NS* 22.609.

⁹⁶ By convention, Xie should have been called by a higher-ranking office he later held.

many who climbed the steps of his hillside tower to view Xuancheng's landscape, as if through his eyes, included Li Bo (701–762) and Bo Juyi (772–846).

The Liang (502–557) was the pinnacle of court-centered poetry and poetics. Its founder Xiao Yan (Emperor Wu, r. 502–549) was a skillful poet formerly among the “Eight Companions” as well as a learned commentator on religious and philosophical texts, and a knowledgeable bibliophile. During his long and tranquil rule, the emperor not only enlarged the imperial library and commissioned encyclopedias and many other compendia, but also systematized the recruitment of talent from the southern gentry and lesser émigré families. Candidates from these disadvantaged social sectors became eligible for promotion to top-echelon offices, and as they and their sons populated the suites of Xiao royalty and other literary patrons, a new cultural elite took shape.⁹⁷

The poetry of the Liang salons was more analytical and descriptively fine-grained than that of the Qi. For instance, whereas earlier verse about genteel ladies was mainly concerned with representing their inner states of feeling, the Liang poet's attention was often trained on surface details and his stance objectively detached.⁹⁸ This was especially true of compositions from the coteries led by the princes Xiao Gang (503–551) and Xiao Yi (508–555). A case in point is Xiao Gang's “Ode on a Court Beauty Beholding a Painting,” wherein the speaker is an offstage onlooker who finds that the features of both “painted” ladies—the court beauty who is painted through her makeup, and the goddess whose portrait she views—are identical. So as to distinguish between “the fake and the true,” he jokingly suggests that one ask, “Which is always in a good mood?”⁹⁹ The follow-up by Yu Jianwu (487?–551), “In Response to a Command: Ode on a Beauty Who Sees Herself in a Painting,” dispenses with the question of difference by claiming, “Both issue forth as if one body divided / Behold each other as mirrors reflecting.” The idea that a work of art could so perfectly resemble an actual entity as to have a life of its own was pursued on another occasion by Yu Jianwu's son Yu Xin (513–581). His suite “Twenty-Four Odes on a Screen Painting” animated the figures on a folding screen, imagining them in the active enjoyment of singing, dancing, and drinking together.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁷ For the revival of an examination system and other measures, see Xiaofei Tian, *Beacon fire and shooting star: The literary culture of the Liang (502–557)* (Cambridge, MA, 2007), pp. 41–52.

⁹⁸ Chang, *Six Dynasties poetry*, pp. 149–151, 155–156.

⁹⁹ Paul Rouzer discusses this and the following poem in *Articulated ladies: Gender and the male community in early Chinese texts* (Cambridge, MA, 2001), pp. 150–152. For Xiao Gang's biography and translations of many of his poems, see John Marney, *Liang Chien-wen Ti* (Boston, 1976); also Xiaofei Tian, “Xiao Gang,” in *Classical Chinese writers*, ed. Smith, pp. 215–221.

¹⁰⁰ Chang, *Six Dynasties poetry*, pp. 158–160.

After Xiao Gang was designated the Crown prince in 531, the term “palace-style poetry” (*gongti shi*) became attached to his followers’ style. Commentators often related this poetry to the rear palace of the harem, instead of the Eastern Palace of the heir apparent—an understandable association because an early source for the term criticized Xiao Gang for “thoughts limited to the boudoir.”¹⁰¹ Yet the palace style might best be construed as a descriptive practice entailing a concentrated visual focus, rather than a style defined by a particular topic.¹⁰² Besides ladies of the palace, Buddhist symbols of enlightenment (e.g., lamps, candles, and natural sources of illumination) were a major interest, and the religion’s doctrine of the phenomenal world’s unreality underlay the Liang’s fascination with ephemeral things.¹⁰³ In Xiao Gang’s “Reflection of a Tower in Water,” for example, none of the objects portrayed has a fixed substance or attributes. They unfold from one moment to the next as changes in the spectator’s field of vision:

The watchtower comes out from the watery depths,
the upturned eaves float among the duckweeds.
Wind arises, but the colors are not destroyed;
the waves pass on, the reflection abides.¹⁰⁴

The word “colors” (*se*) in the third line was the Chinese translation of *rūpa*, the Sanskrit term for the material world’s forms that are all inherently empty. The palace style’s method extended to occasional verse as well. A poem that Liu Xiaowei (496?–549) composed at the Lustration Festival’s customary drinking party featured olfactory and visual illusions in a single line: “Fragrance already flows from the honeyed flames of golden branches.”¹⁰⁵ Liu here conjoined two things carried on the surface of a stream—the fallen petals of sweet-smelling peach blossoms (whose future flowering he imagines) and the present reflection of the branches of a gold candelabra. A new precision in marking time’s passing was also realized by the avant-garde’s keen attention to detail. A couplet in a work by Xiao Gang thus captured the interval from sunset to the lighting of lanterns in a garden: “Tangled clouds, glowing red, are made circular by clear water; / Tiny leaves are outlined by a lamp in the air.”¹⁰⁶ In the gathering darkness, a round pond contains the red clouds

¹⁰¹ SS 35.1090.

¹⁰² Analyzing commentary about the style, Tian, *Beacon fire and shooting star*, pp. 175–185, 211–212, argues for a definition based upon technique.

¹⁰³ Tian, *Beacon fire and shooting star*, pp. 211–259. See also Albert E. Dien, “Lighting in the Six Dynasties period,” *EMC* 13–14.1 (2007), pp. 1–32.

¹⁰⁴ Translation and discussion by Tian, *Beacon fire and shooting star*, pp. 202–203.

¹⁰⁵ Tian, *Beacon fire and shooting star*, pp. 250–251. For the Lustration Festival, see Richter, “The world of prose literature,” Chapter 27 in this volume.

¹⁰⁶ Tian, *Beacon fire and shooting star*, pp. 236–237.

reflected in it, briefly giving them a clear boundary, and then a lantern suspended from a tree bough makes visible the silhouettes of small leaves.

Quatrains were a common form of light verse, and were often written as improvisations upon the romantic songs of the South, a practice Southern Qi poets had earlier legitimized. Like their models, however, *yuefu* quatrains of the Liang were almost invariably in five-character lines. The outstanding example of a heptasyllabic piece is “Song of Crows Roosting,” a tune that the Xiao royalty or notable members of the court’s inner circle apparently invented. Eight *yuefu* of this title were variously composed by Xiao Gang and his cousin, the historian Xiao Zixian (489–537); by Xu Ling (507–583), the very talented son of Xiao Gang’s tutor; and by Cen Zhijing (519–579), a prodigy conferred with court office after Emperor Wu personally tested his scholarship.¹⁰⁷ Xiao Yi alone supplied six *yuefu* to the new title. The heptasyllabic line’s caesura fell after the fourth syllable, and in the translation below of one of Xiao Yi’s quatrains, a double slash indicates the pause in the original phrasing.

Our boat was made from a wild apple tree // its oars of cinnamon wood,
By night it crosses “South of the River” // for “Plucking Lotus” leaves.
If again we should meet Xi Shi // rinsing silk floss anew,
Together we’ll head up the riverbank // and watch the beaming of the moon.¹⁰⁸

The verse is a brief paean to the southland’s lush allure. The first line’s “oars of cinnamon wood” conjures the South’s exoticism by a well-known image from the *Songs of Chu*. The expression “South of the River” (line 2) was a standard term for the region below the Yangzi and also the name of a set of *yuefu* tunes, “South of the River Performances” (*Jiangnan nong*), that was created by Emperor Wu. One of the subtitles in the set, “Song of Plucking Lotus” (*Cailian qu*), derived from a playful work song that implied the land’s abundance.¹⁰⁹ The third line’s reference is to a silk weaver’s daughter (fl.

¹⁰⁷ Preceding this *yuefu* set in *Yuefu shiji* (Shanghai, 1998), 47.534–537, is the possibly related “Song of Crows Cawing in the Night” to which Xiao Gang and Yu Xin each composed a heptasyllabic octave; other pre-Tang examples are pentasyllabic. Xiao Zixian compiled the *Nan Qi shu*. Owing to the roles of Xiao Gang’s tutor Xu Chi (474–551), and of Xu Ling, Yu Jianwu, and Yu Xin in developing or practicing the “palace style,” it was alternately known as the “Xu–Yu Style” (*Xu Yu ti*). Cen Zhijing’s biography is in CS 34.461–462. For Xu Ling’s life and *oeuvre*, see Xiaofei Tian’s entry in *Classical Chinese writers*, ed. Smith, pp. 262–265.

¹⁰⁸ Translation mine. *Yuefu shiji* 48.539. Hsieh observes that the heptasyllabic quatrain cannot be traced to popular tradition. For its connection with dance performances, and Xu Ling’s “Song of Crows Roosting,” see Hsieh, *Evolution of juefu verse*, pp. 220–227. One of Xiao Gang’s four *yuefu* by this title is translated by Tian, *Beacon fire and shooting star*, p. 244.

¹⁰⁹ Commentary preserved in *Yuefu shiji* 50.560 dates Emperor Wu’s creation of the set to “the winter of the 11th year of the Tianjian era,” i.e., to late 512 or early 513. The set and examples of its subtitles are discussed by Allen, *In the voice of others*, pp. 124–129; and Tian, *Beacon fire and shooting star*, pp. 349–352.

fifth century BCE) whose beauty so entranced the King of Wu that it enabled her native kingdom of Yue to conquer that rival southern state.

Several major poets were not at the forefront of the palace style, although they may sometimes have drawn upon its techniques. Wu Jun (469–520) travelled out to Shouyang (Anhui) during his youth, and could there have engaged in combat against the Northern Wei (386–534) army. More than any poet since Bao Zhao, he used the *yuefu* genre to celebrate the heroism of soldiers on campaign and ancient knights-errant. His diverse collection also contained romantic *yuefu*, assumed to date from his service during the Liang.¹¹⁰ Of the 118 poems of He Xun's (466?–519?) surviving collection, approximately half describe journeys to and from official posts. These travel poems recalled the polished fluidity of Xie Tiao's style, but He Xun's works had a more sharply focused realism. Through a few details, he could vividly render an occasion's psychological climate. Both He Xun and Wu Jun broke new ground in adopting the quatrain for personal expression, as in poems to bid farewell to friends and to voice frustration at the lack of success in their careers.¹¹¹ He's contemporaries in the capital disapproved, however, of his frequent references to his poverty and other troubles, and for this reason preferred the works of the popular court poet Liu Xiaochuo (481–539), whose tone was dependably optimistic and moderate.¹¹²

Six of Liu Xiaochuo's siblings, including three sisters, were also writers. The youngest sister, Liu Lingxian (d. after 524), wrote so moving a threnody for her husband's interment that her father-in-law, Xu Mian (466–535), an authority on ritual, put away his brush upon reading it. That only this composition and eight poems remain from her *oeuvre* is typical of the small handful of works extant by female authors. Similar cases include Zuo Si's sister Zuo Fen (d. 300), Xie An's niece Xie Daoyun (d. after 399), Bao Zhao's sister Bao Linghui (fl. 460), and Shen Yue's granddaughter Shen Manyuan (fl. 540). Upper-class women were as a rule well educated, but information in the histories about their literary talent was often placed in the biography of a father or other male relative, and thus contextualized as an asset of the family.¹¹³ According to Xu Ling's preface, he intended that the verses

¹¹⁰ For Wu Jun's career and *oeuvre*, see Knechtges and Chang, *Ancient and early medieval Chinese literature*, Volume 2 (Leiden, 2014), pp. 1369–1378.

¹¹¹ Hsieh, *Evolution of jueju verse*, pp. 198–206.

¹¹² Reported by Yan Zhitui; Teng, *Family instructions*, p. 106. Ping Wang compares the poets' stature and styles in *The age of courtly writing: Wenxuan compiler Xiao Tong (501–531) and his circle* (Leiden, 2012), pp. 146–166.

¹¹³ See Beatrice Spade, "The education of women in China during the Southern Dynasties," *JAH* 13.1 (1979), pp. 15–41; and Qian Nanxiu, *Spirit and self: The Shib-shuo hsin-yu and its legacy* (Honolulu, 2001), pp. 142–148. David R. Knechtges and Xiaofei Tian identify additional poetesses in their chapters in *Cambridge history of Chinese literature*, cited in notes 22 and 69 above.

collected in the *Yutai xinyong* be read by palace women who were “skilled in the craft of poetry.”¹¹⁴ His idea that reading these might inspire their new poems, or serve as a diversion during idle hours, broke with the age-old moralistic rationale of readings for women.

Of numerous Liang dynasty critiques of literature, the surviving masterworks are Liu Xie’s (fl. late fifth to early sixth century) *Wenxin diaolong*, which contains a chapter on *shi* poetry and another on ritual *yuefu*,¹¹⁵ and Zhong Rong’s *Shipin*, whose exclusive focus is pentasyllabic verse. The *Shipin* reviewed the styles of the works of 123 deceased poets from the Han forward, and ranked them in three orders of excellence (upper, middle, lower). Although a few of Zhong’s ratings have been disputed (particularly the placement of Tao Qian, Bao Zhao, and Xie Tiao into the middle rank), his descriptions of the strengths and weaknesses of poets were largely accepted, and the terminology he devised to characterize their styles influenced not only the later practical criticism of poetry but also that of calligraphy and painting.¹¹⁶

POETRY OF NORTH CHINA AND THE CHEN DYNASTY

The interest of northern and southern regimes in the culture of the other accelerated after the Northern Wei Tuoba Emperor Xiaowen (r. 471–499) moved his capital to Luoyang in 494 and instituted an extensive program of sinification. An instance of his successor Xuanwu’s (r. 499–515) continuing the assimilation of the Han people’s customs occurred when he took Shouchun in the year 500. Having captured the garrison town’s southern musicians and singers, Xuanwu established the larger nomenclature for the southland’s romantic songs (i.e., “song lyrics in the clear *shang* mode”), and ordered that the repertoire be performed at banquets.¹¹⁷ *Yuefu* of northern origin were likewise collected in the South, and a large group of them became known as “*Liang* songs for drums, horns, and transverse flutes” (*italics mine*), all of

¹¹⁴ Preface translated by Anne Birrell, *New songs from a jade terrace: An anthology of early Chinese love poetry* (London, 1982), pp. 339–347. On the basis of the preface’s mention of the dispersal of literary works, among other arguments, Liu Yuejin, *Yutai xinyong yanjiu* (Beijing, 2000), pp. 84–88, proposes that Xu compiled the anthology after the Liang. Thomas Jansen describes the text’s history and contents in *Early medieval Chinese texts*, ed. Chennault et al. (Berkeley, 2015), pp. 482–493.

¹¹⁵ See note 66 for the standard translation. For the text’s history and contents, see Antje Richter, “Wenxin diaolong,” in *Early medieval Chinese texts*, ed. Chennault et al., pp. 389–400.

¹¹⁶ For Zhong Rong’s evaluative method, and the text’s history and contents, see Timothy John Wixted’s “The nature of evaluation in the *Shib-p’in* (Gradings of poets) by Chung Hung (A.D. 469–518),” in *Theories of the arts in China*, ed. Susan Bush and Christian Murck (Princeton, 1983), pp. 225–264; and his “Shi pin,” in *Early medieval Chinese texts*, ed. Chennault et al., pp. 275–288.

¹¹⁷ WS 8.192, 109.2843. *Yuefu shiji* 44.499.

which were instruments for martial music. The bulk of pieces from this group of tunes and lyrics related to warfare are believed to date from the Sixteen States (304–439) and Northern Wei, but the category also incorporated imitative pieces by Liang literati.¹¹⁸ The most famous early medieval *yuefu*, the lively “Ballad of Mulan,” belonged to this group. Probably translated from the Xianbei language during the fifth to sixth centuries, the ballad told the story of the legendary Hua Mulan, who disguised herself as a man to take her father’s place in a campaign against enemies of “the khan,” possibly the Ruanruan nomads. Such episodic narratives, at a length of sixty-two lines in this case, had disappeared from the South since the Han dynasty.¹¹⁹

The dynastic histories are the source of many popular songs. The *Jinshu* (*History of the Jin*) preserves a song in the seven-syllable line by soldiers from Gansu grieving the death of their leader Chen An (d. 323). Its first half memorializes Chen’s rapport with his men and two-fisted ferocity in combat.

Of Longshang’s stout warriors there was Chen An,
Slight in build yet wholly a magnanimous man,
Who loved his soldiers like his own heart and liver.
On a swift piebald stallion with a saddle forged of iron,
His seven-foot sword swept down like a torrent,
His eight-yard snake-lance circled to left and right.
Victor in ten of ten bouts, none outdid him.¹²⁰

Also referenced in the histories is the “Song of the Tölös,” a song of the nomadic Chile tribe from the steppes which conjured up the vastness of the grasslands’ stretching out endlessly under “a sky like a vaulted yurt.” Following a disastrous siege of Yubi (Shanxi) in 546, Gao Huan (496–547) and his general Hulü Jin (fl. mid-sixth century) together sang this herding song of unknown date to the demoralized Eastern Wei (534–550) troops.¹²¹

There is no question that southern literati welcomed northern works that reinforced the notion of the crudely martial character of the “barbarians”—a stereotype that was a foil to the image they cherished of themselves as upholders of civilization’s refinements. Northerners also stereotyped southern

¹¹⁸ *Yuefu shiji* 25. Cao Daoheng and Shen Yucheng, *Nanbeichao wenxue shi* (Beijing, 1991), pp. 451–453. Cao, *Nanchao wenxue yu beichao wenxue yanjiu* (Nanjing, 1998), p. 266, observes that by the end of the Liu-Song, northern martial music was already played by southern troops.

¹¹⁹ *Yuefu shiji* 25.307–308. Frodsham and Ch’eng, *Anthology*, pp. 104–106.

¹²⁰ *JS* 103.2694, annals of Liu Yao (d. 329), Xiongnu ruler of the Former Zhao; *Yuefu shiji* 85.908–9. Translation mine, but adapted from the full translation by Frodsham and Ch’eng, *Anthology*, pp. 109–110.

¹²¹ *BS* 6.230; text in *Yuefu shiji*, 86.918.

values. It is sometimes uncertain whether an unsigned poem originated in the North or South, as it may have been a caricature of the other's culture. An example that encapsulates the opposition between a northern love of warfare and southern propensity for romance is a variation on "Song Lyrics of the Langye Wang" in which the owner of a new sword declares,

I just bought a five-foot sword,
from the central pillar I hang it.
I stroke it three times a day—
better by far than a maid of fifteen.

No evidence definitively establishes the poem's provenance.¹²²

In Emperor Wu of Liang's perception, the Northern Wei's Wen Zisheng (495–547), whose writings circulated as far as Kokonor (Qinghai), was a "Cao Zhi or Lu Ji reborn."¹²³ Filling out the triumvirate of the period's "Three Talents" (*San cai*) were the literary rivals Xing Shao (c.497–c.567) and the historian Wei Shou (c.506–572). Yet, despite the former's skill in "carving insects" (*diao chong*)—a characterization of southern technique that was at once admiring and derogatory¹²⁴—and the favorable impression the latter gave of his literary ability when serving as Eastern Wei ambassador in 539 to the Liang,¹²⁵ both seem to have lagged behind south China's current fashion. In their rivalry, Xing Shao accused Wei Shou of copying the prose master Ren Fang (460–508), and Wei countered that Xing stole from Shen Yue. Their contemporaries shared the opinion that these were the models they respectively emulated.¹²⁶

Northern authors could later claim an independent creativity. Lu Sidao's (535–586) "Ballad of Following the Army" not only showed a command of this old *yuefu*'s tropes, but, without compromising its prototypes' robust tone, he deftly interwove the harshly barren terrain experienced by the soldier with scenes from home, where a loving wife awaited his return. Lu's use throughout of the heptasyllabic meter also renovated the old title, as did the antithetical structure of almost all the poem's fourteen couplets.¹²⁷ Their limpid flow was

¹²² Translated by Stephen Owen, and discussed by Scott Pearce, "The way of the warrior in early medieval China, examined through the 'Northern *yuefu*,'" *EMC* 13–14.2 (2008), pp. 100–101. See also Tian, *Beacon fire and shooting star*, pp. 339–340.

¹²³ *WS* 85.1876.

¹²⁴ The passage in Xing Shao's biography which notes "the beauty of his insect-carving" states that the price of paper rose in the capital whenever he wrote a new composition. *BQS* 36.476. Jack W. Chen explains the term's origin and negative implications in "Pei Ziyue's 'Discourse on insect carving,'" in *Early medieval China*, ed. Swartz et al., pp. 267–273.

¹²⁵ *BQS* 37.484–485.

¹²⁶ *BQS* 37.492. See also Yan Zhitui's mention of their models; Teng, *Family instructions*, pp. 96–97.

¹²⁷ In "antithetical" couplets, words that are semantically opposite but syntactically identical occupy the same position in each of the two lines. This matching of terms (most obvious in the translation from Xie

a southern development that he mastered.¹²⁸ After the fall of the Northern Qi (550–577) and Lu's forcible removal to Chang'an, his expression of homesickness and alienation in "Listening to the Cry of a Cicada" won praise from Yu Xin, who at this time was the North's most revered poet-in-exile.¹²⁹ The learned Xue Daoheng (540–609), a friend of Lu, was also deported to Chang'an. He had earlier vaulted to fame when he composed a poem to match (*he*) the contents and rhyme sounds of a fifty-couplet opus presented by a Chen dynasty (557–589) emissary to Ye.¹³⁰ His most-quoted couplet described the disrepair of the home of a long-solitary woman: "Spider webs hang from dark casements / The daub of swallow nests drops from empty rafters." Yet Xue Daoheng's originality, as seen in the second line's imagery, was by no means limited to works about abandoned wives. In frontier poetry and verses on other subjects, his technique of alternating the South's florid expressiveness with plain language was powerfully effective.¹³¹ He infused northern landscapes as well as northern perspectives of the South with a fresh aesthetic sensibility, and his biography tells that southerners recited every new poem of his.¹³²

Most of Yu Xin's remaining 323 *shi* and *yuefu*, the largest lyric collection of any early medieval author, were written while he held prestigious appointments under the Northern Zhou (557–581). He and Wang Bao (514?–575?), a hostage taken at Jiangling,¹³³ were the senior members of Chang'an's expatriate authors and greatly influenced the convergence of northern and southern styles. In contrast to the lightheartedness of Yu Xin's earlier poetry, works he composed in the North had a solemnity that reflected his grief over

Lingyun, discussed above), was observed at least partially in most other *shi* of the fifth century and later, but in general not so strictly in *yuefu*.

¹²⁸ Translated by Tian (*Beacon fire and shooting star*, pp. 331–332), who observes Xiao Gang's influence on Lu's opening couplet. Cao Daoheng and Shen Yucheng, *Nanbeichao wenxue shi*, pp. 492–493, point out the poem's far-reaching vision and concrete portrayal of the northern climate, which seems personally experienced, and note that the Tang Emperor Xuanzong (r. 715–756) recited a slightly reworded version of one of its couplets.

¹²⁹ For Lu Sida's life and *oeuvre*, see Knechtges and Chang, *Ancient and early medieval Chinese literature*, Volume 1, pp. 634–636. Yu Xin was sent as the Liang's ambassador to Chang'an in the autumn of 554, and was trapped there when the Western Wei laid siege to Jiangling a few months later. For his biography, see A. C. Graham, "The Lament for the South": Yü Hsin's "Ai Chiang-nan fu" (Cambridge, 1980), pp. 4–20.

¹³⁰ Their encounter during the early Wuping era (570–576), according to BS 24.1337, can be narrowed down to 571 or 572, during which period BQS 8.104–106 records three visits by Chen emissaries.

¹³¹ For Xue Daoheng's life and *oeuvre*, see Chennault's entry in *Classical Chinese writers*, ed. Smith, pp. 266–272.

¹³² BS 36.1338.

¹³³ For Wang Bao's life and *oeuvre*, see Knechtges and Chang, *Ancient and early medieval Chinese literature*, Volume 2, pp. 1134–1138.

the Liang's calamitous end. Close in spirit to the masterpiece "Rhapsody Lamenting the South," and similarly full of factual references, are his twenty-seven "Imitating 'Poems Singing of Feelings'." In some pieces, he expressed a sense of shame by comparing himself to a courtesan who was bullied into receiving guests, and castigated himself for losing his integrity by serving northern regimes.¹³⁴

Traditional critics acclaimed Yu Xin as the most accomplished poet of the centuries of disunity between the Han and Tang. Yet they also condemned him as a traitor because he accepted high office in the Northern Zhou government and lent his talent to support its legitimacy—as when composing ceremonial songs for the court and epitaphs for Xianbei nobles and statesmen.¹³⁵ Yu Xin's circumstances were complicated. The Liang dynasty to which he owed loyalty was usurped by the Chen, and he had no close relatives in the South after his father died. Like so many officials on either side of the Yangzi, his survival depended upon adapting to the political circumstances in which he found himself. Indications of Yu Xin's sorrow can be found throughout his occasional verse. His "Complementing 'An Outing to Kunming Pond' by Dharma Master Gui" represents one of the instances in which he used the condensed format of the octave—the length favored in the superficial verse of the Qi and Liang salons—to convey deep emotion:

Autumn sunlight gilds the evening sky,	I
In a fish hawk boat we drift on the current.	
Dense water chestnut hides bathing birds,	
Tall lotus stalks screen off fishing boats.	
Small pearls lie strewn round snapped chrysanthemums;	5
Torn silk filaments encircle broken lily buds.	
Urged by falling blossoms to ladle out wine,	
We sing "Roosting Crows" to a one-stringed lute. ¹³⁶	

The singing with forced gaiety and meager accompaniment of a melody popular at the Liang court (lines 7–8), poignantly evokes the fallen dynasty. The celebrated Tang poet Du Fu (712–770) much admired Yu Xin, and certain ideas in this poem—such as the insulation from ordinary realities (lines 3–4) and belated awareness of the destructive impact of the autumn season,

¹³⁴ As described in Xiaofei Tian's entry about Yu Xin, in *Classical Chinese writers*, ed. Smith, p. 303. For his career and poetic development, see also Chang, *Six Dynasties poetry*, pp. 146–184. William T. Graham Jr. and James R. Hightower translated the full set in "Yü Hsin's 'Songs of sorrow,'" *HJAS* 43.1 (1983), pp. 5–55.

¹³⁵ Tian, in *Classical Chinese writers*, ed. Smith, pp. 303–304.

¹³⁶ My translation, with some changes, is based on Frodsham and Cheng, *Anthology*, pp. 191–192. Yu's alteration in line 8 of the *yuefu* title "[Song of] Crows Roosting" (*Wu qi [qu]*) to "Roosting Crows" (*qi wu*) was probably to maintain parallelism with the previous line's "falling blossoms."

shown in exquisitely sensuous details (lines 5–6)—appear in his “Autumn Meditations,” a suite lamenting the Tang dynasty’s decline.¹³⁷

Remembrance and loss suffused the poems of southerners who returned to Jiankang and held office under the Chen dynasty. Released from Chang’an, Shen Jiong (502–560) traveled past villages where only large trees remained. Coming up from Guangzhou, Yin Keng (d. c. 565) stopped at Baling (Hunan) to produce the first *shi* inspecting a temple in ruins. Yao Cha (533–606) was stricken with grief when happening upon a poem by Xiao Ziyun (487–549), and wrote a complementary work in memory of this nobleman who escaped Hou Jing’s siege of Jiankang but died nonetheless of starvation. When Zhou Hongzheng (496–574) went searching for his brother after a long absence from the capital, he was reminded that most of his old friends were now forever gone.¹³⁸

As the practice of Buddhism broadened during the Chen, and became the basis for a literary community that overlapped associations at court, visits to temples were a common occasion for social exchanges. This subject had first appeared after Emperor Wu of Liang’s embrace of the religion around the year 517. Poets of his entourage and those of the Xiao princes drew upon the imagery of the *Chu ci* when describing their visits as opportunities for brief retreats, or displayed their knowledge of Buddhist sites and miracles by transposing them to the grounds of temples in Jiankang’s environs, many of which were sponsored by the royal family. A more intimate understanding of the religion emerged in Chen poems.¹³⁹ Jiang Zong (519–594), whose high offices included the directorship of the Department of State Affairs, wrote often about his devotions, including the rigors of meditation. The qualities of darkness and solitude that characterized his style prefigured treatments of visits to temples during the Tang, the period with which the subject is usually associated. Xu Xiaoke (527–599), an esteemed lay lecturer on the sutras and younger sibling of Xu Ling, answered two verses that Jiang wrote from the Qixia Temple on Mount She, where the Abbot Huibu (517–587) instructed him in the Sanlun school’s Mahayanist teachings. Chen Shubao, the dynasty’s Houzhu (r. 582–589), or last ruler,¹⁴⁰ was his respondent on another occasion.

¹³⁷ Tsu-lin Mei and Yu-kung Kao, “Tu Fu’s ‘Autumn meditations’: An exercise in linguistic criticism,” *HJAS* 28 (1968), pp. 53, 58–60, 69–70.

¹³⁸ For Yin Keng, see Chennault’s entry in *Classical Chinese writers*, ed. Smith, pp. 294–300; for the others, Knechtges and Chang, *Ancient and early medieval Chinese literature*: Shen Jiong, Volume 2, pp. 845–848; Xiao Ziyun, Volume 3, pp. 1563–1565; Xu Xiaoke, Volume 3, pp. 1716–1718; Yao Cha, Volume 3, pp. 1873–1876; Zhou Hongzheng, Volume 4, pp. 2279–2282.

¹³⁹ Cynthia L. Chennault, “Representing the uncommon: Temple-visit lyrics from the Liang to Sui dynasties,” in *Interpretation and literature in early medieval China*, ed. Alan K. Chan and Yuet-keung Lo (Albany, pp. 2010), pp. 189–222.

¹⁴⁰ For Chen Shubao and Jiang Zong, see Knechtges and Chang, *Ancient and early medieval Chinese literature*, Volume 1, pp. 116–117, 447–450.

After the Sui conquered the Chen, Jiang Zong was conferred with an honorable sinecure and continued his religious training. The conclusion of his “Mingqing Temple,” possibly the last work he penned, reflects his reconciling himself to the subjugation of his homeland:

On mountain steps I tread the glistening white moon,
At the ravine’s portal, I listen to cold cicadas.
The market and court may soak in grassy dew,
The Huai and the sea become mulberry fields.
Why speak then of gazing toward Zhong’s summit—
Much less of being cut off by Qin’s streams?¹⁴¹

The passage’s third line recalls an old ballad’s description of the vicissitudes of political fortune and their lack of consequence in the long view: “People change in the market and court / In a thousand years, grave mounds are level.”¹⁴² The “Huai [river] and the sea” of the next line can be understood as the binome *Huaihai*, a term designating Yangzhou, the new “southern capital” established by Emperor Wen of the Sui (r. 581–604) on the Yangzi’s north bank. The mention of mulberry fields refers to his order that the palaces, temples, and homes of Jiankang be razed, and the land turned over to agrarian use.¹⁴³ The last grief that Jiang Zong makes endurable by placing it in cosmic perspective is his separation from the monarch he long served and loved as a friend. Chen Shubao was exiled far away to Chang’an.¹⁴⁴

CONCLUSION

Departing from the largely anonymous legacy of ancient verse, literati from the late Han forward began to compose lyric poetry as a regular practice. Distinctive authorial voices first arose in pieces that drew from a limited repertoire of topics and expressions shared by popular songs (*yuefu*) and poems assumed to reflect the writer’s personal experiences (*shi*). New themes and occasions for compositions later proliferated. Poets of the fourth through sixth centuries were credited with founding thematic subgenres whose practice extended long into later eras. Their works continue to be a resource for

¹⁴¹ My translation, “Representing the uncommon,” p. 204. Lu Qinli, *Xian Qin Han Wei Jin Nanbeichao shi*, Volume 3, pp. 2582–2583.

¹⁴² Lu Qinli, *Xian Qin Han Wei Jin Nanbeichao shi*, Volume 1, p. 290.

¹⁴³ Jiang Zong here implies that Jiankang’s fate could befall Sui metropolises. For Emperor Wen of the Sui’s orders, see Arthur F. Wright, “The Sui dynasty (581–617),” in Denis Twitchett and John K. Fairbank, eds., *The Cambridge history of China*, Volume 3, Part 1, pp. 111–113.

¹⁴⁴ Mount Zhong, northeast of Jiankang, was the site of many temples frequented by Liang and Chen dynasty courtiers. “Qinchuan” (“Qin streams”) referred to the Shaanxi region, where Chang’an was first a capital under the Qin dynasty (221–206 BCE).

insights into the society, political conditions, and intellectual movements of the times.

Despite the significance of early medieval poetry as a bridge between the classical age and the Tang, traditional appraisals were often tainted by the fact of the Southern Dynasties' final collapse. In particular, literary commentators saw evidence of moral decay in salon poetry's subject matter and concern for stylistic technique. Their judgment isolated a putative cause of the native southern government's defeat from a constellation of circumstances unrelated to personal virtue.¹⁴⁵ It is useful to remember that the regulated octave that was the pride of Tang verse originated in the dedication of salon poets to perfecting poetry's euphony, and that the artistry of their finely wrought observations of the sensuous world was not forsaken by poets of the Tang, when they further advanced the complementarity of scenic description and emotional expression.

The evolution of early medieval poetry often involved the integration of apparent opposites. There existed a symbiosis between forms of elite and popular lyricism whereby each tradition absorbed elements of the other. There developed a systematic method for representing the natural world's interactive forces of *yin* and *yang* and, later, the formulation of guidelines for balancing contrastive tonal values. There was finally a merging of the traits of northern and southern poetry, led in the main by southern masters, which preceded China's political reunification.

¹⁴⁵ Orthodox historians likewise criticized the moral decadence of the late Southern Dynasties' leadership. Charles Holcombe considers this charge in the context of other circumstances in "The last lord of the South: Chen Houzhu (r. 583–589) and the reunification of China," *EMC* 12 (2006), pp. 91–122.

CHAPTER 29

ART AND VISUAL CULTURE

Wu Hung

The three hundred years of the Six Dynasties was one of the most important transformative periods in the history of Chinese art. The early dynasties of Qin and Han, which first unified China, had fallen. The breakup of the empire brought new forces into play, such as regional autonomy, foreign incursions, and resettlement of populations. Many important changes in visual and material culture took place and initiated subsequent developments during the Sui and Tang dynasties.

Three pivotal changes characterized the art and visual culture of this period; first, the country's political division introduced new modes of artistic exchange. No longer dominated by a single metropolitan tradition and bureaucratic system, Chinese art developed in new directions through the interaction of regional traditions and foreign influences. Such cultural and artistic interaction became evident in all domains of art and visual culture, especially in funerary art, which had been a major locus of artistic production since ancient times. Second, central to this broad cultural interaction, Buddhist art was embraced by the central authority as well as local communities. This then brought about a fundamental change in religious art. Instead of serving family-based ancestral veneration, numerous temples and icons were created for a community-based worship. The Buddhist faith inspired new types of monuments, such as cave chapels and pagodas, and also stimulated the formation of the Daoist pantheon. Third, in the sphere of painting and calligraphy, the idea of "art for art's sake" prevailed. Following the independence of these two art genres, there was a surge of art collecting, art criticism, and connoisseurship. These inventions then laid a foundation for a literati art tradition, which would become the mainstream of Chinese art for the next 1,500 years.

This chapter outlines these new phenomena that were realized in three major fields of art and visual culture, namely funerary art, religious art, and painting and calligraphy. Although these fields constantly interacted with one other, they produced scholarly works for divergent purposes, in different forms and media,

and to be shown at separate places. Such differences also imply the diverse evidence in studying these three fields. For funerary art, little has survived from above-ground graveyards except for some stone sculptures near Nanjing, the capital of the Southern Dynasties. Evidence for this art mainly comes from underground tombs, often decorated with elaborate murals and furnished with figurines, objects, epitaphs, and mortuary furniture carved with intricate images. For Buddhist art, none of the timber-framed temples from this period recorded in historical texts still stand, but many cave chapels with sculptures and wall paintings remain, especially in north and northwest China. Another source for studying Buddhist and Daoist art is individual sculptures, including “image steles” (*zaoxiang bei*), gilt bronze miniature statues, and stone statues; examples of the last kind have been found in large quantities in caches. Finally, for painting and calligraphy created as independent works of art, authentic examples remain extremely scarce. Their format and content are preserved in copies made in later dynasties, but there is also much information on the subject in the written sources.

FUNERARY ART

As the oldest art tradition in China, funerary art can be traced back to prehistoric times when people built underground structures for the dead and furnished them with objects and offerings. During the Han dynasty, the tomb structure underwent a profound transformation from the box-like “casket grave” (*guo mu*) inside a deep earthen pit to the house-like “chamber grave” (*shi mu*) connected with the outside world by doors and passageways; stone sculptures were also erected in graveyards.¹ Tomb designers of the Six Dynasties inherited these inventions, but the course of funerary art during this period was neither continuous nor linear. In many cases, specific social and economic conditions dictated the development of this art. Political interference further contributed to the sudden disappearance and reappearance of certain art and architectural forms.

The abolishment and resurrection of stone funerary monuments offered clear instances of political intervention. Soon after the fall of the Han, Cao Pi, Emperor Wen of the Wei (r. 220–226), denounced Han-style “lavish tombs” and promoted “frugal burials” instead. Following his example, Sima Yan, Emperor Wu of the Western Jin (r. 265–290), issued an edict in 278 prohibiting the use of

¹ For these two changes, see Wu Hung, *The art of the Yellow Springs: Understanding Chinese tombs* (Honolulu, 2010), pp. 20–34; *idem*, *Monumentality in early Chinese art and architecture* (Stanford, 1995), pp. 189–192.



Figure 29.1 *Tomb of Prince Xiao Ji (d. 529) at Jurong, Jiangsu. Liang dynasty. Wu Hung, Monumentality of early Chinese art and architecture (Stanford, 1995), Figure 5.3*

stone sculptures and steles in graveyards.² A radical reversal of this policy took place some 200 years later and brought the Han tradition back into practice. Today, near Nanjing, monumental sculptures have been found in more than thirty locations as remains of royal and princely mausoleums of the Song, Qi, Liang, and Chen dynasties.³ The earliest specimens were possibly created in the early fifth century, and the latest around the mid-sixth century. The better-preserved sets, such as those in the graveyards of three Liang princes Xiao Xiu (d. 518), Xiao Hong (d. 526), and Xiao Ji (d. 529), suggest that an original layout included paired stone animals, pillars, and memorial steles (Figure 29.1). The pillars displayed the name and title of the deceased on the flat panels beneath the capitals, whereas the steles bore inscriptions to glorify the prince's career and merits. These stone sculptures originally flanked a ritual path leading to the tumulus. As indicated by its ancient designation *shendao*, the "spirit way," this path was built not for the living but for the departing soul, which, it was believed, traveled along the path from its old home to its new abode, crossing the paired pillars that marked out the boundary between these two worlds.

Because of the fragmentary condition of these stone carvings, it is difficult to reconstruct a complete mausoleum or to ascertain the stylistic development of the sculptures. It is significant, however, that some of these

² Although some later writers mentioned certain stone sculptures in Eastern Jin graveyards, the scarcity of actual examples suggests the effectiveness of the prohibition. For sources of these records, see Albert E. Dien, *Six Dynasties civilization* (New Haven, 2007), p. 457, n. 73.

³ The most up-to-date investigation report of these sculptures is Annette Kieser, *Grabanlagen der Herrscherhäuser der Südlichen Dynastien in China (420–589): Geisterwege und Gräber im Spiegel der Geschichte*, Monographien des Römisch-Germanischen Zentralmuseums, Band 60 (Mainz, 2004).

monuments provide clear evidence for artistic communication between the Southern Dynasties and other regions, both within and beyond China. For example, although a pair of *que*-towers often marked the entrance to a Han dynasty graveyard, the pillars near Nanjing derived their designs from Indian prototypes, such as the Lion Column in Lauriyā Nandangarh.⁴ The memorial stele of Prince Xiao Hong exhibited fantastic animals and celestial figures; similar images also decorated stone epitaphs and Buddhist cave chapels in the North. The nearly simultaneous appearance of such images in both North and South was likely related to another contemporary phenomenon: the Northern Wei royal house also erected monumental sculptures in imperial mausoleums. But when reviving this old Han tradition, the Xianbei rulers enriched it by adding paired human figures along the spirit way. The surviving examples include two guardian figures from the mausoleums of Yuan Ke, Emperor Xuanwu (d. 515) and Yuan Ziyou, Emperor Xiaozhuang (d. 531).⁵ Over three meters tall, these anthropomorphic images initiated a tradition that would be followed by the Tang and later dynasties.

Due to the official promotion of frugal burials and the continuous political turmoil during the Wei and Western Jin, the Eastern Han-type tomb with sumptuously painted murals virtually vanished from the Central Plain in the third and fourth centuries, and only survived in the Northwest and Northeast during this period.⁶ A group of third- and fourth-century tombs near Liaoyang in Liaoning Province retained the traditional multi-chamber plan and pictorial decoration, but adopted the local custom of using stone as the construction material. The interior murals, including the portraits of the tomb occupants, manors, and chariot processions, can all be traced to Eastern Han tomb paintings in Hebei and Henan. In the same period, another regional tradition of painted tombs thrived in the Northwest, in the Hexi corridor in present-day Gansu Province.⁷ Mostly built of small bricks and featuring a domed ceiling, these tombs exhibited numerous miniature pictures painted

⁴ Wu, *Monumentality*, pp. 276–279.

⁵ Zhongguo shehui kexueyuan kaogu yanjiusuo Luoyang Han Wei dui and Luoyang gumu bowuguan, “Bei Wei Xuanwudi Jingling fajue baogao,” *Kaogu* 1994.9, pp. 801–814. The statue from this mausoleum, now headless, is 2.89 meters tall; Huang Minglan, “Luoyang Bei Wei Jingling weizhi de queding he Jingling weizhi de tuice,” *Wenwu* 1978.7, pp. 36–41, 22. The statue found in front of Emperor Xiaozhuang’s tomb is 3.14 meters tall.

⁶ For a comprehensive study of decorated tombs during the Six Dynasties, see Zheng Yan, *Wei Jin Nanbeichao bibuamu yanjiu* (Beijing, 2002). Also see Wei Zheng, *Wei Jin Nanbeichao kaogu* (Beijing, 2013), pp. 76–256.

⁷ For a comprehensive study of this group of tombs, see Guo Yongli, *Hexi Wei Jin Shibilinguo bibuamu* (Beijing, 2012).

on individual bricks, showing domestic animals, farming and hunting, and figures from history and legends.⁸

One unique feature of these northwestern tombs is their disproportionately tall facades. Standing above a tomb's entrance, the facade displayed profuse images of heavenly omens and immortal symbols on multiples registers, generating the allusion that, upon entering the tomb, the deceased was admitted into the celestial realm (Figure 29.2). In order to build such a tall facade below the ground level, an elongated sloping passageway was created in front of a tomb. During the Western Jin, such long passageways became the fashion and appeared in some royal burials near Luoyang. Flanked by two broad triangular walls, this space was then transformed into a "picture gallery" in north China after the fall of the Northern Wei in 534. The result was a new type of painted tomb, introduced by the Eastern Wei and Northern Qi around the mid-sixth century. Represented by large burials at Cixian in Hebei and Taiyuan in Shanxi, it is made up of three architectural or decorative sections, including a descending passage (*mudao*), a tomb corridor (*yongdao*), and a square tomb chamber behind one or more stone gates (Figure 29.3).⁹ Elaborate murals decorate all these sections, but the two walls flanking the open passage provided the largest space for painting. To take the Wanzhang tomb as an example, this imperial burial—possibly belonging to Gao Yang, Emperor Wenxuan of the Northern Qi, who died in 559—has a passage thirty-seven meters long and about 3.5 meters wide at the bottom, with walls that increase in height from 0.36 to 8.86 meters. In comparison, the *yongdao* tunnel is a mere 6.7 meters long and the tomb chamber only about 7.5 meters square. Within the enormous "exhibition space" outside the tunnel, a multitude of images on the walls, expertly executed with energetic ink lines and rich colors, constitute two enormous paintings unprecedented in Chinese funerary art. At the beginning of the two triangular compositions are the cosmic animals Blue Dragon and White Tiger, flying toward the outside, leading forty-one fantastic creatures through the sky in rapid succession. Below these supernatural images are 106 guards of honor. Holding various ceremonial paraphernalia, they form a continuous ritual procession consisting of twenty-two units (Figure 29.4).

⁸ Typical examples of such painted tombs are recorded in Gansusheng wenwudui, Gansusheng bowuguan, and Jiayuguanshi wenwu guanlisuo, *Jiayuguan bibuamu fajue baogao* (Beijing, 1985); Zhang Baoxi, ed., *Jiayuguan Jiuquan Wei Jin Shibingguo mu bibu* (Lanzhou, 2001); Gansusheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo, *Dunhuang Foyemiaowan Xi Jin huaxiangzhuan mu* (Beijing, 1998).

⁹ Zheng Yan has termed this burial type the "Yecheng model" because, in his opinion, it started at the Northern Qi capital Ye and spread to other regions. Zheng, *Wei Jin Nanbeichao*, pp. 181–208.

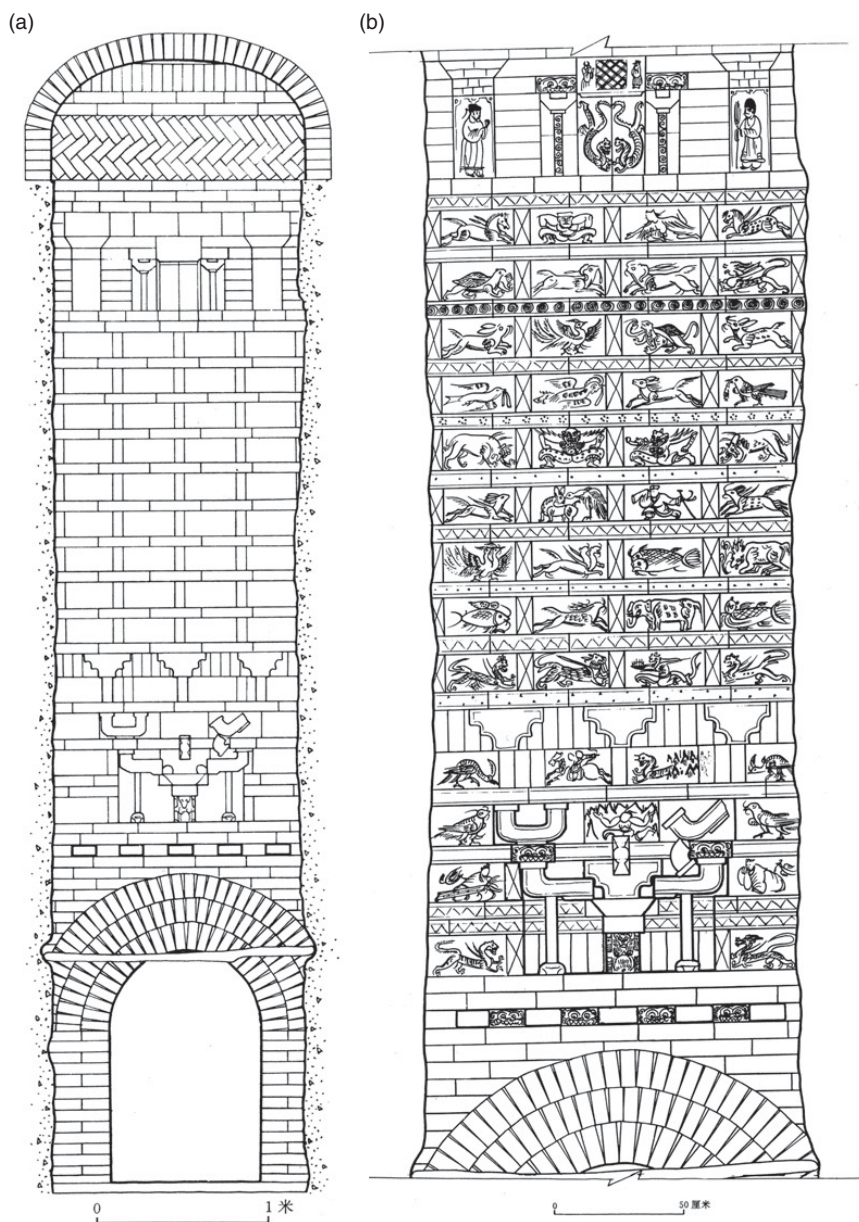


Figure 29.2 Facade of Tomb 133 at Foyemiaowan, Dunhuang, Gansu. Western Jin, late third century; (left) full view, (right) detail. Wu Hung, *The art of the Yellow Springs* (London, 2010), Figure 208

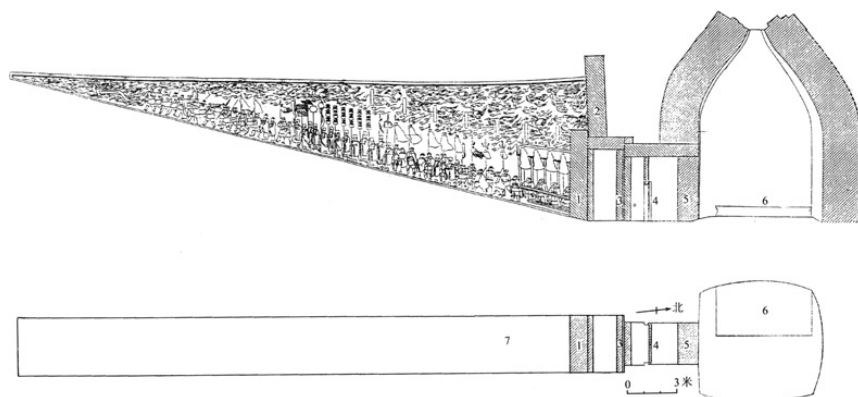


Figure 29.3 *Plans of the Wanzhang tomb, Cixian, Hebei. Northern Qi, 560. Wu Hung, The art of the Yellow Springs, Figure 209*

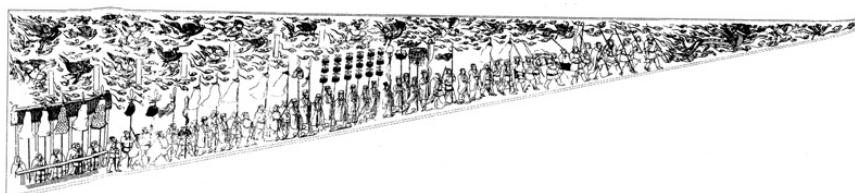


Figure 29.4 *The east wall of the passageway of the Wanzhang tomb, Cixian, Hebei. Northern Qi, 560. Wu Hung, The art of the Yellow Springs, Figure 211*

Such decorated passageways were absent in contemporary aristocratic graves in the South, but two features shared by sixth-century northern and southern tombs suggest artistic communication and mural influences. The first is the single-chamber plan; the second is the prevalence of wall decoration. In retrospect, we realize that the tendency toward a more compact spatial plan in mortuary architecture had become increasingly evident during the fourth and fifth centuries.¹⁰ As a result, a sixth-century grave no longer imitated a multi-chambered living space. Its murals also contained fewer references to an imagined “happy homeland,” but instead alluded to the social status and cultural taste of the dead with symbolic images. Whereas large

¹⁰ For the development of tomb structures during the Six Dynasties period, see Dien, *Six Dynasties civilization*, pp. 76–192. For a comprehensive archaeological survey of southern tombs, see Wei Zheng, *Liuchao muzang de kaoguxue yanjiu* (Beijing, 2011).

(a)



(b)



Figure 29.5 *The Seven Sages of the Bamboo Grove and Rong Qiqi*. Brick reliefs in the Southern Dynasty tomb at Xishanqiao near Nanjing. Wu Hung, *The art of the Yellow Springs*, Figure 170

procession scenes dominated the decoration of northern aristocratic tombs, a composition called “The Seven Sages in the Bamboo Grove and Rong Qiqi” enjoyed particular popularity among southern royal patrons. The earliest example of this composition appeared in an Eastern Jin or Liu-Song tomb at Xishanqiao near Nanjing.¹¹ Delineated in fluid lines stamped on bricks, the elegant portraits of these figures flank the burial chamber on the two long walls (Figure 29.5). We must distinguish these portraits from the real Seven Sages, a group of third-century bohemian writers, philosophers, and musicians who escaped political intrigue and found solace in nature. A single feature of the Xishanqiao tomb reveals that these men were no longer viewed as individuals but as general cultural symbols: they are grouped with a much earlier figure named Rong Qiqi, who is said to have achieved the status of an

¹¹ Nanjing Bowuyuan and Nanjingshi wenwu baoguan weiyuanhui, “Nanjing Xishanqiao Nanchao mu jiqi zhuanke bihua,” *Wenwu* 1960.8–9, pp. 37–42; Luo Zongzhen, “Nanjing Xishanqiao Youfangcun Nanchao damu de fajue,” *Kaogu* 1963.6, pp. 291–300, 290.

immortal. This new significance of the Seven Sages explains the continuing popularity of their images during the Southern Dynasties; cruder copies of their portraits, now grouped with flying fairies and mythical animals, appeared in large Danyang graves, possibly mausoleums of Qi emperors.¹²

As these decorated tombs demonstrate, Six Dynasties funerary art is characterized by constant interregional interactions. This phenomenon is most visible in tombs located in southern Henan and eastern Shandong. Geographically situated between North and South, these areas belonged to an intermediate zone of cultural transmission. For example, a tomb at Dengxian, Henan, is constructed with stamped bricks like the Southern Dynasties tombs near Nanjing.¹³ But instead of forming large pictorial compositions, many bricks bear individual scenes and thus resemble the northern tombs near Jiayuguan. The stamped images again fuse northern and southern elements: here one finds not only hermits and immortals similar to the Seven Sages of the Bamboo Grove and Rong Qiqi, but also filial paragons and ceremonial processions ubiquitous in northern tomb decoration. Another example is Cui Fen's tomb at Linqu in Shandong, which displays a hybrid art style in a different manner.¹⁴ The burial was constructed before 551 at the beginning of the Northern Qi. With large, continuous murals covering plastered walls, its decorative method is similar to northern painted tombs, but the artist derived the images from different sources. On the walls is a series of gentlemen sitting in front of gnarled rocks and under leafy trees; their loose robes and relaxed manner recall the Seven Sages in Southern Dynasties tombs. Above the niche on the west wall, Cui Fen is portrayed in a procession that closely resembles royal parade scenes in the Northern Wei cave chapels at Longmen and Gongxian, both in Henan. On an adjacent wall are the images of a snake intertwining a turtle—the symbol of the North. Almost identical images are found in a number of Koguryŏ tombs at Anak in the Korean peninsula. In an eclectic manner, these regional motifs and styles are synthesized into a single setting.

In addition to tomb murals, two other important components of Six Dynasties funerary art are mortuary furniture, mainly decorated coffins and funerary couches, and "spirit articles" (*mingqi*), mainly tomb figurines. The

¹² Nanjing Bowuyuan, "Jiangsu Danyang Huqiao Nanchao damu ji zhuanke bihua," *Wenwu* 1974.2, pp. 44–56; *idem*, "Jiangsu Danyangxian Huqiao, Jianshan liangzuo Nanchao muzang," *Wenwu* 1980.2, pp. 1–17.

¹³ Henansheng wenhuaju wenwu gongzuodui, *Dengxian caise huaxiangzhuan mu* (Beijing, 1958).

¹⁴ Shandongsheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo and Linquxian bowuguan, "Shandong Linqu Bei Qi Cui Fen bihua mu," *Wenwu* 2002.4, pp. 4–26. For an English introduction to the tomb, see Wu Wenqi, "Painted murals of the Northern Qi period in the tomb of General Cui Fen," *Orientalism* 29.6 (June 1998), pp. 60–69.

majority of coffins during this period were rectangular timber structures, wider and higher at the head and with a flat or curved lid.¹⁵ Archaeological evidence suggests that during the fifth century, Northern Wei Xianbei aristocrats adopted the Chinese tradition to decorate lacquered coffins with pictorial scenes. One such example from Guyuan, Ningxia, is severely damaged, but its decorative program is still discernible.¹⁶ The reconstruction shows that the coffin lid bears images of the King Father of the East and the Queen Mother of the West, two prominent deities in Chinese mythology and the Daoist pantheon. Flanking the Milky Way, these two old Chinese deities are now dressed in Xianbei-style attire and given a new ethnic identity. The head of the coffin displays a large image of a Xianbei aristocrat, apparently the deceased. On the three other vertical sides, stories of Confucian paragons are illustrated above bodhisattvas and fantastic beasts in interlocking pearl roundels, again showing fusions of divergent art traditions.

The Northern Wei invented two types of stone sarcophagi with markedly different shapes. The earlier type, possibly created as an outer coffin, is shaped as a miniature house with a pitched roof. The earliest-dated example came from the tomb of Yuchi Dingzhou, a Xianbei high official who died in 457 and was buried near the Northern Wei capital, Pingcheng (the present-day Datong in Shanxi Province).¹⁷ The most elaborate example belonged to Song Shaozu, another Northern Wei official, who died in 477. It is a masonry structure 2.4 meters high and 3.48 meters wide, constructed from more than a hundred individual parts (Figure 29.6). Four columns support the portico attached to the stone house. Inside the house is a raised U-shaped platform. The walls were originally covered with murals, but only a few images on the north wall are recognizable, showing two musicians playing a lute and a round guitar. Both the musical instruments and the figures' clothing are typically Chinese, but the 117 figurines found around the sarcophagus are all dressed in Xianbei costumes. Whereas this kind of house-shaped sarcophagus continued its currency after Yuan Hong, Emperor Xiaowen, moved the capital from Pingcheng to Luoyang in 495, another type appeared in the Luoyang area in the early sixth century. Designed to substitute for the traditional timber coffin, its stone surface is covered with ornate engravings that depict Confucian paragons and celestial beings. In most cases, one of these two motifs dominates the decoration of a particular sarcophagus. But occasionally, the two motifs are mixed together, as seen on the sarcophagus of Yuan Mi (524) in

¹⁵ See Lin Sheng-chih, "Bei Wei Pingcheng shiqi de zangju," in *Gudai muzang meisbu yanjiu: di er ji*, ed. Wu Hong, Zhu Qingsheng, and Zheng Yan (Changsha, 2013), pp. 191–215.

¹⁶ Ningxia Guyuan bowuguan, *Guyuan Bei Wei mu qiguanhua* (Yinchuan, 1988).

¹⁷ See Yin Xian and Liu Junxi, "Bei Wei Yuchi Dingzhou mu shiguo fengmenshi mingwen," *Wenwu* 2011.12, pp. 47–54.

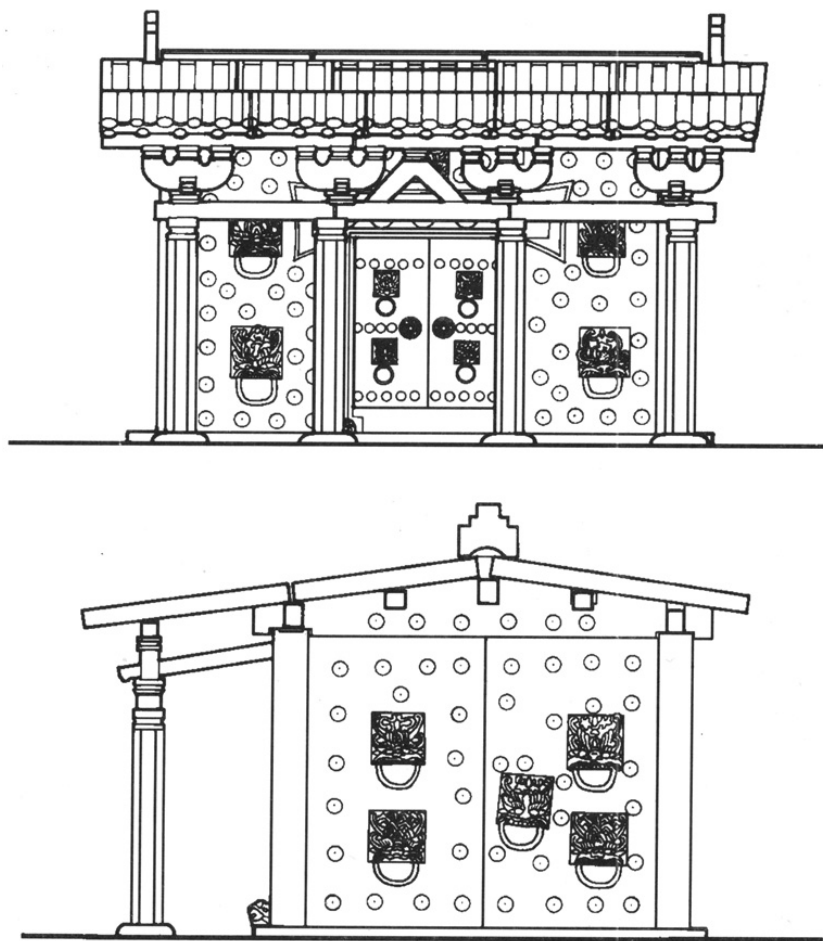


Figure 29.6 *House-shaped stone sarcophagus from the tomb of Song Shaozu, Datong, Shanxi, Northern Wei, 477. Shanxi Provincial Institute of Archaeology et al., "Datongshi Bei Wei Song Shaozu mu Fajue baogao," Wenwu 2001.7, Figure 8*

the Minneapolis Art Museum.¹⁸ At the bottom of each long side of this coffin, rolling hillocks establish a continuous foreground. Tall trees then divide the receding space into a number of sub-frames for depicting stories of filial paragons. These virtuous men are positioned in the lower half of the pictures

¹⁸ For introductions to this sarcophagus, see R. S. D., "A stone sarcophagus of the Wei Dynasty," *BMA* 37.23 (1948), pp. 110–116; Ikuō Okumura, *Kaka: Ōji daiichi* (Tokyo, 1939), pp. 359–382.

while the upper half is populated with fantastic and possibly Daoist images—a dragon juxtaposed with a phoenix, fairies riding on clouds, or exotic birds and fierce demons roaring against the wind. Counterbalancing the earthbound historical figures, these fantastic images delineated in animated lines seem to shift smoothly on the two-dimensional picture plane.

A third kind of stone funerary furniture to appear in north China in the sixth century is a large, rectangular stone couch surrounded by screen panels on the back and the two sides. The front side is either open or half-enclosed by a pair of gate towers. Like contemporary stone sarcophagi, it is richly decorated with pictorial images. Often the portrait of the deceased appears on the central screen panel, flanked by procession scenes and filial paragons. It is likely that such funerary couches developed from a flat stone bed without screen panels, which have been found in Northern Wei tombs before the sixth century. Contextual evidence also suggests that such couches, at least some of them, were associated with a special burial custom. In at least two cases, the skeletons of the dead were displayed directly on screened couches. Because one of the two tombs belonged to Kang Ye, a royal descendent of Kangju, in Central Asia,¹⁹ some scholars have related this burial custom to Sogdian immigrants, who moved to north China in considerable numbers during the Six Dynasties period. The pervasive Indo-Iranian decorative elements on some funerary couches seem to support this speculation.²⁰ But a more recent excavation challenges such direct association: among the 142 Eastern Wei and Northern Qi tombs found in a large cemetery at Gu'an in Anyang between 2005 and 2007, one grave is very similar to Kang Ye's tomb in burial method and manner of furnishing; the deceased—this time a couple—are also exposed on a stone couch without a coffin, and the couch is decorated with engraved line images.²¹ But an inscribed brick from the tomb identifies the dead as Feng Senghui and Madame Xie. There is no evidence suggesting that they were Sogdians.

The Six Dynasties period generally followed the Han dynasty tradition of furnishing elite tombs with “spirit articles.”²² Mostly made of clay, these were objects and figurines designed especially for the dead. Like mortuary

¹⁹ Xi'an shi wenwu baohu kaogusuo, “Xi'an Bei Zhou Kang Ye mu fajue jianbao,” *Wenwu* 2008.6, pp. 14–35.

²⁰ One such couch is reportedly from Anyang near the Northern Qi capital, Ye, now dispersed between four museums. See Giustina Scaglia, “Central Asians on a Northern Ch'i gate shrine,” *AA* 21.1 (1958), pp. 9–28.

²¹ Henansheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo, “Henan Anyang Gu'an mudi kaogu fajue shouhuo,” *Huaxia kaogu* 2009.3, pp. 19–23.

²² According to Albert Dien, *Six Dynasties civilization*, p. 218, fewer than 15 percent of the tombs constructed during this period contained human figurines. Yang Hong has also noted that figurines are absent in most tombs in North China during the Sixteen Kingdoms period, when the region was



Figure 29.7 *Soul jar reportedly from Shaoxing, Zhejiang, Western Jin, 260. Collection of the Palace Museum, Beijing. Wu Hung, "The invisible miniature: Framing the soul in Chinese art and architecture, Art History 38.2 (2015), Figure 5*

architecture and decoration, new types of spirit articles emerged in specific regions in accordance with local cultural and religious developments. One such regional object called a "soul jar" (*hunping*) developed in the third and fourth centuries in the lower Yangzi river delta. Its barrel-shaped lower body supports five small urns as well as miniature buildings, gate towers, musicians, birds, and animals, and even Buddha-like figures (Figure 29.7). Inscriptions

controlled by non-Han people. Angela F. Howard et al., *Chinese sculpture* (New Haven and Beijing, 2006), p. 111.

found on some examples suggest that these unusable vessels were created as the dwelling place of the posthumous soul.²³

Figurines constituted the largest category of spirit articles. The country's brief unification under the Western Jin brought about a relatively standard style of tomb figurine, especially in north and central China. But such uniformity soon vanished when the North and South came under the rules of various local regimes.²⁴ Whereas figurines in southern tombs were generally monochromic and existed in smaller arrays of domestic roles, the northern figurines were often brightly painted, and their numbers and types burgeoned to form powerful displays, with a strong emphasis on martial prowess. For example, nearly four-fifths of the 367 figurines from the tomb of Sima Jinlong, a Northern Wei royal relative who died in 484, represent military personnel, including armored cavalymen, footmen, and Xianbei soldiers.²⁵ To escort the dead with huge arrays of figurines then became a fashion among northern aristocrats around the mid-sixth century, as large burials containing hundreds of painted figurines have been found in Hebei, Henan, Shanxi, Shandong, Shaanxi, and Ningxia.²⁶ The very different appearances of northern and southern figurines, however, do not exclude common elements. For example, apotropaic figures, including guardians and "tomb-quelling beasts" (*zhenmushou*), appeared in both North and South, demonstrating the shared desire to protect the dead. Also, from the fourth century, if not even earlier, an ox-drawn carriage and a saddled horse were often placed in a tomb to symbolize the departing souls of a deceased couple. Either sculptured or painted, the paired images have been seen on many occasions, including some important tombs in the lower Yangzi region, Inner Mongolia, the Korean peninsula, and the Yellow River reach.²⁷ Their ubiquitous appearance attests not only to shared concepts of the posthumous soul, but also to a common symbolic language to represent it.

²³ For the possible funerary and religious significance of the soul jar, see Wu Hung, "Buddhist elements in early Chinese art (2nd and 3rd century A.D.)," *AA* 47.3–4 (1986), pp. 263–352, especially 283–291; Chen Dingrong, "Lun duiyuping," *Zhongguo gu taoci yanjiu* 1 (1987), pp. 71–80.

²⁴ Yang Hong, "Beichao taoyong de yuanliu, yanbian jiqi yingxiang," in *idem*, *Han Tang meishu kaogu be Fojiao yishu* (Beijing, 2000), pp. 126–139.

²⁵ Shanxisheng Datongshi bowuguan and Shanxisheng wenwu gongzuo weiyuanhui, "Shanxi Datong Shijiazhai Bei Wei Sima Jinlong mu," *Wenwu* 1972.3, pp. 20–33, 64.

²⁶ For a list of these tombs and their figures, see Yang Hong, "Beichao taoyong de yuanliu," pp. 131–136.

²⁷ These include, for example, an Eastern Jin tomb (no. 7) of the prestigious Wang clan in Xiangshan, Nanjing; an early fifth-century tomb at Hohhot, Inner Mongolia; the tomb of Chin, a high Koguryō official who died in 408; and tombs of Lou Rui and Xu Xianxiu, both of whom served in the Northern Qi court in the sixth century.

RELIGIOUS ART

Archaeological evidence demonstrates that certain popular motifs in Indian Buddhist art, including iconic images of the Buddha, entered Chinese visual culture in the second and third centuries. Whether decorating underground tomb chambers or carved alongside Daoist images, these foreign forms were used to express indigenous religious ideas, not to propagate original Buddhist teachings.²⁸ This situation changed fundamentally in the Six Dynasties period, when the ruling class embraced Buddhism and sponsored the construction of Buddhist temples in major cities and along traffic routes. Sima Yan (r. 265–290), the founder of the Western Jin, set one of the earliest examples for such enterprises by “greatly mobilizing Buddhist affairs and building Buddhist monasteries far and wide” (*da hong fo shi, guang shu qie lan* 大宏佛事, 廣樹伽藍).²⁹ As a result, 180 Buddhist temples appeared in Luoyang and Chang’an during the next few decades.³⁰ The proliferation of Buddhist institutions continued in both the North and South after the fall of the Western Jin in 316, reaching a peak in the late fifth and early sixth centuries.³¹

In the South, Xiao Yan, Emperor Wu of the Liang (r. 502–549), known as the “bodhisattva emperor” for his unrivaled devotion to Buddhism, not only built temples and monasteries, but also discoursed and commented on Buddhist sutras. His passion for the religion must have contributed to the existence of 2,846 temples in Liang territory. In the North, several non-Chinese rulers of the Sixteen Kingdoms started to sponsor cave temple complexes in the fourth century (see discussion below). Tuoba Jun, the Northern Wei Emperor Wencheng (r. 452–65), then issued an edict immediately after ascending the throne, making the construction of Buddhist temples an official responsibility of every district, prefecture, and county.³² Twenty-five years later, the number of Buddhist temples in Northern Wei reached 6,478.³³ When Yang Xuanzhi served as an official in the dynasty’s capital, Luoyang, in the 520s, he saw more than a thousand Buddhist temples, their magnificent pagodas piercing the sky.³⁴ The tallest pagoda belonged to the Eternal Tranquility Monastery (Yongningsi), a temple constructed around 516 under the patronage of the Grand Dowager Empress Ling. Located south of the palace, this nine-story monument was reportedly a thousand *chi* 尺

²⁸ See Wu Hung, “Buddhist elements in early Chinese art.”

²⁹ *Bianzheng lun*, by Falin, *Taishō shinshū daizōkyō*, 52.502c.

³⁰ *Bianzheng lun*, by Falin, *Taishō shinshū daizōkyō*, 52.502c.

³¹ For a detailed account of numbers of Buddhist temples and monasteries in medieval China based on textual sources, see Zhang Gong, *Han Tang Fosi wenhua shi* (Beijing, 1997), 1.19–206.

³² *WS* 114.3036. ³³ *WS* 114.3036.

³⁴ *Luoyang qielan ji jiaozhu*, by Yang Xuanzhi, comm. Fan Xiangyong (Shanghai, 1978), pp. 1–2.

(roughly 305 meters) tall; standing on its top level, one could see a hundred miles away. Reconstructions based on the pagoda's surviving foundation suggest instead a height of about 150 meters—still a technical wonder for a timber structure built around an earthen core.³⁵

Like the Yongningsi pagoda, the numerous wooden-framed temples and monasteries constructed during the Six Dynasties have long disappeared; their splendor can only be imagined from literary records and pictorial images. The actual material evidence for Buddhist (and also Daoist) art and visual culture during this period consists of five basic kinds: (1) cave chapels (*shiku si*) built on mountain cliffs; (2) freestanding brick and masonry structures, such as the Songyue Temple Pagoda in Dengfeng, Henan; (3) stone sculptures from vanished temples, including a large number of damaged ones found in underground hoards; (4) smaller statues made of gilt bronze (*jintongfo*); and (5) stone “image steles” (*zaoxiang bei*). Among these, cave chapels constitute the most significant body of historical evidence because of their abundant existence in north China and because of their combination of architecture, sculptures, murals, reliefs, and devotional inscriptions.

From the fourth to fifth centuries, several early cave complexes appeared in the Hexi corridor. Spanning 1,600 kilometers along the Qilian mountains, this corridor in present-day Gansu provided traders and traveling monks with a natural highway linking Central Asia to China. Each cave complex typically consisted of multiple man-made grottoes as ritual spaces for worship and meditation. One important patron of such structures was Juqu Mengxun, the founder of the Northern Liang. During his long reign from 397 to 433, he played a prominent role in initiating and expanding Buddhist cave complexes, including the Tiantishan caves near Wuwei, the Wenshushan caves south of Jiuquan, and the Matisi and Jintasi caves south of Zhangye. His effort was matched by rulers of the contemporary Western Qin (385–431), whose patronage of Buddhism produced two important cave complexes in eastern Gansu: the Binglingsi caves near Lanzhou and Maijishan caves at Tianshui.³⁶ Architecturally, the Northern Liang caves followed a Central Asian model, having a square shaft in the middle of the cave to facilitate the ritual of circumambulation. Such central pillars are absent in early Maijishan caves, which offered instead intimate spaces for meditation. The statues at Maijishan have limp bodies draped in

³⁵ Yang Hongxun, “Bei Wei Luoyang Yongningsi ta fuyuan yanjiu,” in *idem*, *Yang Hongxun jianzhu kaoguxue lunwenji (zengding ban)* (Beijing, 2008), pp. 328–341.

³⁶ For an introduction to these early caves in the Northwest, see Howard et al., *Chinese sculpture*, pp. 208–216.



Figure 29.8 *Cave 20 at Yungang, Shanxi Province. Sandstone. Northern Wei, 460–470. Photo by Wu Hung*

flowing robes, as exemplified by the graceful bodhisattva from Cave 80. Binglingsi presents yet a different case. An inscription dates its earliest structure, Cave 169, to 420. A naturally formed grotto sixty meters above the ground, this cave lacks coherent architectural planning but contains clusters of images sponsored by different patrons, including an early representation of the famous debate between the bodhisattva Mañjuśrī and the wise layman Vimalakīrti (Weimojie).

The creation of the Yungang caves near the Northern Wei capital, Pingcheng, represented a major step forward in the imperial sponsorship of Buddhist art. The main work at the site continued from 460 to 494, before the capital moved south. The five earliest Yungang caves are merely hollowed out with room for the enormous statues which they are scarcely able to contain. The idea is clear—it was the icons, not architectural space, that dominated the royal patrons' concern. The largest statue of Cave 20, 13.7 meters high, is a Buddha seated cross-legged and in full-frontal view; both the wedge-shaped nose and the arching brow are decisively sharp-cut. The monastic robe is presented in a “western” style, pulled fully over the left shoulder and partially over the right (Figure 29.8). The immense power and grandiosity of this and the other four statues seem in accordance with a historical record that Emperor

Wencheng made five buddhas to honor, or even to represent, the first five Northern Wei rulers from Taizu to himself.³⁷

Following the move of the Northern Wei capital from Pingcheng to Luoyang in 494, a second Buddhist cave complex was built at Longmen, some ten miles south of the new capital. The dominant sculptural style at Longmen differs markedly from that of Yungang. As exemplified by images in the imperial central Binyang cave (completed before 523), a Longmen Buddha statue has a narrower body and correspondingly elongated, slightly square face (Figure 29.9). The sculpture appears flat and volumeless. The attire has changed to the Chinese fashion. The “waterfall” drapery is emphasized with great care; the repetition of its linear forms creates a rhythmical effect. Even more Chinese-like are two elegant reliefs in the same cave chapel, representing the Northern Wei emperor and empress who come to worship the Buddha. There is no trace of Indian or Central Asian influence; instead the sweeping linear rhythms in these figures’ movements recall earlier and contemporary Chinese scroll paintings, such as the *Nymph of the Luo River* and *Admonitions of the Instructress to the Court Ladies* (see discussion below). Two historical conditions contributed to this new form of Buddhist art. The first is the changing attitude of the Northern Wei rulers towards traditional Chinese culture. Emperor Xiaowen (r. 471–499), who was responsible for establishing the new capital, decided that if, someday, his dynasty could control the whole of China, the Northern Wei had to prove itself the legitimate successor to the long line of Chinese dynasties beginning from remote antiquity. He thus introduced a series of reforms to adopt Chinese surnames, speech, attire, and etiquette. The new iconography and style at Longmen can be considered part of this sinicizing effort. The second factor is the location of the new capital: Luoyang was an ancient city with its location historically associated with the glory of the Zhou and Han. In the late fifth and early sixth centuries, it was also close to the neighboring Qi and Liang, two contemporary Chinese dynasties in the South. Having moved to Luoyang, the Xianbei rulers found themselves surrounded by layers of Chinese cultural heritage and also came into close contact with the cultural developments of the South. Understood in this context, the new type of Buddhist art at Longmen reflected both contemporary political initiatives and cultural interactions.

The third-largest cave complex established during the Six Dynasties is the Mogaoku caves at Dunhuang near the westernmost border of China proper. Unlike the imperially sponsored Yungang and Longmen, its founding was more closely related to traveling monks and local patrons. It is commonly believed that the monk Lezun built the first cave chapel there in 366. The

³⁷ See Su Bai, “Yungang shiku fenqi shilun,” in *idem*, *Zhongguo shikusi yanjiu* (Beijing, 1996), p. 76.

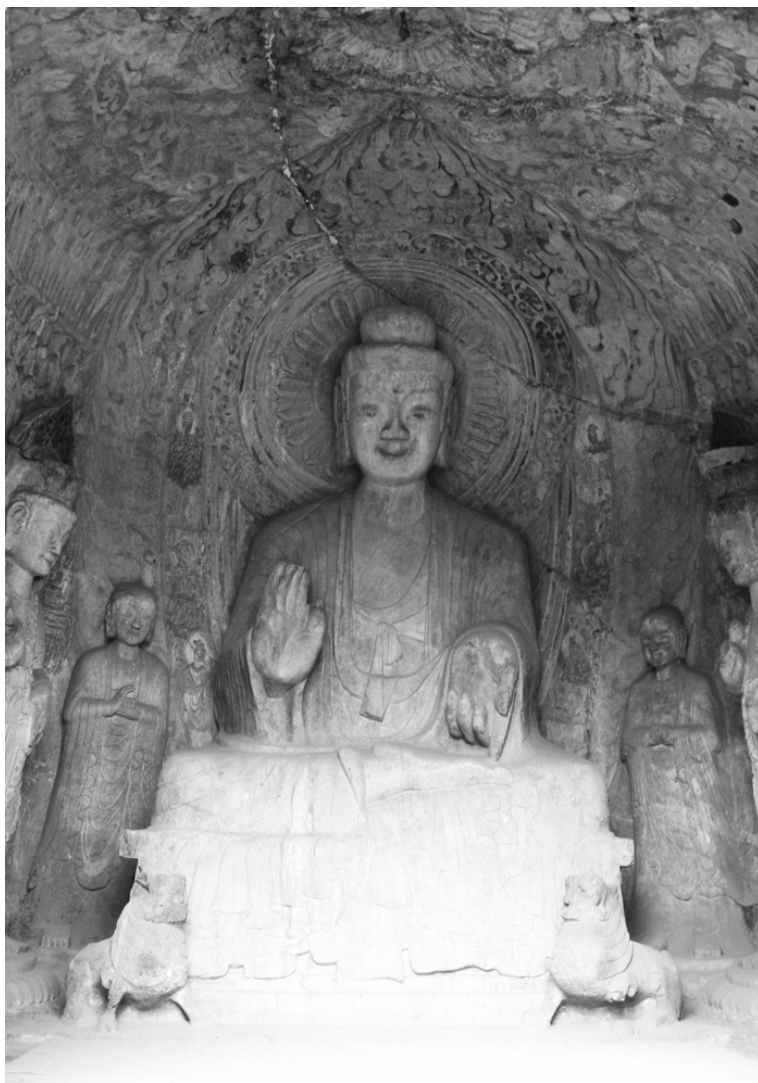


Figure 29.9 *Central Buddha statue, limestone, central Binyang cave. Northern Wei dynasty, dated 523. Photo by Wu Hung*

earliest known cave chapels, however, are three early fifth-century cave chapels numbered 268, 272, and 275. Constructed during the Northern Liang dynasty, they are positioned next to one other, with different designs to facilitate monastic assemblage and meditation. In each cave, polychromic

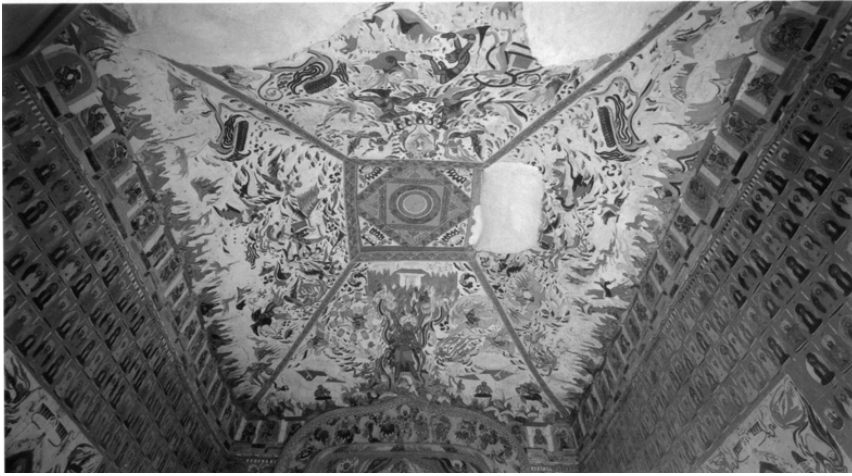


Figure 29.10 Ceiling of Cave 249 at Dunhuang, Gansu. Western Wei, early sixth century. Wu Hung, “The origins of Chinese painting (Paleolithic period to Tang dynasty),” in Richard M. Barnhart et al., *Three thousand years of Chinese painting* (New Haven and Beijing, 1997), Figure 30

murals surround the main statue and cover every inch of the interior space, depicting Jātaka tales (stories about the Buddha’s former lives), heavenly musicians, and donors.³⁸ Such combinations of iconic, narrative, and devotional images would continue to characterize later Dunhuang art, although the content and style of images changed over the course of history. Another major characteristic of Dunhuang art is its integration of divergent art traditions, a tendency easily explained by the site’s strategic location on the Silk Road. One outstanding example in this regard is Cave 249, dated to the early sixth century by most scholars.³⁹ Whereas the painted Buddhas and heavenly musicians on the walls betray strong Central Asian influences, the ceiling provided the artist with space to display images from other sources (Figure 29.10). A strange, powerful figure above the central niche, possibly Hindu in origin, has four eyes and four arms, standing in an ocean while holding up the sun and the moon. To his sides, on the north and south slopes of the truncated ceiling, are the King Father of the East and the Queen Mother of the West. In this instance, dressed in Chinese royal costume and seated in

³⁸ For images of these three caves, see Dunhuang wenwu yanjiusuo, *Dunhuang Mogaoku* (Zhongguo shiku series) (Beijing, 1981), Volume 1, Plates 3–15.

³⁹ For images of this cave, see Dunhuang wenwu yanjiusuo, *Dunhuang Mogaoku*, Plates 89–107.

elaborate chariots, they transform the ceiling into a transcendent celestial realm.

The relocation of the Northern Wei capital to Luoyang triggered a “craze” of constructing Buddhist cave chapels in north China.⁴⁰ In addition to Longmen, a number of new cave complexes appeared in Gongxian in Henan, Yixian, Liaoniang, Qingyang, and Jingchuan in Gansu from the end of the fifth century to the beginning of the sixth. In addition, new structures were added to existing sites at Binglingsi, Maijishan, Dunhuang, and Yungang.⁴¹ After the fall of the Northern Wei in 534, North China was divided into two political territories, east and west, ruled first by the Eastern Wei and Western Wei, and then by Northern Qi and Northern Zhou respectively. In the western territory, older cave complexes at Dunhuang, Maijishan, and other places continued to develop, but the eastern territory saw the creation of many new caves around the region’s twin political centers, Ye in Hebei and Jinyang in Shanxi.⁴² Of these new establishments, the three groups of Xiangtangshan caves in southern Hebei provide invaluable materials to aid understanding of the broad social basis of Northern Qi Buddhist art. The grand northern group, located halfway up the Gushan (Drum Mountain), was closely related to the Northern Qi royal family and may have housed the burial of Gao Huan (496–547), the powerful regent of the Eastern Wei and the father of the first Northern Qi emperor. The main patrons of the southern group were high officials in the Northern Qi court, whereas the modest western group at Shuiyusi was founded by members of a local religious association called an *yi*.⁴³ With such divergent sponsors, the three groups of Xiangtangshan caves nevertheless exhibited shared architectural features and were connected by certain monastic figures, revealing a multilayered religious network in the Northern Qi capital area.

Yi associations were especially active in creating “image steles,” which demanded fewer resources than cave chapels and became a popular form of religious devotion favored by common people in the fifth and sixth centuries. Essentially a rectangular stone slab exhibiting iconic and devotional images, it combines the traditional Chinese stele (*bei*) and Buddhist iconography in a succinct form, usually one to three meters in height. The main icon is mostly represented in a nearly three-dimensional form on the front side, while other

⁴⁰ See Su Bai, *Zhongguo Fojiao shikusi yiji: 3 zhi 8 shiji Zhongguo Fojiao kaoguxue* (Beijing, 2010), p. 37.

⁴¹ For example, among the forty-three early Dunhuang caves dated to the Northern Dynasties, only seven were from the Sixteen Kingdoms period; the rest were constructed during the Northern Wei (nine), Western Wei (twelve), and Northern Zhou (fifteen).

⁴² For a study of these cave complexes, see Li Yuqun, *Beichao wanqi shikusi yanjiu* (Beijing, 2003).

⁴³ For information on the Xiangtangshan Caves, see Katherine R. Tsiang, ed., *Echoes of the past: The Buddhist cave temples of Xiangtangshan* (Chicago, 2011).

figures, including donors, are delineated in low relief or with sunken lines to generate a clear sense of visual hierarchy (Figure 29.11). Erected in a temple yard, at a crossroad, or on open ground, an image stele is a public monument proclaiming the religious, social, and territorial identity of its patrons.⁴⁴ The two main purposes for establishing such monuments are commemoration and merit making. Many steles commemorate deceased family members, while their inscriptions also declare the donors' religious faith and express their wish to transfer merit to all sentient beings. The growing popularity of such steles in the sixth century seems to be related to the contemporary "craze" in building Buddhist temples and cave chapels. Found in a broad zone stretching from northwest Henan to southern Shanxi and then to Shaanxi, Ningxia, and Gansu, image steles from different areas often show distinct regional characteristics. Most interestingly, examples from Yaoxian in central Shaanxi include a considerable number of Daoist and Buddhist–Daoist steles. The former substitute the Buddha with Laozi as the main icon; the latter represent the Buddha and Laozi sitting side by side, receiving collective homage from devotees (Figure 29.12).⁴⁵ Mingled with Buddhist steles, these new images demonstrate the coexistence and interpenetration of the two religions in this area.

Although historical texts record many Buddhist temples in the South, they have left little material evidence if compared with the abundant cave chapels and image steles in the North. A few surviving cliff carvings near Nanjing and in Xinchang, Zhejiang, are either severely damaged or completely remodeled, betraying only vague resemblance to early sixth-century Longmen statues.⁴⁶ The most significant group of southern Buddhist sculptures come from Sichuan. Consisting of close to 300 steles and statues, these works have been unearthed from caches through a series of excavations since the late nineteenth century. Most of these pieces have been found in the Temple of Ten Thousand Buddhas (Wanfosi) in Chengdu,⁴⁷ whereas two recent discoveries took place outside the temple's territory, along the Xi'an Avenue in Chengdu in 1995 and at the site of Longxing Temple in Qionglai in 2005.⁴⁸ Although all are from central Sichuan, the excavated sculptures display a variety of styles, some strongly influenced by Indian sculptures at Gandhara and Mathurā, others

⁴⁴ For an introduction to the Buddhist steles, see Dorothy C. Wong, *Chinese steles: Pre-Buddhist and Buddhist use of a symbolic form* (Honolulu, 2004).

⁴⁵ See Wong, *Chinese steles*, pp. 114–117.

⁴⁶ Su Bai, "Nanchao kanxiang yizhi chutan," in *idem*, *Zhongguo shikusi yanjiu* (Beijing, 1996), pp. 176–199.

⁴⁷ Part of the Wanfosi finds is published in *Chengdu Wangfosi shike yishu*, ed. Liu Zhiyuan and Liu Tingbi (Beijing, 1958).

⁴⁸ Chengdushi wenwu kaogu gongzuodui and Chengdushi wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo, "Chengdushi Xi'an lu Nanchao shike zaoxiang qingli jianbao," *Wenwu* 1998.11, pp. 4–20; Chengdushi wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo and Qionglai shi wenwu guanliju, *Sichuan Qionglai Longxingsi: 2005–2006 nian kaogu fajue baogao* (Beijing, 2012).



Figure 29.11 Stone stele. Western Wei, dated 551. Courtesy of the Art Institute of Chicago

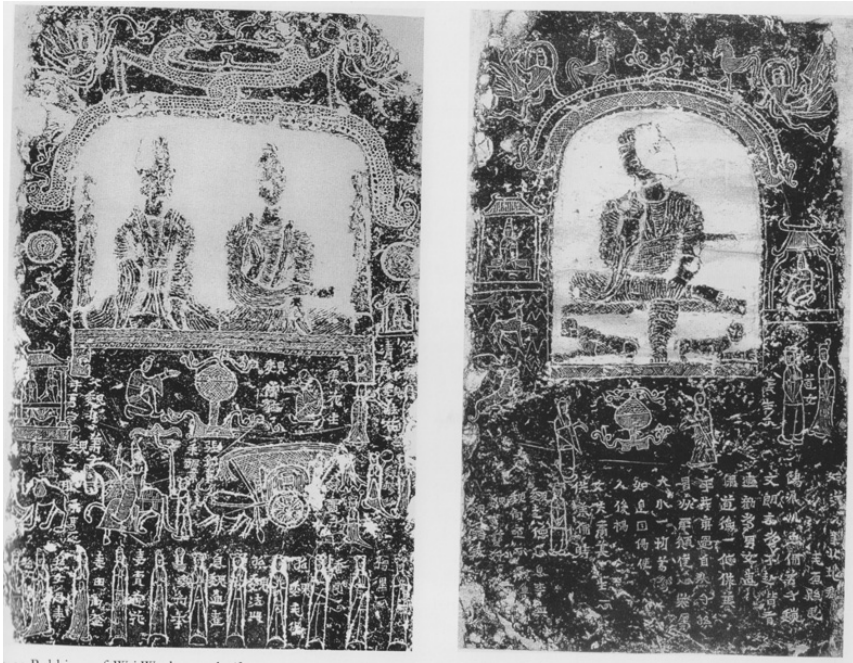


Figure 29.12 *Rubbings of Wei Wenlang Stele (front and back), limestone, Northern Wei dynasty, dated 424. The Yaowangshan Museum at Yaoxian. Angela Howard et al., Chinese sculpture (New Haven and Beijing, 2006), Figure 3.59*

showing indigenous attire and a fluid, linear style.⁴⁹ The nine pieces from the Xi'an Avenue include a foreign-looking gilt stone Buddha, dressed in an Indian-style robe and wearing a mustache (Figure 29.13). The inscription identifies it as a “King Aśoka image” ([A] *yuwang xiang*), a Buddhist icon favored by the famous Indian ruler. The same excavation also yielded a beautiful sculpture donated by the Buddhist disciple Zhang Yuan in memory of his deceased parents, as well as a Daoist statue representing probably Celestial Worthy of Primal Origins (Yuanshi Tianzun) with a fan in the right hand. Their similar materials and sculptural styles have convinced the excavators that a local workshop produced both.⁵⁰

Comparable caches have been found in the North as well. Most notably, two pits under a Song dynasty temple in Quyang, Hebei, yielded about 1,000 Buddhist statues and fragments in 1953 and 1954; more than 400 sculptures

⁴⁹ Howard et al., *Chinese sculpture*, pp. 266–273.

⁵⁰ Chengdushi wenwu kaogu gongzuodui and Chengdushi wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo, “Chengdushi Xi'an lu,” p. 17.



Figure 29.13 *Asoka-type Buddha (front and back), sandstone and gilt, found in 1995 at Xi'an Avenue, Chengdu. Southern Liang dynasty, 551. Chengdu Institute of Archaeology. Howard et al., Chinese sculpture, Figure 3.74*

in a hoard in the Longxing Temple in Qingzhou, Shandong, came to light in 1996; and almost 3,000 sculptures were found in another hoard inside the city of Ye in 2012.⁵¹ A majority of statues from such deposits are damaged or

⁵¹ Luo Fuyi, "Hebei Quyangxian chutu shixiang qingli gongzuo jianbao," *Kaogu tongxun* 1955.3, pp. 34–38; Li Xijing, "Hebei Quyangxian Xiudesi yizhi fajue ji," *Kaogu tongxun* 1955.3, pp. 38–44;

broken. Most likely, they were originally displayed in multiple temples in each area. Having been damaged or destroyed by wars, natural disasters, and religious persecution, they were collected and buried by monks as a kind of charitable practice. Under such circumstances, although many statues from these hoards are extraordinary and rare, it is impossible to reconstruct their original grouping and context.

One faces a similar problem when studying gilt bronze statues of Buddhas and bodhisattvas; despite their dazzling appearance, there is little available information about their original placement and the histories of their transmission. The earliest-dated example of such works, dedicated by a monk in 338 in the Later Zhao, is now housed in the Asian Art Museum of San Francisco. The sinicized facial features of the Buddha suggest that the work may have been pre-dated by examples showing a more distinct Gandharan style, such as a famous statue in the collection of the Harvard University Art Museum. This type of devotional object became increasingly popular toward the sixth century, a development which was again consistent with the fervent construction of Buddhist cave chapels and image steles at the time. On an especially elaborate example from 524, now in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, the central Buddha, flanked by pairs of bodhisattvas, disciples, guardian kings, and worshipers, stands on a lotus that springs from the mouth of a coiling dragon (Figure 29.14). Behind the Buddha, eleven apsarases surround the openwork aureole as if suspended in midair, forming an intricate, flame-like outline for the whole piece. Directly in front of the Buddha, two minuscule figures, one kneeling and one standing, emerge from lotus flowers to represent souls that have been reborn into the Buddha's paradise. Less than one meter tall, the work condenses the iconography of a large temple or cave chapel in miniature, to be used as an altarpiece in a more intimate worshipping space.

PAINTING AND CALLIGRAPHY

From the early Six Dynasties period, as the country fell into chaos and orthodox Confucianism rapidly lost its appeal, many intellectuals sought spiritual refuge in philosophical discourse, poetry, and music. From this trend emerged a group of educated artists who began to transform public art into private expressions. It was in this context that calligraphy and painting developed into two independent art traditions. Correspondingly, art connoisseurship and art criticism

Shandongsheng Qingzhoushi bowuguan, "Qingzhou Longxingsi Fojiao zaoxiang jiaocang qingli jianbao," *Wenwu* 1998.2, pp. 4–15.



Figure 29.14 *Altarpiece dedicated to Maitreya, gilt bronze, possibly from Hebei. Late Northern Wei–Eastern Wei, c.525–535. 76.9 cm. Courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York*

emerged and collecting became high fashion among the social elite. Crucial to the development of painting, the portable handscroll became an important art medium. No longer attached to functional architecture and ritual objects, this kind of pictorial image began to constitute its own history.

This development reached a critical point in the fourth century, when the Jin was defeated by the Han (later renamed Zhao) and retreated to the South. As north China now came under the rule of a host of non-Chinese regimes, many Chinese aristocratic families moved to the Jiangnan region, where the Jin established its new capital in Jiankang in present-day Nanjing. Co-operating with wealthy local clans, they rebuilt the political and economic system and nourished a sophisticated literary culture with a particular interest in calligraphy and painting. It is no accident that Wang Xizhi (307–365) and Gu Kaizhi (c.344/345–406), both considered “sages” (*sheng*) of calligraphy and painting in Chinese art history, were from this time and place. Wang was born into a leading family of the Eastern Jin aristocracy. He was appointed to the office

of the General of the Right, and served as the governor of Jiangzhou. Even during his lifetime, his writings, often in the form of private letters, had already become highly prized works of art by his social peers. Traditional critics praised him for his skillful synthesis of older forms into an elegant, individualized style and for his ability to excel in each basic script type, from “cleric” (*li*), “strolling” (*xing*), semi-cursive (*zhang cao*), and cursive (*cao*), to the ornamental “flying white” (*feibai*). Guided by the dictum that “writing is the delineation of the mind” (*shu, xin hua ye* 書, 心畫也), his admirers found in Wang’s calligraphy a highly refined personality capable of expressing the subtlest emotional nuance in varied brushwork. The irony is, however, that although Wang’s legacy has been perpetuated to this day, it is doubtful if any extant works attributed to him actually come from his hand. The most reliable evidence for his style and achievement consists of several tracing copies made during the early Tang, when enthusiasm for such works reached its peak. Among them, the *Sangluan tie* (*Letter on the Disturbances*) and *Kong Shizhong tie* (*Letter to Mr. Kong*) are the finest, combining the rhythmic movement of the brush, expressive strokes, and varied yet always balanced structures of characters (Figure 29.15). These copies, along with some ink rubbings made from engraved stones, have become the indispensable models for anyone who wants to study his calligraphy, all while scholars have debated the authenticity of these works.⁵²

Students of Six Dynasties painting face a similar problem; although texts record many prominent painters from this period, we do not have a single work with secure authorship. Still, these texts are important not only because they preserve painters’ names and describe their specialties, but also because they constitute the earliest corpus of artistic discourse on painting. Among these texts, three earlier ones attributed to Gu Kaizhi are concerned with, respectively, the design of a projected work, the evaluation of old and contemporary paintings, and technical devices.⁵³ Writings from the early fifth century further began to focus on the ontology of painting and issues of aesthetic appreciation. Zong Bing (375–443) interpreted a painting as an intermediary between the viewer and some profound philosophical or cosmological principles.⁵⁴ For Wang Wei (415–443), another scholar-artist with

⁵² For different opinions regarding Wang Xizhi’s most important work, “Preface on the Orchid Pavilions,” see Hua Rende and Bai Qianshen, eds., *Lanting lunji* (Suzhou, 2000).

⁵³ These are *Hua Yuntaishan ji* (“A Record of Depicting Mount Yuntai”), *Lun hua* (“On Painting”), and *Wei Jin shengliu buazan* (“Depictions of Famous Figures in the Wei and Jin Periods with Eulogies”). See Pan Tianshou, *Gu Kaizhi* (Shanghai, 1958), pp. 30–33.

⁵⁴ Zong Bing, “Hua shanshui xu.” For an English translation, see Susan Bush and Hsio-yen Shih, trans., *Early Chinese texts on painting* (Cambridge, MA, 1985), pp. 36–38.

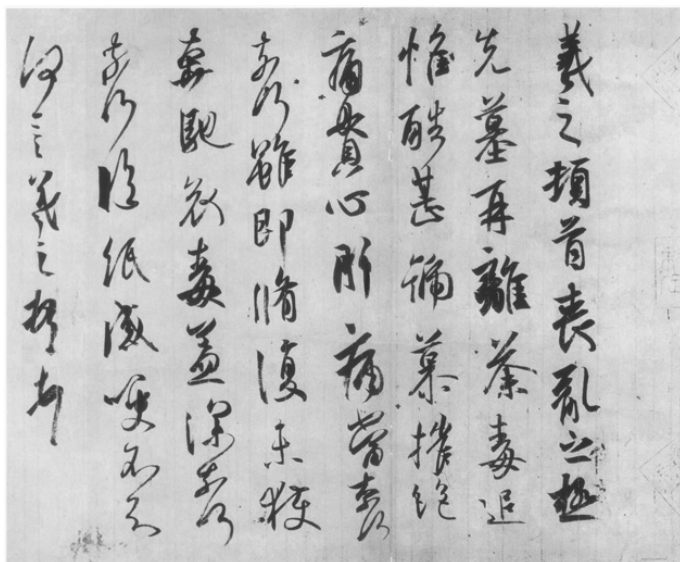


Figure 29.15 Wang Xizhi, “Letter on the Disturbances” (Sang luan tie), Tang copy, ink on paper. The Museum of the Imperial Collections, Tokyo. Yujiro Nakata, ed., Chinese calligraphy, translated and adapted by Jeffrey Hunter, New York and Tokyo, 1983, Plate 16

a keen interest in landscape, a true painting “must come about through divine inspiration.”⁵⁵ Half a century later, Xie He (active c. 500) developed Wang’s notion into the first of his famous six principles of painting (*liu fa*), which emphasize the primary importance of “spirit consonance” (*qi yun* 氣韻) in enlivening painted forms; the other five principles concern brushwork, shape, color, composition, and copying as a means of training. Based on this theoretical formulation, Xie He was able to evaluate and rank twenty-seven painters from the third to the fifth centuries in his *Classified Record of Ancient Painters* (*Gu hua pin lu*).⁵⁶ A sequel to Xie’s work by Yao Zui (c. 557) further introduces twenty painters who were active during Qi and Liang, the second and third of the Southern Dynasties.⁵⁷

In a different vein, the Tang art historian Zhang Yanyuan (c. 815–c. 877) has left us a report of painting collection and connoisseurship during the Southern

⁵⁵ Wang Wei, “Xu hua,” translation in Bush and Shih, *Early Chinese texts on painting*, p. 39.

⁵⁶ For an English translation, see William R. B. Acker, trans., *Some T’ang and pre-T’ang texts on Chinese painting* (Leiden, 1954), especially pp. 1–32.

⁵⁷ For an English translation, see Acker, *Some T’ang and pre-T’ang texts on Chinese painting*, pp. 33–58.

Dynasties.⁵⁸ He describes the fanatic collecting of masterpieces by some emperors as well as the fatal destruction of their collections when the throne changed hands. Xiao Daocheng, Emperor Gao of the Qi (r. 479–482), for example, gathered 348 scrolls by forty-two famous painters. He classified these works and “would enjoy them day or night, whenever he had leisure.” His collection was greatly enriched by the emperors of the following Liang dynasty. The last Liang ruler, however, ordered all this collection burned before surrendering himself to the invading northern army; those fortunately recovered from the embers, more than 4,000 scrolls in total, were taken north. The Chen, the last southern dynasty, started all over again, and more than 800 scrolls entered the royal collection during the three decades of its rule. Zhang Yanyuan’s record, while documenting the unprecedented royal patronage of painting and the fashion of collecting, also explains why only a limited number of scroll paintings were handed down from that turbulent age. To study the tradition of scroll painting from the third to sixth centuries, we have to rely largely on copies of original scrolls made during the Song dynasties, including *Pictures of Tribute-Bearers* (*Zhigong tu*), attributed to Xiao Yi, Emperor Yuan of Liang (r. 552–555); *Collating Texts in the Court of Northern Qi* (*Bei Qi jiaoshu tu*), attributed to Yang Zihua (sixth century); and *Wise and Benevolent Women* (*Lienü renzhi tu*) and *The Nymph of the Luo River* (*Luoshen fu tu*), attributed to Gu Kaizhi. The only painting which may have been an authentic work from the Six Dynasties is *Admonitions of the Instructress to Palace Ladies* (*Nüshi zhen tu*), also attributed to Gu Kaizhi.

We do not have contemporary records of Gu Kaizhi. His first biography in the *Jinshu* (*History of the Jin*), written some 400 years after his death, consisted mainly of anecdotes.⁵⁹ He became the most famous Six Dynasties painter only later. Pre-Tang critics differed markedly in evaluating his paintings, but all Tang writers praised him in the highest terms. This growing reputation must have contributed to the free association of his name with anonymous early paintings, including the three scrolls mentioned above, which are absent even from the Tang records of Gu Kaizhi’s works. Given this situation, instead of associating these paintings with him and his time, we should consider them anonymous works and use them as evidence for some general aspects of Six Dynasties painting.

Scholars agree that the *Biographies of Wise and Benevolent Women* is a Southern Song copy, mainly because a screen in the painting is decorated with a landscape painted in a typical Southern Song style. The importance of this

⁵⁸ Zhang Yanyuan, *Lidai minghua ji*. For an English translation, see Acker, *Some T’ang and pre-T’ang texts on Chinese painting*, pp. 111–123.

⁵⁹ *JS* 92.2404–2406.

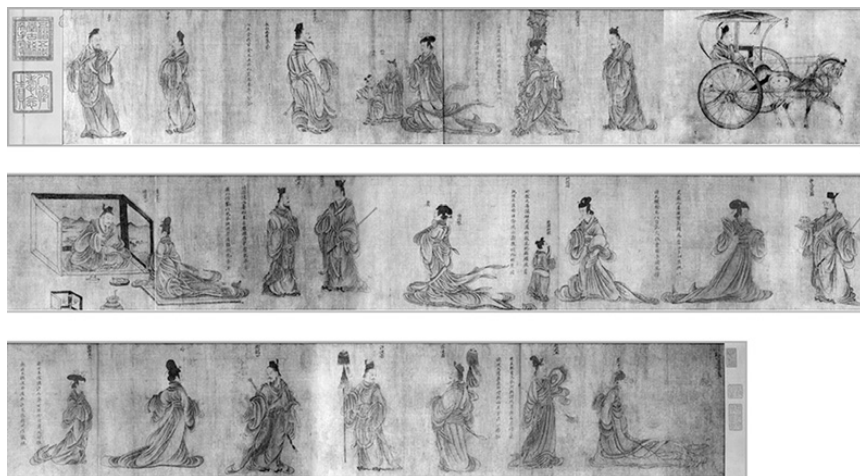


Figure 29.16 Attributed to Gu Kaizhi, *Wise and Benevolent Women*, handscroll, ink on silk, Song dynasty copy of a Six Dynasties work, Palace Museum, Beijing. Wu Hung, "The origins of Chinese painting," Figure 38

copy lies in its preservation of an early Six Dynasties picture, which demonstrates the persistence of Han pictorial style in a new intellectual environment. The five-meter-long scroll consists of ten sections. Figures in each section form a tightly interrelated group, with no relationship with other groups. Short labels identify figures, while longer inscriptions, inserted between the scenes, summarize stories and divide the long scroll into a series of "frames." Neither the subject matter nor the compositional scheme are new to the Six Dynasties. The innovative elements of the painting include a new interest in individual figures, a more realistic style, and the selection of motifs. The artist was no longer satisfied with the traditional schematic female images as seen in the second-century Wu Liang shrine, which were largely symbols rather than representations. His figures appear to be acting; their subtle expression seems to reflect emotion and feeling (Figure 29.16). The costumes are carefully drawn; the folds, emphasized by dark and light ink wash, are convincingly three-dimensional. While it is still difficult to argue to what extent such stylistic attributes belonged to the original work or were supplemented by the Song copier, we recognize the "period character" of the painting from its selection of motifs. It is important to realize that no single pre-Tang work on this subject ever illustrated the more than 100 stories in the *Biographies of Exemplary Women* (*Lienü zhuan*), and that each painter had to select certain stories from the book according to particular need. Thus the designer of the

Wu Liang shrine (151) only portrayed “chaste and obedient” women of the domestic type, and the painter of a screen from Sima Jinlong’s tomb (created before 484) focused on royal ladies. The subject of the scroll painting indicates a very different choice; the “wise and benevolent women” reflect a growing interest in women’s “intellectual” qualities, even in this highly conservative tradition.

But generally speaking, stylistic and iconographical inventions in the *Biographies* scroll are still largely subordinated to convention. In comparison, although the *Admonitions of the Instructress to Palace Ladies* scroll emerged from the same Confucian moralistic tradition, new elements broke through the restrictions of the old ideology and pictorial style. The painting, which some scholars consider an original work from the late fifth century,⁶⁰ illustrates Zhang Hua’s (232–300) text of the same title. Unlike the narrative *Biographies of Exemplary Women*, Zhang’s writing teaches abstract principles of female morality, which are difficult to translate into visual forms. To solve this problem, the artist often depicts selected images regardless of their rhetorical context. In some cases, his pictures even contradict the severe moral tone of the text. For example, a passage in the text begins with the line “Men and women only know how to adorn their face / But none know how to adorn their character.” Ignoring this criticism, which leads to stern advice (“Correct your character as with an axe, embellish it as with a chisel, strive to create holiness in your nature”), the artist only focuses on the initial analogy and portrays an elegant palace lady who is watching her face in a mirror, while another lady is having her maid arrange her long hair (Figure 29.17). The whole scene is so pleasant that no one would think there could be any harm in such natural behavior, despite the writer’s warning.

This painting also exhibits more stylistic innovation than the *Biographies* scroll. Some of its nine scenes are based on popular motifs, but the artist’s modification has reached such a critical point that he is able to transform traditional formulae into something entirely new. In this way, he distinguishes himself from an “artisan,” whose works, as exemplified by the Sima Jinlong screen, preserve the tradition to a greater extent. One scene on the screen illustrates the story of Ban Jieyu, who once refused to sit in the same sedan chair as the emperor in order to preserve the proper gender distinction. The picture follows the conventions of traditional symbolic art; a figure’s size is determined by social status or role. The whole scene appears static and

⁶⁰ See Wu Hung, “The *Admonitions* scroll revisited: Iconology, narratology, style, dating,” in *Gu Kaizhi and the Admonitions scroll*, ed. Shane McCausland (London, 2003), pp. 89–99; Yang Xin, “A study of the date of the *Admonitions* scroll based on landscape portrayal,” in *Gu Kaizhi and the Admonitions scroll*, ed. McCausland, pp. 42–52. There are scholars, however, who still consider it a Tang copy of an older work.



Figure 29.17 Attributed to Gu Kaizhi, "Adoring Oneself," detail from *Admonitions of the Instructress to Palace Ladies*, handscroll, ink and color on silk. Possibly fifth century. 24.8 × 348.2 cm. British Museum, London. Wu Hung, "The origins of Chinese painting," Figure 39

schematic, with a pictorial index of the long inscription to its left (Figure 29.18). We are astonished by its transformation in the *Admonitions* scroll (Figure 29.19). Although the basic composition is preserved, the scene is now full of energy. The sedan carriers, who are merely manikins on the screen, are now animated figures. The concubine, whose giant image on the screen indicates her central role in the story, is reduced to normal proportions. Her elegant profile contrasts with and balances the sedan carriers' frustrated movement. The focus of representation has shifted from a literary, symbolic level to a pictorial, aesthetic level.

Among all three paintings attributed to Gu Kaizhi, *The Nymph of the Luo River* is most innovative in terms of both composition and subject matter. Preserved in a number of Song and Jin copies, the original work was likely created around the mid-sixth century.⁶¹ Unlike the other two paintings, it is

⁶¹ These copies are in the collections of the Palace Museum, the Liaoning Museum, the Freer Gallery in Washington, DC, and the British Museum. For the dating of the original painting, see Pao-Chen Chen, "The goddess of the Lo River: A study of early Chinese narrative handscrolls" (PhD dissertation, Princeton University, 1987), p. 171.

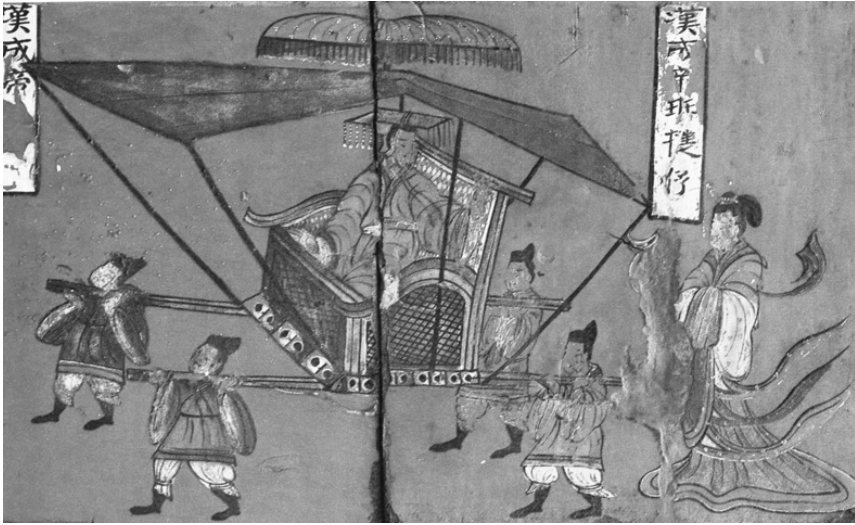


Figure 29.18 Anonymous, "Lady Ban Rejecting the Emperor's Invitation," scene on a lacquer screen from Sima Jinlong's tomb in Datong, Shanxi Province. Northern Wei dynasty, before 484. Wu Hung, "The origins of Chinese painting," Figure 42

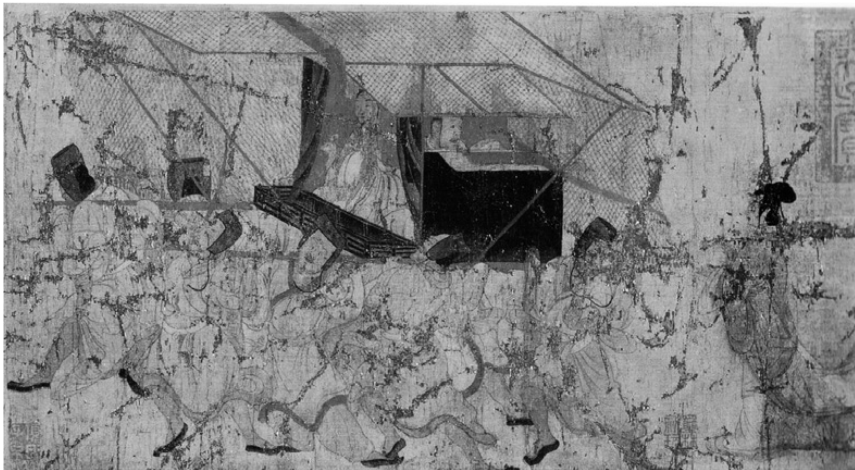


Figure 29.19 Attributed to Gu Kaizhi, "Lady Ban Rejecting the Emperor's Invitation," scene from Admonitions of the Instructress to Palace Ladies, possibly fifth century. Detail of a handscroll, ink and color on silk. The British Museum. Wu Hung, "The origins of Chinese painting," Figure 40



Figure 29.20 Attributed to Gu Kaizhi, section of *The Nymph of the Luo River*, handscroll, ink and color on silk. Song-dynasty copy of a sixth-century painting. 27.1 × 572.8 cm. Palace Museum, Beijing. Wu Hung, "The origins of Chinese painting," Figure 43b

no longer didactic in content, but illustrates Cao Zhi's (192–232) poetic description of his romantic encounter with a fairy. The opening scene depicts Cao standing on the bank of the river facing left. Following his gaze, the viewer unrolls the painting and finds the Nymph on the waves followed by a series of episodes from the romance (Figure 29.20). Cao Zhi's image also concludes the painting; seated in a departing chariot, he is looking back—his gesture leading us to recall his vanished dream. In this way, the painting synchronizes the unfolding story, the scroll format, and the viewer's gaze into a dynamic movement.

This painting signifies two other important advances in Chinese painting. The first is the invention of a continuous pictorial narrative in which the same characters reappear multiple times; the second is the development of landscape art—hills, trees, and streams are treated not as isolated entities (as in the *Admonitions* scroll), but as components of a coherent physical environment for the narrative representation. Most important, the theme of the painting is no longer a woman's virtue but her beauty, as the subject of poetic inspiration, romantic longing, and pictorial representation. The work thus initiates a new artistic tradition instead of revising an old one. In retrospect, we realize that no matter how innovative the *Biographies* and the *Admonitions* scrolls are, their creators still bore great burdens from their Han heritage. Only the painter who first composed the *Nymph of the Luo River* invented a new female iconography, which is echoed in Six Dynasties literature.⁶²

⁶² For example, romantic love is a central theme of the *New Songs from the Jade Terrace* (*Yutai xinyong*), compiled around the same time. See Anne Birrell, trans., *New songs from a jade terrace: An anthology of early Chinese love poetry* (London, 1982).

In addition, this painting offers pictorial evidence to connect three major traditions in Six Dynasties art, namely funerary art, religious art, and scroll painting, and also leads us to speculate on artistic interaction between North and South. In particular, Cao Zhi's image at the beginning of the painting attests to a standard iconography for portraying a royal figure. Two attendants are holding his arms. Others follow him, their gestures repeating one another with their draperies depicted in parallel, rhythmic lines (see Figure 29.18). Similar representations exist in the relief carvings in Northern Wei Buddhist caves at Longmen and Gongxian and also in the tomb of Cui Fen in Shandong. As mentioned earlier, a large panel in the central Binyang cave at Longmen portrays a Northern Wei emperor coming to worship the Buddha. Its iconography, as well as the sweeping linear patterns of clothes and the figures' rhythmic movement, immediately recalls the initial scene in the *Nymph* scroll. In Cui Fen's tomb, again mentioned earlier, a composition above the niche on the west wall closely resembles both the Longmen relief and the scene in the *Nymph* scroll. From Cui's epitaph, we know that he was from the powerful Cui clan of Qinghe (*Qinghe Cui shi*). His grandfather first served in the Song court in the South before joining the Northern Wei government and becoming a high official. Cui Fen started his official career in the Northern Wei. When the Northern Wei was split into the Western Wei and Eastern Wei, he joined the latter and was given grand titles.⁶³ Viewed against this background, we can understand why his posthumous image adopted the standardized depiction of a nobleman found in both North and South. We can also take this as a representative example of artistic assimilation in sixth-century China.

⁶³ Linxian bowuguan, *Bei Qi Cui Fen bibummu* (Beijing, 2002).

CHAPTER 30

MUSIC

Bo Lawergren

INTRODUCTION: THE BACKGROUND TO SIX DYNASTIES MUSIC

A manuscript, surviving in Japan,¹ contains a composition purportedly written during the Six Dynasties period by Qiu Ming (493–590),² who lived in southern China at the end of the Liang dynasty (502–557). The piece, *You Lan* (*Secluded Orchid*), was written for the *qin* (modern name *guqin*)—a type of zither. Although it is the only extant piece from the time of the Six Dynasties, we know a fair amount about the circumstances of music through the archaeology and literature of the period.

It was a time of great change among Chinese instruments. Earlier, during Shang and Zhou, the emphasis had been on heavy instruments playing ritual music.³ During the Han and Qin dynasties, lighter instruments gradually gained favor, but all were indigenous. Central Asian instruments began to arrive during the Six Dynasties period. Their importation reached a peak during the Sui (581–618) and Tang (618–907) dynasties, when entire foreign orchestras entered the court in Chang'an and were listed as the state music in the official history of the Sui dynasty.⁴ Those from Sogdia were the smallest (typically just a harp, lute, flute, and drum) and the two indigenous ones—the *yanyue*⁵ and *qingshang*⁶ ensembles—the largest. Another import to China was Buddhism. Its scriptures described a Pure Land paradise filled with music played on western instruments. It gave a reason to reshape the Chinese musical landscape.

¹ Tokyo National Museum, TB-1393, www.emuseum.jp/detail/100229/000/000.

² Also known as Qiu Gong (Master Qiu).

³ Lothar von Falkenhausen, "The Zeng Hou Yi finds in the history of Chinese music," in *Music in the age of Confucius*, ed. Jenny F. So (Washington, DC, 2000), pp. 101–113.

⁴ SS 15.376–380.

⁵ On *yanyue* or courtly banquet music, see Mingyue Liang, *Music of the billion* (New York, 1985), pp. 98–99.

⁶ For *qingshang* music, a synthesis of a northern style brought south in 317 with elements of a southern tradition, see SS 15.377–378; Liang, *Music of the billion*, p. 89–90; and Alan R. Thrasher, *Sizhu instrumental music of south China: Ethos, theory, and practice* (Leiden, 2008), pp. 53–61.

IMPORTATION OF KUCHEAN MUSIC TO NORTHERN CHINA

During the Six Dynasties period, when the Jin lost control of the North, members of the northern elite who fled to the South brought with them the *qingshang* music which presumably contained elements of earlier Han music. This is confirmed by the *Suishu* (*History of the Sui*), where the *qingshang* orchestra is listed with many stone chimes (lithophones) and bell chimes, instruments typical of ancient China. None of the other orchestras described in the *Suishu* had such instruments.

Some sixty years after the North–South split, dynastic histories document the gradual penetration of Kuchean music into northern China (Map 30.1).⁷ When Lü Guang in 386 established the Later Liang state with its capital at Guzang, Gansu, he installed groups of jugglers, actors, musicians and dancers taken as booty from his conquest of Kucha. These captives met local performers, and a hybrid style—called “Qin–Han” music—was the result.⁸ In 403 Northern Liang—ruled by Xiongnu people—conquered Later Liang and absorbed the Qin–Han music. In turn, Northern Wei conquered Northern Liang in 439 and renamed Qin–Han music “Western Liang music.” This type of music spread across northern China, and was officially renamed “state performance” (*guoji*) in the mid-sixth century. When the capital of Northern Wei was moved from Datong south to Luoyang in 494, this *guoji* music became popular in Luoyang, where Emperor Xuanwu (r. 500–515) is said to have loved it. The tunes were played—and danced—throughout his state.

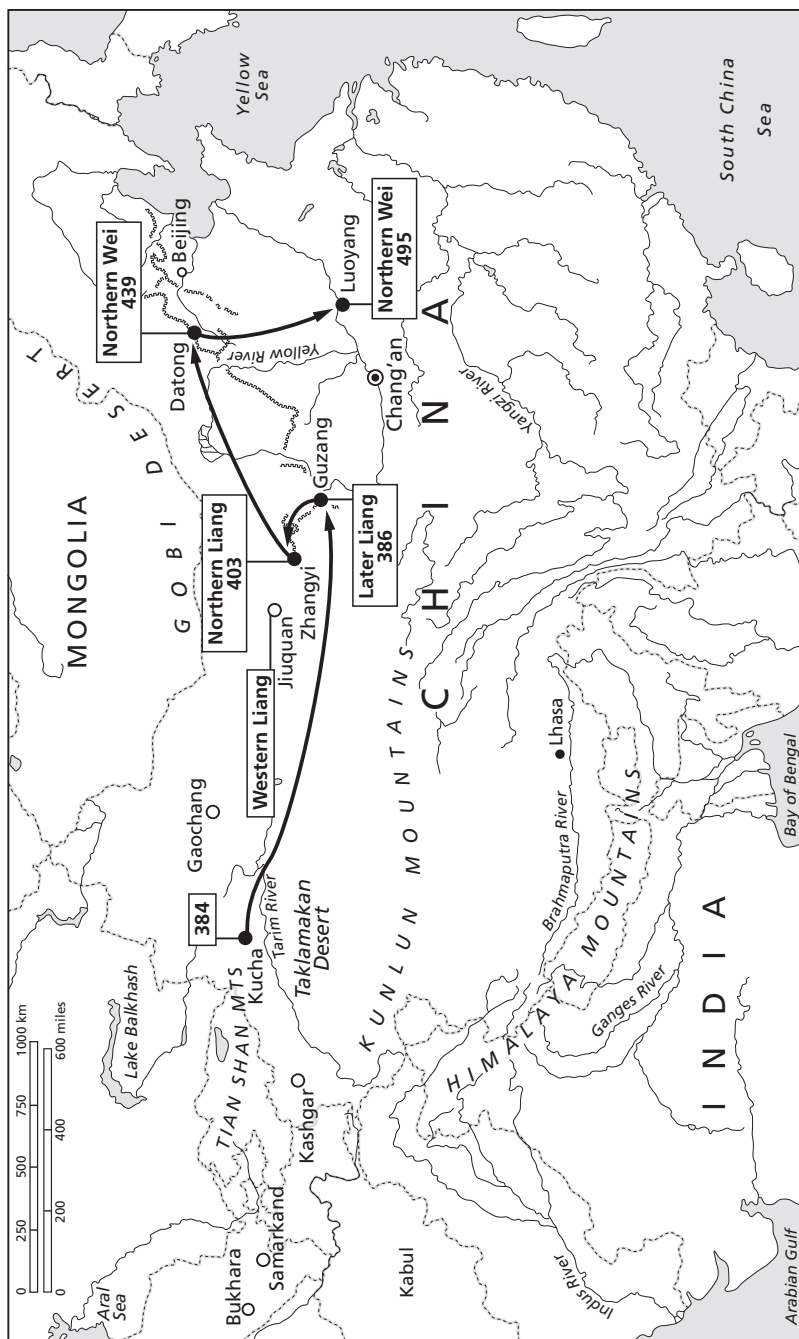
The instruments employed in this Kuchean music were mostly imported from Central and Western Asia. There were angular harps, mouth organs, drums, cymbals, gongs, and the five-stringed and four-stringed (“Kuchean”) lute. Two lute teachers came from Kucha: Cao Poloumen—active in the Western Wei (535–557)—and Sujīva in the Northern Zhou (557–581). The family name of the former points to a Sogdian connection, and his given name translates to “Brahman.” As company for a royal bride, Sujīva traveled from Kucha to a region held by Northern Zhou in 568. There a Chinese musician, Zheng Yi, heard Sujīva demonstrate the “seven modes” of Kuchean lute music. The names, as recorded by Zheng, sound like the names of Indian *rāgas*.⁹ Evidently, Kuchean music was based on Indian modes.

State music remained popular throughout the North. During the Northern Qi (550–577), there were four types of music at court: Western Liang music,

⁷ Mau-Tsai Liu, *Kutscha und seine Beziehungen zu China vom 2. Jh. v. bis zum 6. Jh. n. Chr.*, Asiatische Forschungen, Volume 27 (Wiesbaden, 1969), pp. 201–205.

⁸ Liu, *Kutscha*, p. 101.

⁹ Richard Widdess, *The ragas of early Indian music: Modes, melodies, and musical notations from the Gupta period to c. 1250* (Oxford, 1995), pp. 16–17; Liu, *Kutscha*, 103.



Map 30.1 How music traveled from Kucha to northern China. The thick lines and solid black dots show the path. Open circles mark some sites that sent ensembles to Chang'an

secular Han music, Kucha music, and drum dances. The first emperor of the dynasty, Gao Yang, posthumously Emperor Wenxuan (r. 550–559), enjoyed playing foreign drums to accompany the Kuchean lute, and the last, Gao Wei (565–577), who brought down the dynasty, “only cared for the obscene tunes of barbarians.”¹⁰ Musicians from Central Asia worked at the court, and many Buddhist ensembles were shown in the art.

When Yuwen Yong, Emperor Wu of the Northern Zhou (560–578), married the daughter of a Turkish khagan in 568, the bride traveled through Central Asia and musicians joined her entourage. This brought a fresh supply of musicians from Kucha, Kashgar, Bukhara, and Samarkand to northwestern China. In 571 Emperor Wu arranged a huge concert in the palace, with more than 500 musicians, and all were dressed in priceless costumes made of silk.¹¹ Foreign music permeated the palace. When the Sui replaced the Northern Zhou and united the country, the history of music entered a new phase, but that is beyond the scope of this volume.¹²

BUDDHISM AND MUSIC

Buddhism was introduced to China during the Han and influenced music as it gained ground during the Six Dynasties.¹³ Mahayana sutras, composed west of China, asserted that western instruments were played in paradise. Prince Siddhartha, who would become the Buddha, loved music while living in his father's palace.¹⁴ He heard female court musicians play harps, lutes, flutes, and drums.¹⁵ Buddhists were assured that similar glories awaited them in paradise, and the *Lotus Sutra* identified drums, horns, conch shells, pipes, flutes, zithers, harps, lutes, cymbals, and gongs in the orchestras.¹⁶

Chinese monasteries and palaces featured such ensembles. Around 520, a nunnery at the capital of Luoyang sponsored

six *maigre* feasts [and] there were always women musicians. Songs curled round the roof-beams as dancing sleeves slowly turned. Clear sounded the silken strings and the pipes, and enchanting were their harmonies. As this was a nunnery men were not allowed in, but those who could go to see it felt that they were in paradise.¹⁷

¹⁰ Liu, *Kutscha*, p. 102. ¹¹ Liu, *Kutscha*, p. 102.

¹² For music in the Sui and Tang, see Liu, *Kutscha*, pp. 205–209.

¹³ Kenneth Ch'en, *Buddhism in China: A historical survey* (Princeton, 1964), pp. 34–36.

¹⁴ Bo Lawergren, “Buddha as a musician,” *AA* 54 (1994), pp. 226–240.

¹⁵ E. B. Cowell, trans., “The *Buddha-karita* of Asvaghosha,” in *Buddhist Mahāyāna texts*, ed. F. Max Müller (New York, 1969), pp. 56–57.

¹⁶ Burton Watson, trans., *The Lotus sutra* (New York, 1993), p. 40.

¹⁷ W. J. F. Jenner, *Memories of Loyang: Yang Hsüan-chih and the lost capital (493–534)* (Oxford, 1981), p. 168.

CHINESE INSTRUMENTS

General

During Qin and Han, music had a wide appeal in entertainment, as illustrated in a tomb relief in Yi'nan (Figure 30.1). Here sixteen members of an ensemble sit on long mats and play while jugglers, acrobats, and tightrope walkers entertain. The instruments shown here include pellet drums, squat drums beaten with mallets, a handbell beaten with a mallet, three panpipes, a pipe, a *se* zither, an ocarina, a mouth organ, a pole drum, suspended bronze bells, and lithophones. All are indigenous. During the Six Dynasties this changed. Small instruments arrived by way of the Silk Road. Caravans brought angular harps

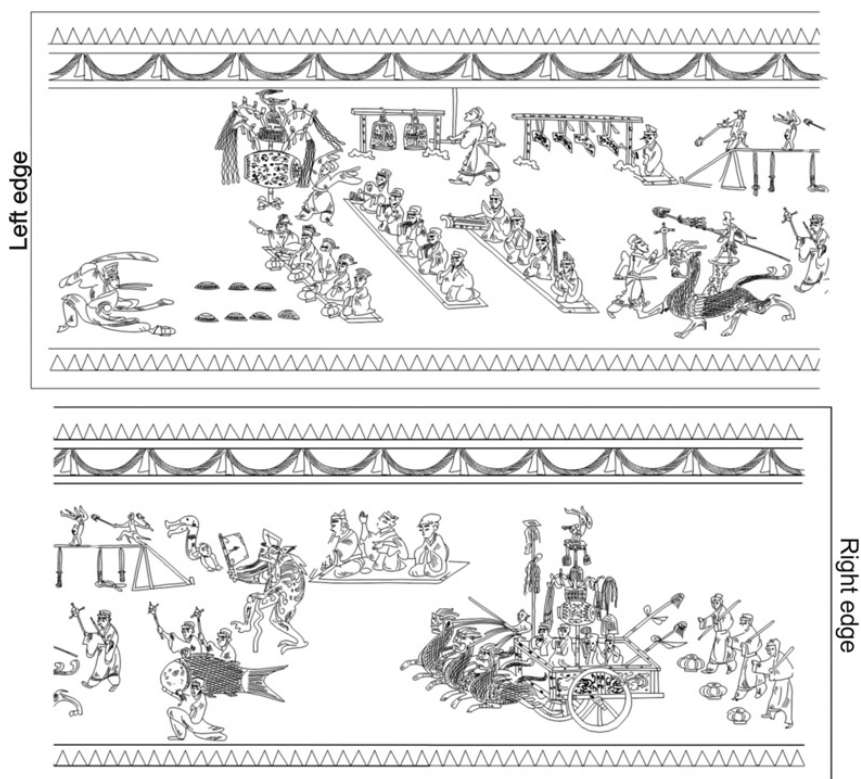


Figure 30.1 Part of an ensemble inscribed on a tomb wall at Yi'nan, Shandong, c.170 CE. The line drawing is based on Zeng Zhaoxu, Jiang Baogeng, and Li Zhongyi. Yi'nan gu huaxiangshimu fajue baogao (Shanghai, 1956), Plate 48

and lutes from Greater Iran,¹⁸ where they were indigenous. The squat drum can also be seen represented in a tomb at Shangfang dated a century after Yi'nan (see Chapter 19).

INSTRUMENTS OF THE SIX DYNASTIES PERIOD

The Indigenous Qin Zither

The most prestigious Chinese stringed instrument was the *qin*. Until its discovery in the tomb of Marquis Yi of Zeng (*Zeng hou yi*), dated to c.433 BCE, the shape was only known from instruments made during the Tang and later, although the name had been mentioned already in the *Shijing* of the Zhou dynasty (perhaps seventh century BCE).¹⁹ The Marquis Yi's tomb contained a variety of zithers: a *qin*, a *zhu*, and twelve *se*. The *qin* was smaller (67 centimeters long) than the Tang design (roughly 120 centimeters), but similar small *qin* zithers were soon found in several Warring States and Han tombs. Both shape and size had changed drastically between 433 BCE and the Tang, but by the Tang it had reached a stable shape.

Besides the extant instruments, dozens of images have been found on the backs of bronze mirrors made between 206 BCE and 280 CE. Usually the images show Bo Ya, a semi-legendary *qin* player, who roamed mountains and played the *qin* for his boon companion Zhong Ziqi, the only person who understood the subtlety of his playing.²⁰ A text from the third century BCE claims that Bo Ya's *qin* could emulate nature.²¹ The images on bronze mirrors

¹⁸ Scott Cook, "Yue Ji: Record of music: Introduction, translation, notes, and commentary," *Asian Music* 26.2 (1995), pp. 1–96, esp. 44. The *Yue Ji* is thought to have been compiled during the Western Han dynasty, as the nineteenth part of the *Xiao Dai Li Ji*. It treats the influence of music and ritual on the affairs of state.

¹⁹ The *qin* and *se* are each mentioned six times in the *Shijing*; see Hafo Yanjing daxue tushuguan yinde biancuan chu, *Maoshi yinde: A concordance to Shih Ching*, Volume 9 (Taipei, 1974), entries 77010 and 77920, pp. 126–127. To enhance its prestige, ancient emperors were said to have invented it in the third millennium BCE. Robert van Gulik, *The lore of the Chinese lute: An essay in the ideology of the ch'in* (Bangkok, 2011), p. 6.

²⁰ The *Lüshi chunqiu* has: "Whenever Bo Ya played the qin, Zhong Ziqi listened to him. Once when he was playing the qin, his thoughts turned to Mount Tai. Zhong Ziqi said, "How splendidly you play the qin! Lofty and majestic like Mount Tai." A short time later, when his thoughts turned to rolling waters, Zhong Ziqi said, "How splendidly you play the qin! Rolling and swelling like a rushing river." When Zhong Ziqi died, Bo Ya smashed the qin and cut its strings. To the end of his life, he never played the qin again because he felt that there was no one in the world worth playing for." John Knoblock and Jeffrey Riegel, trans. and study, *The annals of Lü Buwei* (Stanford, 2000), p. 308 (section 14/2.3).

²¹ Suzanne Cahill, "Boya plays the zither: Two types of Chinese bronze mirror in the Donald H. Graham Jr. collection," in *Bronze mirrors from ancient China: Donald H. Graham Jr. collection*, ed. Toru Nakano (Honolulu, 1994), pp. 50–59, esp. 55.

show a gradual lengthening of the *qin* during the eight centuries after that in Marquis Yi's tomb.

There are several depictions of the *qin* during the Six Dynasties, the most prominent being the *Seven Sages of the Bamboo Grove* (*Zhulin qi xian*) relief, dated to the early fifth century,²² appearing on stamped-brick murals in tombs near Nanjing.²³ The sages had lived two centuries earlier, around 260.²⁴ Most were literati from Luoyang, the capital of Wei, but had chosen to live as recluses, enjoying the simple pleasures of observing nature, drinking wine, philosophizing, and making music. In many ways they shared the sensibility of Bo Ya, who had lived outside the norms of society five centuries earlier.

Two of the figures as depicted in the grove, Xi Kang (223–262) and Rong Qiqi (the latter a philosopher contemporary with Confucius), play the *qin*; their portraits give the shape of the instrument in the early fifth century (Figure 30.2a). There are many realistic details,²⁵ but Xi Kang reverses the zither's position. *Qin* zithers have a rectangular end under which the tuning mechanism is placed. Normally, it is placed near the player's right hand, but here it is on the left. However, the shape of the *qin* is already close to what it would look like during the Tang—the canonical shape. The final steps in the transformation from the Warring States shape to the modern one occurred during the early part of the Six Dynasties.

Beside playing the *qin*, Xi Kang wrote a rhapsody on the *qin*. It is the first extensive description of *qin* properties, comprising twenty-five poems.²⁶ In

²² Various dates: c.375 in Alexander Coburn Soper, "A new Chinese tomb discovery: The earliest representation of a famous literary theme," *AA* 24 (1961), pp. 79–86, esp. 79–80; early fifth century in Audrey Spiro, *Contemplating the ancients: Aesthetic and social issues in early Chinese portraiture* (Berkeley, 1990), p. 115; second half of the fifth century in James C. Y. Watt, *China: Dawn of a golden age, 200–750 AD* (New York, 2004), p. 206.

²³ Watt, *China*, pp. 206–209; Spiro, *Contemplating the ancients*, pp. 44–64. Similar bricks were later discovered in nearby tombs.

²⁴ Donald Holzman, "The place of the Seven Sages of the Bamboo Grove in Chinese history," *KASOP* 3 (Kyoto, 1955), pp. 1–34, esp. 6; Soper, "A new Chinese tomb," p. 80; Robert van Gulik, *Hsi K'ang and his poetical essay on the lute, with an annotated English translation accompanied by the full original text of the Ch'in-fu* (Tokyo, 1969), p. 14.

²⁵ Xi Kang's left hand is unclear, but Rong Qiqi's is not. For comparison the outline of Rong's hand has been added to Figure 30.3a.

²⁶ David R. Knechtges, *Wen xuan, or, Selections of refined literature by Xiao Tong*, Volume 3 (Princeton, 1982), p. 287. Gulik (in *Hsi K'ang*) mistranslated a passage in poem 1X. Knechtges, under Xi Kang's *zi*, Xi Shuye, as it is entered in the *Wen xuan*, and numbering the same poem IV, renders "they paint and carve it." Gulik's version, "the instrument then is painted with the five colors," prompted Gulik to redate the many-colored *qin* preserved in the Shōsōin Museum, Nara, Japan. It was deposited there in 817, but Gulik, *The lore of the Chinese lute*, 209, suggested it was manufactured during Northern Wei, either 435 or 495.



Figure 30.2 (a–c) *Musical instruments shown on walls of a tomb of the Nanjing area, c.400. (a) Xi Kang, a qin player, after Audrey Spiro, Contemplating the ancients: Aesthetic and social issues in early Chinese portraiture (Berkeley, 1990), Figure 16, p. 47; insert, left hand of the qin player Rong Qiqi, from Spiro, Contemplating the ancients, Figure 30, p. 61. (b) Ruan Ji, a whistler, after Spiro, Contemplating the ancients, Figure 18, p. 61. (c) Ruan Xian, a lute player, after Spiro, Contemplating the ancients, Figure 31, p. 96. (d) Figurine blowing the horn from a tomb at Pingling, Shaanxi, after Xianyang Municipal Institute, "Excavation of a Sixteen Kingdoms period tomb in Pingling, Xianyang," CA 6 (2006), Figure 5.4*

numbers 11 and 17 Xi Kang mentions "floating tones" (harmonics),²⁷ and the remark counts as the first identification of this acoustic phenomenon.²⁸

²⁷ *Fanyin*: the right hand pulls a string while the left touches it.

²⁸ Joseph Needham, Wang Ling, and Kenneth Girdwood Robinson, *Science and civilisation in China*, Volume 4, *Physics and physical technology*, Part 1, *Physics* (Cambridge, 1961), p. 132.

Two other images of the *qin* are known from the Six Dynasties. The first is half a century earlier than Xi Kang: “Making a *Qin*,” a Song dynasty facsimile based on Gu Kaizhi (344–406).²⁹ The second was painted a century later: “Scholars of Northern Qi Collating Classic Texts” by Yang Zihua, purported to have been made sometime between 550 and 577.³⁰

The Indigenous Se Zither

In the *Shijing*, the *se* and the *qin* have approximately equal prominence,³¹ but in the tomb of Marquis Yi there was an imbalance, with many more *se* (twelve) than *qin* (one). In Han dynasty art the *se* and *qin* continued to be shown, but during the early part of the Six Dynasties references to the *se* become rare. As Robert van Gulik states,

That the *sê* as a solo instrument fell into disuse is probably due to the rise of a new instrument, the *chêng* [now read *zheng*] in construction not unlike the *sê*, but smaller and much easier to handle . . . Chinese sources assert that the tradition of the *sê* as a solo instrument was entirely forgotten from the Eastern Jin period (317–420). Later efforts at reviving the solo *sê* appear to have been more or less of an archaeological nature.³²

Although both were zithers, the *se* and *qin* differed radically in the tomb of Marquis Yi.³³ The *se* was large (roughly 170 centimeters) with many (around twenty-five) strings; the *qin* small (sixty-eight centimeters) with few (ten) strings. The attachment of the strings was also different: the *qin* had two fixed bridges, one at each end of the strings. The *se* had three medium-length fixed bridges at the right end of the strings and one long fixed bridge at the left end. In between these distal bridges was a small movable bridge (*se rui*) under each string.

The *se* did not completely disappear after the Eastern Jin period. Revived instruments were used in Confucian and Daoist temples,³⁴ and the instrument remained a poetic image as late as the Tang dynasty. A poem by Li Shangyin (c.813–c.858), “The Ornamental Zither,” referred to the *se*,³⁵ but as James J. Y. Liu points out, Li used it as a symbol for bygone days.³⁶ The *qin* and *se* exemplify two contrasting paths taken by indigenous zithers during the Six Dynasties.

²⁹ Stephen Addiss, *The resonance of the qin in East Asian art* (New York, 1999), pp. 124–125.

³⁰ William Watson, *The arts of China to AD 900* (New Haven, 1995), p. 199, Figure 319; and Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, No. 31.123. See also the citation of this work in the preceding chapter in this volume.

³¹ See note 19 above. ³² Gulik, *The lore of the Chinese lute*, p. 9.

³³ Bo Lawergren, “Strings,” in *Music in the age of Confucius*, ed. Jenny F. So (Washington, 2000), pp. 65–85.

³⁴ Fu-yen Chen, “Confucian ceremonial music in Taiwan with comparative references to its sources” (PhD dissertation, Wesleyan University, 1976), p. 156.

³⁵ James J. Y. Liu, *The Poetry of Li Shang-yin* (Chicago, 1969), p. 51. ³⁶ James Liu, *The Poetry*, 44.

There may have been zithers of other types, such as the model seen twice in a tomb at Shangfang, but it is hard to evaluate its exact shape.

Indigenous Whistling

In the bamboo grove, Ruan Ji (210–263, Figure 30.2b) sits next to Xi Kang (223–262). Ruan whistles (*xiao*), an honored pursuit during the Six Dynasties. Besides its musical aspects, it was a means of finding the Daoist way and achieving breath control.³⁷ “Daoists believed that breathing the breath of Nature was one means of gaining immortality . . . By whistling they were breathing in accord with Nature, and therefore they came nearer to Immortality.”³⁸

The musical potential of whistling is gleaned in an anecdote:

When Ruan Ji whistled, he could be heard several hundred paces away. In the Sumen mountains [in Henan] there appeared from nowhere a Realized Man. Ruan Ji went to see for himself and spied the man squatting with clasped knees by the edge of a cliff. Ji climbed the ridge . . . and squatted opposite him. Ji rehearsed for him briefly matters from antiquity to the present . . . But when Ji asked his opinion about it he remained aloof and made no reply. Ji therefore turned toward him and made a long whistling sound. After a long while the man finally laughed and said, “Do it again.” Ji whistled a second time . . . then . . . withdrew. When halfway down the ridge . . . he heard above him a shrillness like an orchestra of many instruments, while forests and valleys re-echoed with the sound. Turning back to look, he discovered it was the whistling of the man he had just visited.³⁹

The ensemble in the Shangfang tomb seems to have a whistler (third from the right). If so, whistling could be a solo and an ensemble pursuit.

Imported Lutes

China had no lutes (*pipa*) before the Six Dynasties, but adopted them eagerly during that period. The inspiration came from Western Asia, where lutes had existed since 2300 BCE. They first appeared on Mesopotamian terracotta plaques.⁴⁰ The basic element of the early lutes was a rod, about sixty centimeters long and a few centimeters wide. These were the “long-necked” lutes. Strings ran along the rod, and a small gourd-like resonator was attached to its

³⁷ Spiro, *Contemplating the ancients*, 216, n. 101. I am grateful to Professor Alan Berkowitz for informative discussions about whistling.

³⁸ E. D. Edwards, “Principles of whistling: Hsiao Chih—anonymous,” *BSAOS*, 20.1–3 (1957), pp. 217–229; Knechtges, *Wen xuan*, 3.315–323, “Rhapsody on whistling,” by Chenggong Sui, appellation Zi’an (231–273).

³⁹ Spiro, *Contemplating the ancients*, 200, n. 28.

⁴⁰ Dominique Collon and Anne Draffkorn Kilmer, “The lute in ancient Mesopotamia,” in *Music and civilization*, British Museum yearbook 4, ed. T. C. Mitchell (London, 1980), pp. 13–28.

lower end. The other type, “short-necked” lutes, appeared more than two millennia later. The first images are on gold jewelry excavated at Tillya-tepe, Bactria, Afghanistan, dated between 100 BCE and 100 CE.⁴¹ The long/short distinction is clear in the Near East, especially on recent lutes in Turkey: the *saz* has a neck about one meter in length and a few centimeters in width.⁴² At the same time, lutes with very short necks, like the *kemençe*, are abundant in Turkey. Two examples seen by the modern scholar Laurence Picken were about seventy-two and forty-eight centimeters long with necks of nine and 7.5 centimeters in length.⁴³ In the second century CE, coexisting with long- and short-necked lutes, was a third type, the waisted lute. It is shown on a frieze at Airtam, Bactria.⁴⁴ Its sound box narrows in the middle—just like a modern guitar.

In China distinctions based on the shape of the neck are less useful, and it is easier to base distinction on the shape of the sound box: they are either round or pear-shaped. The latter can be further subdivided into lutes with peg boxes aligned with or perpendicular to the neck.

Centuries before China acquired round and pear-shaped lutes, similar types existed in the Near East. They are represented on terracotta figurines in two distinct regions during the first few centuries of the first millennium CE. Round-bodied lutes flourished in Sogdia (principally at Afrasiab, near Samarkand, first to third centuries),⁴⁵ west of the Tarim Basin (Figure 30.2). At that time it was the only Near Eastern region with round lutes.

Pear-shaped lutes, on the other hand, belonged to sites further south. The northernmost site was Yotkan (second to third centuries), part of the Khotan oasis (Map 30.2). It lay at the southern rim of the Tarim, 1,150 kilometers southeast of Samarkand. Here,⁴⁶ many terracotta figurines show such lutes played by monkeys,⁴⁷ but none by humans. However, pear-shaped lutes were played even further south, in Gandhāra⁴⁸—800 kilometers southwest of

⁴¹ V. I. Sarianidi, *The golden board of Bactria: From the Tillya-Tepe excavations in northern Afghanistan* (New York, 1985), p. 234a, 59, catalogue no. 2.29.

⁴² Called *Saz*, *Bağlama*, etc.: Laurence Picken, *Folk musical instruments of Turkey* (New York, 1975), pp. 272–294 and Plate 25. At p. 210, Picken observed two instruments, 74–140 centimeters long.

⁴³ Estimated from Picken, *Folk musical instruments of Turkey*, Plates 26d, 27a and pp. 296, 299.

⁴⁴ F. M. Karomatov, V. A. Meškeris, and T. S. Vyzgo, *Mittelasiien* (Leipzig, 1987), pp. 81, Figure 82.

⁴⁵ Karomatov, Meškeris, and Vyzgo, *Mittelasiien*, Figures 102–104, dated first–third centuries.

⁴⁶ Karomatov, Meškeris, and Vyzgo, *Mittelasiien*, Figures 182–190; Gösta Montell, “Sven Hedin’s archaeological collections from Khotan,” *BMFEA* 7 (1935), pp. xvi, xvii, 145–222.

⁴⁷ The “Monkey lord Jātaka” (*Vanarinda-jātaka*) relates that the Buddha had been a monkey in a previous life and had outsmarted a crocodile who wanted to eat him; evidently monkeys were seen as benevolent and clever creatures. Caroline A. F. Rhys Davids, trans. and ed., *Stories of the Buddha: Being selections from the Jātaka* (New York, 1989), pp. 58–60.

⁴⁸ Walter Kaufmann, *Alt-Indien* (Leipzig, 1981), pp. 140 (second–third centuries), 144–145 (first–third centuries), Figures 99–100 (also first–third centuries).

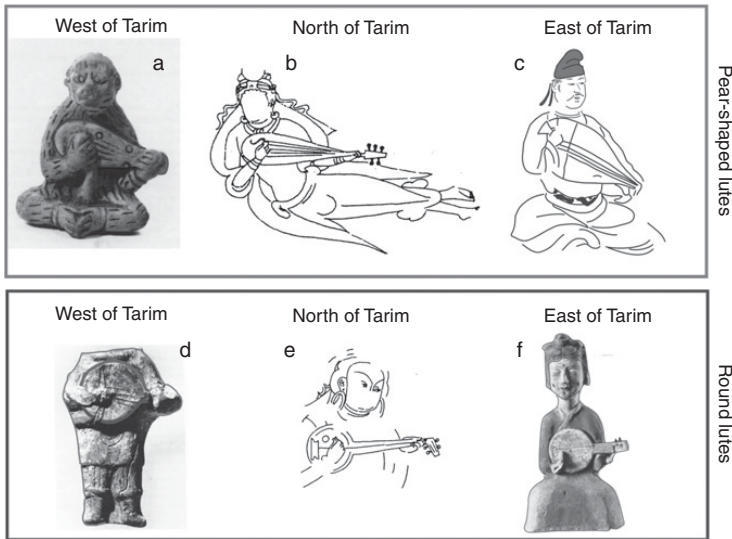
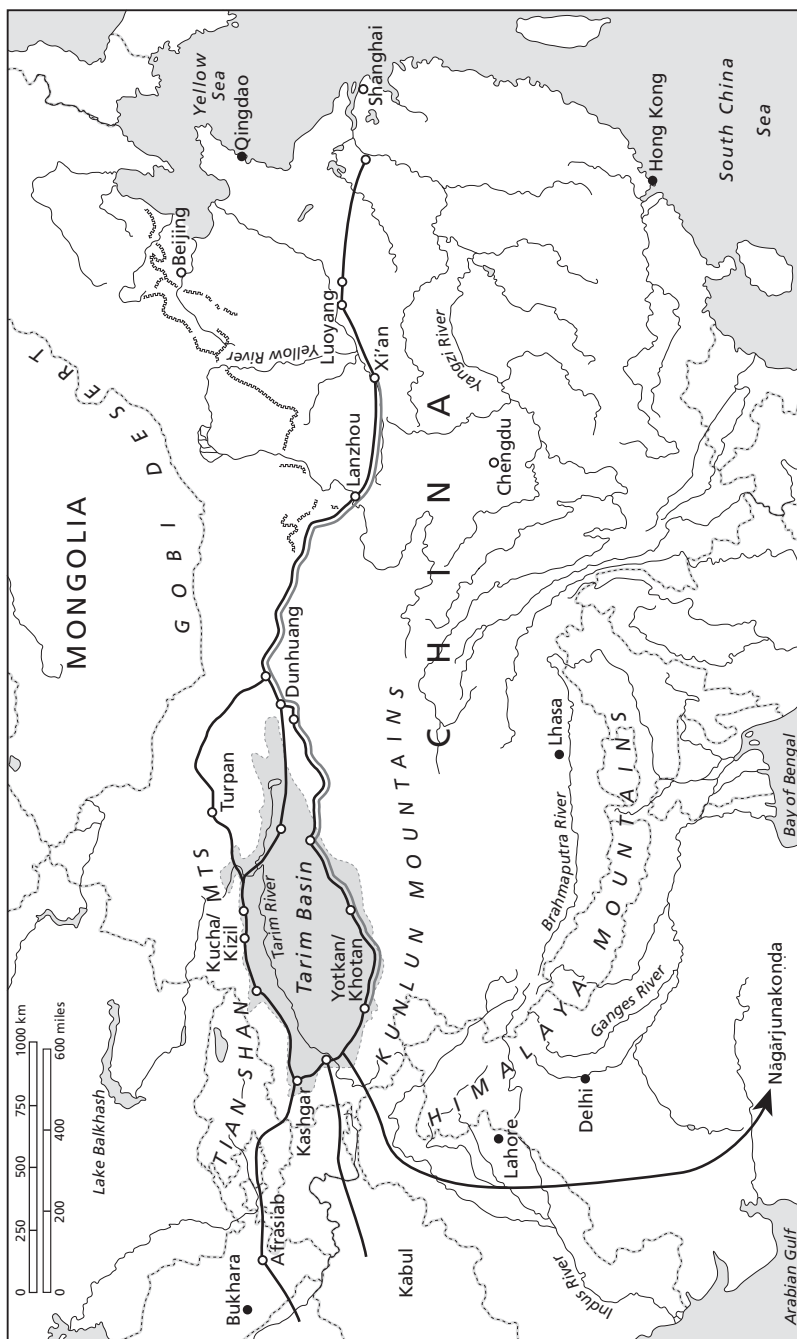


Figure 30.3 *Lutes moving from the Near East to China via Central Asia. Pear-shaped lutes, originating in Yotkan: (a) Monkey player, terracotta (from Yotkan), second–third centuries CE, after F. M. Karomatov et al., Mittelasiien (Leipzig, 1987), No. 184, height four to five centimeters; (b) an apsara or a gandharva painted in Kizil, Cave 8, after Yao Shibong, “Kezier shiku bibuazhong de lewu xingxiang,” in Kezier shiku, ed. Xinjiang Uighur zizhiqu wemwu guanli weiyuanhui et al., Volume 2 (1986), p. 238, no. 3; (c) player in Su Sixu’s ensemble, wall painting, 745 CE, Xi’an city, after Li Guozhen, comp., Da Tang bihua (Xi’an, 1996), no. 83. Round lutes, originating in Afrasiab: (d) terracotta from Afrasiab, Karomatov et al., Mittelasiien, No. 99, first–third centuries, height 8.2 centimeters; (e) Kizil Cave, after Yao, “Kezier shiku bibuazhong de lewu xingxiang,” p. 238, no. 6, painted in Kizil, Cave 38; (f) terracotta statue in Tomb 1 at Pingling, Xianyang, Shaanxi, dated 350–417*

Khotan, across the 8,000-meter high Karakoram mountains. The southernmost extent of pear-shaped lutes was on the subcontinent itself, at Amarāvati⁴⁹ and Nāgārjunakoṇḍa (in the state of Andhra Pradesh) dated to the second to third centuries. At the latter site, a stone relief inscribed in 289–299 depicts a pear-shaped lute.⁵⁰ It was part of the court orchestra in the palace of Śākyamuni’s father. Pear-shaped lutes covered a large part of ancient

⁴⁹ Kaufmann, *Alt-Indien*, pp. 98–101, Figures 54, 56–57.

⁵⁰ Elizabeth Rosen Stone, *The Buddhist art of Nāgārjunakoṇḍa* (Delhi, 1994), Plates 126–127, shows the Kumarānandin panel found at Site 106, Nāgārjunakoṇḍa. It shows five scenes from the life of Prince Siddhārtha, one of which (Figure 133; greater detail in Kaufmann, *Alt-Indien*, Figures 67–68) depicts Siddhārtha in his father’s palace listening to female musicians. Cf. Lawergren, “Buddha as a musician,” pp. 227–228.



Map 30.2 Asia showing the paths of lutes

Central Asia: from southern Tarim to central India. Round lutes were adopted in a comparatively smaller region, Sogdia, between the first and third centuries.

The Tarim contained the formidable Taklamakan desert, and the Silk Road skirted around it, either along its northern or southern rim. From Sogdia one might take the northern route to China, and from Khotan the southern branch. Khotan gave India early access to the Silk Road, but later, fourth- to sixth-century cave paintings at Kizil also show large Indian influences in the Kucha region on the northern route.⁵¹

On the Silk Road and in China, pear-shaped lutes had their peg boxes mounted in two different ways depending on their string counts: on four-stringed lutes the box was mounted at ninety degrees to the neck, while five-stringed models had it placed parallel to the neck.⁵² In China lutes with round sound boxes appeared first:

- 1 A terracotta figurine in a tomb at Fengqiyan, Xi'an, Shaanxi, has a round lute.⁵³ It belongs to the Sixteen States period, 304–439.
- 2 Another terracotta figure plays a round lute in Tomb M1 at Pingling, Xianyang, Shaanxi. It dates to the Former or Later Qin, 350–417.⁵⁴
- 3 Ruan Xian is shown playing a round lute in the Bamboo Grove, c.400 (Figure 30.2c).
- 4 Song Shaozu was interred in Tomb 7 at Yanbei, Datong, Shanxi, which dates to 477, during the Northern Wei. A round lute is drawn on the inner wall of the stone sarcophagus.⁵⁵
- 5 Mogao Cave 285, Dunhuang, has a flying and self-playing round lute.⁵⁶ It was painted during Western Wei, 535–556. Such a self-sounding instrument was known as *bu gu zi ming* (不鼓自鳴 “no drumming but sounding by itself”).

In all cases the round lute has four strings, is played with a plectrum, and partakes in an ensemble that includes a zither or an unconventional wind instrument such as whistling or leaf-blowing. The round lute flourished principally between 300 and 500.

⁵¹ Bo Lawergren, “The spread of harps between the Near and Far East during the first millennium A.D.: Evidence of Buddhist musical cultures on the Silk Road,” *SRAA* 4 (1995–1996), p. 270.

⁵² R. F. Wolpert, “The five-stringed lute in East Asia,” *Musica Asiatica* 3 (1981), p. 105.

⁵³ Guojia wenwuju, ed., 2009 *Zhongguo zhongyao kaogu faxian* (Beijing, 2010), p. 138.

⁵⁴ Xianyang Municipal Institute, “Excavation of a Sixteen Kingdoms period tomb in Pingling, Xianyang” *CA* 6 (2006), pp. 70–78.

⁵⁵ Liu Junxi, ed., *Datong Yanbei shiyuan Bei Wei muqun* (Beijing, 2008).

⁵⁶ For flying instruments, see Bo Lawergren, “Music on Japanese raigō images 700–1700—and Chinese influences,” in *Medieval sacred chant: From Japan to Portugal (Canto sacro medieval: do Japão a Portugal)*, ed. Manuel Pedro Ferreira (Lisbon, 2008), pp. 62–63.

Textual references are earlier. Picken cites the *Shiming* (*Explanations of Names*) from c.200 CE. “Pipa originally arose among [Northern and Western] barbarians; that which is played on horseback. Pushing the hand forward is called *pi*; pulling the hand backward is called *pa*. This depicts [what happens] when it is played; therefore used as name.”⁵⁷ The *Jiu Tangshu* (*Old History of the Tang*) fancifully associates *pipa* with the Qin dynasty (the *Qin pipa*) and Gulik associates this term with the round lute.⁵⁸ However, since the round lute was played by Ruan Xian (234–305), one of the Seven Sages of the Bamboo Grove, it is more often called the *ruanxian*.⁵⁹

In China pear-shaped lutes appeared later, possibly by the fourth century. Two centuries later this type became commonplace, shown, for example, on a stele from 551 (Figure 30.4).⁶⁰ This image has both a four- and a five-stringed pear-shaped lute, an angular harp, a mouth organ, a vertical pipe, a zither and two dancers. During the Sui and Tang dynasties this type grew to dominate the lute family.

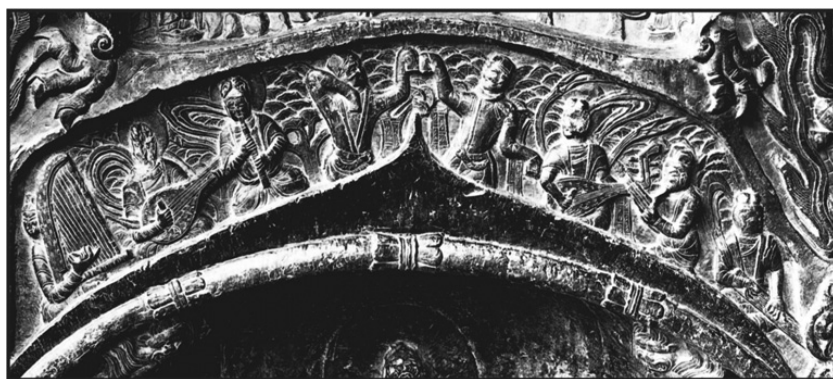


Figure 30.4 A Northern Qi ensemble shown on parts of a stele (C404 of 551 CE, University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology & Anthropology). Counting from left to right the instruments are an angular harp, a five-stringed pear-shaped lute, a bili-pipe, (two dancers), a four-stringed pear-shaped lute, a mouth-organ, and a zheng zither

⁵⁷ Laurence Picken, “The origin of the short lute,” *GSJ* 8 (1955), p. 33.

⁵⁸ Gulik, *The lore of the Chinese lute*, p. 201.

⁵⁹ A name accepted after the reign of Empress Wu Zetian (690–705). Ruzhong Zheng, “Musical instruments in the wall paintings of Dunhuang,” *CJ* 7 (1993), p. 27; Alan R. Thrasher, *Chinese musical instruments* (Oxford, 2000), p. 40.

⁶⁰ University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, inv. no. C404.

Picken found the first mention of lutes with bent necks (i.e., four-stringed pear-shaped ones) in *Suishu*,⁶¹ and “the passage suggests that the instrument came from Western Liang at the beginning of the fifth century.” Quite likely, it derived from Lü Guang’s war booty in Kucha. By the mid-sixth century, the pear-shaped lute had become dominant and appeared on many monuments associated with Buddhism. During the Sui and Tang dynasties few round lutes remained. There was a multilevel distinction between round and pear-shaped lutes. Not only did it concern their shapes, but also their Near Eastern places of origin and their period of popularity.

Very few depicted lutes have hybrid forms. These would arise if a round lute deviated slightly from the circular shape, and the lower part gained some width to acquire a pear-shaped pattern. It is impossible to know if the lute maker or the picture maker would have decided on such a hybrid shape; at any rate, there are few such lutes.

At the end of the sixth century, Sogdians brought their own lutes to China. At this time, round and pear-shaped lutes were both well-established in China, but the Sogdian monuments in China only show pear-shaped ones.

Imported Harps

Around 1900 BCE angular harps (*konghou*) were invented in Mesopotamia, from where they spread in many directions. The Silk Road brought them to China, where they were shown from mid-sixth century until the early twelfth century. The first textual reference is earlier, dated to 111 BCE.⁶² Some ministers serving the Emperor Wudi of Han had arranged for music and dance at rituals. “A number of boys were summoned to sing at the services and twenty-five stringed zithers [i.e., the *se*] and harps of the kind called *konghou* were made. It was at this time that zithers and harps first came into use for religious ceremonies.” Perhaps harps appealed to Wudi’s taste for rare western imports. But harps did not catch on and are not shown until mid-sixth century, when they appear in Buddhist art (e.g., Figure 30.3). There were two kinds of harps, angular and arched, and both types had clear lines of ancestry in Western Asia. Most Chinese harps were angular, but a few arched ones were illustrated in the grottoes of Xinjiang and Gansu.⁶³

⁶¹ Picken, “The origin of the short lute,” p. 38.

⁶² Burton Watson, trans., *Records of the grand historian by Sima Qian: Han dynasty*, Volume 2 (New York, 1993, revised edn), p. 40.

⁶³ Bo Lawergren, “Angular harps through the ages: A causal history,” in *Studien zur Musikarchäologie* 11, ed. Arnd Adje Both, Ricardo Eichmann, Ellen Hickmann, and Lars-Christian Koch, *Orient-Archäologie* 22 (2008), pp. 261–281.

*Imported Foreign Ensembles***Bukhara and Samarkand: Two Sogdian Sites**

The *Suishu* lists ten foreign orchestras established at the Chinese court during the Daye period (605–616), only about sixteen years after the end of the Six Dynasties.⁶⁴ Many scholars have discussed the orchestras, but they are worth further analysis.⁶⁵ Most had place names (Western Liang, India, Korea, Kucha, Bukhara, Kashgar, Samarkand, and Gaochang; see Map 30.2) and idiosyncratic instrument names. To reduce the information to manageable size, winds, strings, and percussion are lumped into three categories in Figure 30.4. In addition, groups of “conch trumpets” and “tuned percussion” are introduced.⁶⁶ The former were first used in India, and indicate a connection with the sub-continent. The latter, sets of tuned bronze bells and lithophones, were invented in China and point to indigenous connections.

The largest groups were the indigenous orchestras labeled *yanyue* and *qingshang*—each with twenty-three instruments; the smallest came from Bukhara and Samarkand—each with nine. The indigenous pair played at banquets in the southern part of China. The ensembles from Bukhara and Samarkand had similar content—as might be expected from groups from nearby cities. They had a few stringed instruments—angular harp, four- and/or five-stringed lutes; a few wind instruments—horizontal flute, panpipe, or reed pipe (*bili*); and a small percussion section—straight drum (*zhenggu*), concord drum (*begu*), and bronze cymbals (*tongba*).⁶⁷ Both cities lie in Sogdia, a region northeast of Iran. The religion of the area was principally Zoroastrian but included elements of Buddhism, Hinduism, and Christianity. Sogdians were active traders on the Silk Road, and some settled in China, where some funeral monuments display scenes from the life of the deceased, often involving music.⁶⁸

We can compare the instruments shown on the monuments with those listed in the ensembles from Bukhara and Samarkand at the court in Chang’an. The depictions on the tombs may be incomplete, but the list is based on real

⁶⁴ Albert E. Dien, *Six Dynasties civilization* (New Haven, 2007), p. 346.

⁶⁵ E.g., Yin Falu, *Tang Song daqu zhi lai yuan ji qi zuzhi* (Beijing, 1948), pp. 9–11; Maurice Courant, “Chine et Corée: Essai historique sur la musique classique des chinois avec un appendice relative à la musique coréenne,” in *Encyclopédie de la musique*, Part 1, ed. A. Lavignac and L. de La Laurencie (Paris, 1913), pp. 77–241; Martin Gimm, *Das Yüeh-fu tsa-lu des Tuan An-chieb: Studien zur Geschichte von Musik, Schauspiel und Tanz in der T’ang-Dynastie*, Asiatische forschung 19 (Wiesbaden, 1966), p. 211; Liang, *Music of the billion*, 99.

⁶⁶ Lithophones and bronze bells.

⁶⁷ Figure 30.4 is based on tables by Yin Falu, *Tang Song daqu zhi lai yuan ji qi zuzhi*, pp. 9–11, who proposed for Samarkand that a harp, lute, and drum should be added to the *Suishu* listing.

⁶⁸ Étienne de la Vaissière, *Sogdian traders: A history*, trans. James Ward (Leiden, 2005), pp. 97–157. See also Chapter 17, “The History of Sogdians in China,” in this volume.

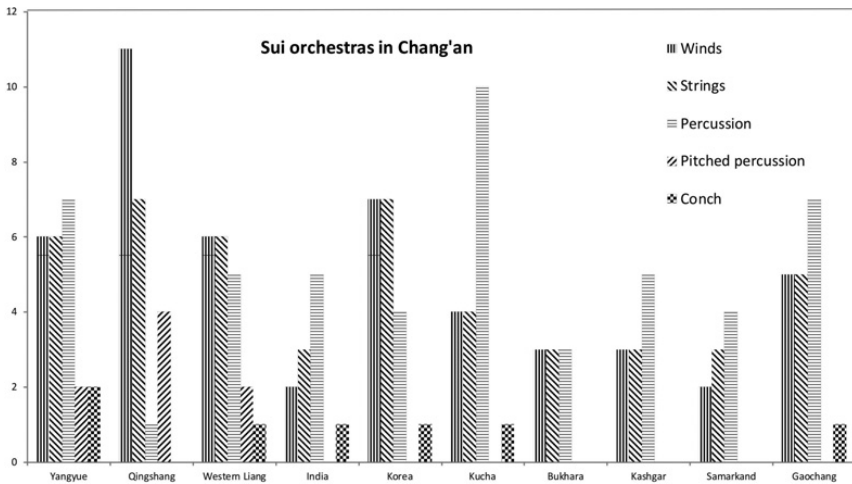


Figure 30.5 *Foreign orchestras at Chang'an, 605–616. From Yin Falu, Tang Song daqu zhi lai yuan ji qi zuzhi (Beijing, 1948), pp. 9–11*

orchestras, observed and counted. Since it is harder to draw instruments accurately than to count them, one expects fewer instruments depicted in the tombs than those listed in the *Suishu*.

About ten ensembles are known on funeral monuments.⁶⁹ The number of players averages five, about half the size of the ensembles from Bukhara and Samarkand at Chang'an—confirming our expectation. Typically, a funerary ensemble contains a harp, a lute, a flute, and, occasionally, a percussion instrument.⁷⁰ More exotic instruments, such as conch trumpets, are missing—just as they are at Chang'an.

The sarcophagus of Shi Jun depicts typical ensembles. In one panel the deceased couple is shown after crossing the Činvat bridge on their way to the Zoroastrian paradise (Figure 30.6). At the top are winged musicians playing the cymbal, lute, flute, harp, and panpipe. Below, the deceased couple pass by on horseback, and further down are animals running and birds floating on the water. It is the first time music is shown in the Zoroastrian paradise, although

⁶⁹ References to the Sogdian funerary monuments (An Jia (also known as An Qie), Yu Hong, Kang Ye, Anyang (two panels in Boston and one in Paris), Kooros, Shi Jun, Miho) in Judith A. Lerner, *Aspects of assimilation: The funerary practices and furnishings of Central Asians in China*, Sino-Platonic Papers 168 (2005).

⁷⁰ Jiang Boqin “Zhongguo xianjiao huaxiangshi suo jian tuxiang,” *Jiuzhou xuelin* 1.2 (2003), pp. 116–141, analyzes “Zoroastrian” ensembles at the tombs of Anyang, An Jia, and Yu Hong, but some instruments are misidentified, e.g., the *suorna* at Anyang is called a flute.

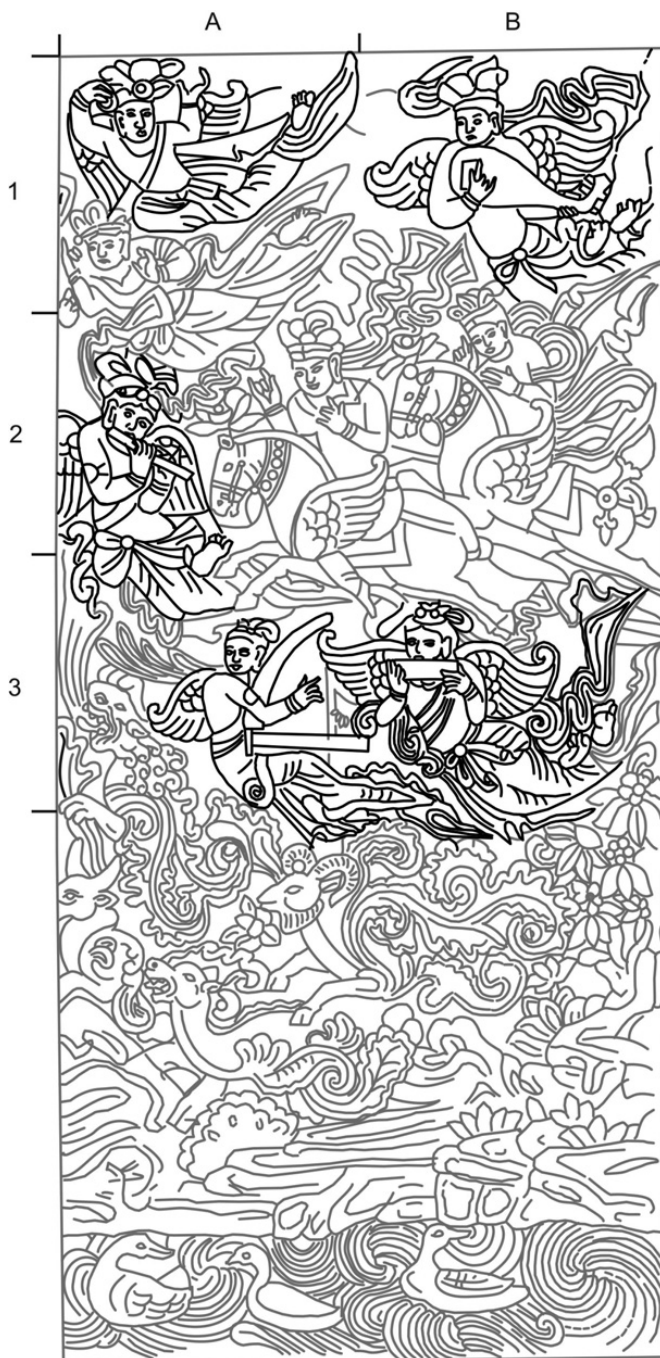


Figure 30.6 *The Zoroastrian paradise shown in the tomb of Shi Jun (c.580). After Albert E. Dien, "The tomb of the Sogdian Master Shi," TSR 7 (2009), 46, Figure 6. Bold lines mark musicians: a cymbal is at co-ordinate A1; a lute at B1, a flute at A2, a harp at A3, and panpipe at B3*

it is known as *garōdmān*, “house of song.”⁷¹ Musical instruments are shown less often in the Sogdian homeland, where they are never represented in paradise. One monument, the Miho bed, has much larger ensembles—well outside the norm, and its instruments include ones not seen on other Sogdian monuments.⁷²

The Chinese admired Sogdian performers and showed their leaping or whirling dances (*hutengwu* or *buxuanwu*) on stone reliefs during the Northern Wei dynasty. During the Northern Qi the dancers were painted on murals,⁷³ and shown on flattened earthenware flasks. Quite a few flasks are known but they show only two distinct scenes which differ in the composition of the dance orchestra.⁷⁴

The City of Kucha

In about 630 a Chinese pilgrim was enthusiastically received in Kucha, and he praised its music: “The style of writing is Indian, with some differences. They excel over other countries in their skill in playing the lute and pipe.”⁷⁵ Kucha was the largest site on the Silk Road and had a rich musical culture, judging from murals in nearby cave sites.⁷⁶ In principal, we should be able to compare these depicted ensembles with the one listed at Chang’an, and this would permit comparisons to those used on Sogdian orchestras above. But the paintings in the Kizil caves are too damaged to be useful. Not a single complete orchestra is shown.⁷⁷ The most characteristic feature of the Kuchean ensemble (Figure 30.4) is the large number of percussion instruments. There are more than eight, a higher proportion than in any other

⁷¹ *Encyclopædia Iranica*, ed. Ehsan Yarshater (London, 1982–), Volume 10, fasc. 3, pp. 317–318.

⁷² E.g., the orchestra at the bottom of Figure E in Miho Museum, *Miho Museum, South Wing*, stone panel, p. 253 (text p. 249, panel E), has twelve members, more than twice that of other depicted Sogdian ensembles. Among the instruments are a conch trumpet and a cowry shell—both without precedence among Sogdian orchestras. There are four lutes—an unusually large section.

⁷³ Zhang Qingjie, “*Hutengwu* and *Huxuansu*: Sogdian dances in the Northern, Sui and Tang Dynasties,” in *Les sogdiens en Chine*, ed. Étienne de la Vaissière and Éric Trombert (Paris, 2005), pp. 93–106, esp. 96–97.

⁷⁴ The *Hutengwu* dancer, here shown during the Northern Qi dynasty, is surrounded by two types of ensemble, both including a lute, a pair of hand cymbals, and clapping hands. In addition, the first type has a flute (Zhang Qingjie, “*Hutengwu*,” Figure 58), and the second type a harp, a kneeling flutist and clapping hands (Zhang, “*Hutengwu*,” Plate 15, Figure 3). Several copies of the two scenes are known, only differing in the color of the glaze.

⁷⁵ Xuanzang, *Si-yu-ki: Buddhist records of the western world*, trans. Samuel Beal (Delhi, 1969), p. 19.

⁷⁶ Valerie Hansen, *Silk Road: A new history* (Oxford, 2012), pp. 56–69.

⁷⁷ For an inventory of instruments painted in the Kizil caves, see Yao Shihong, “*Kezier shiku bihuazhong de lewu xingxiang*,” in *Kezier shiku*, ed. Xinjiang Uighur zizhiqu wenwu guanli weiyuanhui, Baichengxian Kezier Qianfodong wenwu baoguansuo, and Beijing daxue kaoguxi, Volume 2 (Beijing, 1996), pp. 237–257.

ensemble. Judging by their idiosyncratic names, two drums came from India⁷⁸ and three were shared with Kashgar.⁷⁹

It has been pointed out that waisted drums first appeared at Bharhut, northern India, during the first two centuries CE.⁸⁰ This may have been transformed into the *maoyuan* and *dutan* drums that appear in the Indian and the Kuchean ensembles, and both are thought to be small hourglass-shaped drums.⁸¹ The profound artistic influence of India on Kucha has long been recognized by art historians. But Kucha also favored Indian arched harps, while most other Silk Road sites preferred angular harps from Western Asia.⁸² The analysis of the instruments in the ten ensembles listed at Chang'an shows that there were Indian musical influences at Kucha and that these traveled on to China.

Military Orchestras

During the fourth and fifth centuries, mounted military bands, called *hengchui*, appeared in China. They included military instruments such as J-shaped horns of about 1.2 meters in length and six centimeters in diameter called *hujue* 胡角 (Figure 30.2d). The large cross-section would have given it a loud sound but, like all pipes, it would have played few pitches. A tomb, dated to 351–417, at Pingling, Xianyang, Shaanxi,⁸³ contained a terracotta band with eight horns, seven drums, and one panpipe, all played on horseback. A player identified as a Xianbei is also shown on horseback.⁸⁴ Images of horn players are shown on tomb tiles at Dengxian, Henan, c.490.⁸⁵ The bells of the horns sometimes point up, sometimes down.

⁷⁸ *Dutan* drum and *maoyuan* drum (*gu*) are probably transcriptions of foreign names, but “*maoyuan* drum” may also mean “drum of a hairy official” (comments by Victor H. Mair, 2003).

⁷⁹ *Dala* drum, *jilou* drum, and “drum held by nobleman,” *bouti*. The first two are probably transcriptions of foreign names, and *jilou* may also mean “chicken” (comments by Victor H. Mair, 2003).

⁸⁰ Bo Lawergren, “Waisted drums in ancient China and Eurasia,” in *Nomads, traders and holy men along China's Silk Road: Papers presented at a symposium held at the Asia Society of New York, November 9–10, 2001*, ed. Annette L. Juliano and Judith A. Lerner (Turnhout, 2002), pp. 115–120, and Figure 1f.

⁸¹ Thrasher, *Chinese musical instruments*, p. 46.

⁸² Lawergren, “The spread of harps between the Near and Far East during the first millennium A.D.: Evidence of Buddhist musical cultures on the Silk Road,” *SRAA* 4 (1995/96), pp. 233–275, esp. 248.

⁸³ Xinyang Municipal Institute, “Excavation of a Sixteen Kingdoms period tomb in Pingling, Xianyang,” *CA* 6 (2006), pp. 70–78.

⁸⁴ Annette L. Juliano and Judith A. Lerner, eds., *Monks and merchants: Silk Road treasures from northwest China* (New York, 2001), pp. 92–93.

⁸⁵ Annette L. Juliano, *Teng-hsien: An important Six Dynasties tomb*, *Artibus Asiae Supplementum* 37, Volume 4, Part 1 (Ascona, 1980), Figures 43 and 44.

MUSIC THEORY

Many of the old theoretical concepts still held sway during the Six Dynasties. One still classified instruments according to the materials from which they were made: metal (bronze bells), stone (lithophones), silk (zithers with strings), and bamboo (flutes).⁸⁶ During the Zhou dynasty these four categories grew into eight: metal, stone, clay (ocarinas), leather (drums), silk, wood (struck boxes), gourds (mouth organs), and bamboo. Both methods derived from the nonmusical world, namely the four geographical directions and the eight winds.⁸⁷

Pitches of the musical scale were still generated through the “circle of fifths,” first documented in the *Lüshi chunqiu* (c.245 BCE).⁸⁸ One started by selecting a string (length L) that yielded the *huangzhong* pitch. The fifth above was obtained by shortening the string to $\frac{2}{3}L$. Repeated applications with octave transpositions (c^4 generates g^4 , d^5 , a^5 , e^6 , etc.) yields all twelve semitones of the octave. In China this tuning procedure is called *sanfen sunyi fa*. Inscriptions on the bells in the tomb of Marquis Yi of Zeng reveal two types of scales: the *yin* and *lü* sets. The three first notes of the latter are *huangzhong*, *daliu*, and *taicu*—counted in ascending semitone steps. This set is similar to the Western gamut of fixed pitches: a^4 , $a\sharp^4$, b^4 , which are constrained by the condition $a^4 = 440$ Hz.⁸⁹ The *lü* gamut gives the Chinese pitch standard determined by the *sanfen sunyi fa* method and constrained by pitch pipes. When several instruments play together, all need to agree on a common pitch standard, and the *lü* set, given by the flutes (*di*), served the purpose. The *yin* set (*gong*, *shang*, *jue*, etc.) corresponds to the Western *do*, *do♯*, *re* (etc.) set. The pitch is relative, and can begin on any member of the *lü* set. This system adequately notates a melody.

Pitch standards tended to change when a new dynasty was established. During the Jin dynasty (265–317) it became clear that the previous dynasty had used length units longer than those of the ancient Zhou dynasty. It was decided that the lengths should be shortened; shorter flutes would yield higher pitch. Xun Xu (c.221–289) conceived an algorithm which determined the tuning of pitch regulators.⁹⁰ These, in turn, served to fix the tuning of performance flutes (*di*) in and out of court.⁹¹

⁸⁶ Needham, Wang, and Robinson, *Science and civilisation in China*, Volume 4, Part 1, pp. 142–151.

⁸⁷ Needham, Wang, and Robinson, *Science and civilisation in China*, Volume 4, Part 1, 149.

⁸⁸ Knoblock and Riegel, *The annals of Lü Buwei*, p. 157, Section 6/2.1; Lothar von Falkenhausen, *Suspended music: Chime-bells in the culture of Bronze Age China* (Berkeley, 1993), p. 276.

⁸⁹ The exponential identifies the octave position in scientific pitch notation.

⁹⁰ Howard L. Goodman and Y. Edmund Lien, “A third century AD Chinese system of di-flute temperament: Matching ancient pitch-standards and confronting modal practice,” *GJF* 62 (2009), esp. p. 17.

⁹¹ Goodman and Lien, “A third century AD Chinese system of di-flute temperament,” p. 14.

A new acoustic concept emerged during the Six Dynasties period. As already noticed, the rhapsody by Xi Kang referred to floating sounds, i.e., string harmonics.⁹² Such sounds arise when a finger lightly touches a played string to force a node at that point. If the node lies in the middle of the string, an airy sound emerges one octave above the fundamental.

CONCLUSION

China had a rich history of music prior to the Six Dynasties, but it had shunned foreign influences. Just as the Six Dynasties brought rulers from beyond China's northern and northwestern borders, so musical instruments were imported from Western and Central Asia. This import was stimulated by Buddhism, which also appeared at this time, and which described the Western Paradise of Amitābha as filled with western instruments. Lutes and harps were the most characteristic imports, and both derived from regions near Iran. The increase of stringed instruments would have affected the sound of ensembles.

Zithers (*qin*, *zheng*, *se*, and *zhu*), invented during the Zhou dynasty, lived on in various ways. The *qin* remained an active instrument, while the *zhu* practically disappeared. During Shang and Zhou bronze bells had been built to play tunes in many modes and tunings, but they lost that ability during the Six Dynasties.

While there was a large expansion of the instrumental corpus, there was relatively little progress on theoretical issues. Much had already been accomplished during the Zhou dynasty, when theoreticians discovered how to construct scales using the cycle of fifths. With this knowledge they managed to tune large sets of bronze bells—as in the sixty-five-bell set buried in the tomb of Marquis Yi of Zeng. The set spanned a range of over four octaves, adequate for any instrument during the Six Dynasties. More refined discoveries, such as the production of equal-tempered tuning systems, lay far in the future, in 1584, when Zhu Zaiyu derived the frequency ratios between adjacent semitones from geometrical reasoning.⁹³

⁹² Needham, Wang, and Robinson, *Science and civilisation in China*, Volume 4, Part 1, p. 132.

⁹³ Derived from a series of circumscribed and inscribed squares and circles. See Cheng-Yih Chen, "An ethnohistorical analysis of ancient musical tonal systems in China," in *A search in Asia for a new theory of music*, ed. José S. Buenconsejo (Quezon City, 2003), pp. 3–52, esp. 27–34.

ABBREVIATIONS OF FREQUENTLY CITED PRIMARY SOURCES

<i>BQS</i>	<i>Bei Qishu</i> 北齊書 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1973 edition)
<i>BS</i>	<i>Beishi</i> 北史 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1974 edition)
<i>CS</i>	<i>Chenshu</i> 陳書 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1972 edition)
<i>HYGZ</i>	<i>Huayangguo zhi</i> 華陽國志. <i>Huayangguo zhi jiaobu tuzhu</i> 華陽國志校補圖注. Compiled by Chang Qu 常璩 (c.291–361). ed. Ren Naiqiang 任乃強 (Shanghai: Guji chubanshe, 1987, reprinted 2007)
<i>HHS</i>	<i>Hou Hanshu</i> 後漢書 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1965 edition)
<i>HS</i>	<i>Hanshu</i> 漢書 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1962 edition)
<i>JS</i>	<i>Jinshu</i> 晉書 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1974 edition)
<i>LS</i>	<i>Liangshu</i> 梁書 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1973 edition)
<i>NQS</i>	<i>Nan Qishu</i> 南齊書 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1972 edition)
<i>NS</i>	<i>Nanshi</i> 南史 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1975 edition)
<i>SGZ</i>	<i>Sanguozhi</i> 三國志 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1962 edition)
<i>SJ</i>	<i>Shiji</i> 史記 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1959 edition)
<i>SoS</i>	<i>Songshu</i> 宋書 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1974 edition)
<i>SS</i>	<i>Suishu</i> 隋書 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1973 edition)
<i>SSXY</i>	<i>Shishuo xinyu</i> 世說新語. <i>Shishuo xinyu jianshu</i> 世說新語箋疏. Compiled by Liu Yiqing 劉義慶 (403–444). Annotated by Yu Jiaxi 余嘉錫 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1983)
<i>TD</i>	<i>Tongdian</i> 通典. Compiled by Du You 杜佑 (734–812) (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1988)
<i>TPYL</i>	<i>Taiping yulan</i> 太平御覽. Compiled by Li Fang 李昉, 983 (Taipei: Taiwan shangwu yinshuguan, 1968), 7 vols.
<i>WS</i>	<i>Weishu</i> 魏書 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1973 edition)
<i>XTS</i>	<i>Xin Tangshu</i> 新唐書 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1975 edition)
<i>YWLJ</i>	<i>Yiwen leiju</i> 藝文類聚. Compiled by Ouyang Xun 歐陽詢 (557–641). 1965 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1982)
<i>ZS</i>	<i>Zhoushu</i> 周書 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1971 edition)
<i>ZZTJ</i>	<i>Zizhi tongjian</i> 資治通鑑. Compiled by Sima Guang 司馬光 (Beijing: Guji chubanshe, 1957). 4 vols.

JOURNAL TITLES: ACRONYMS

(SINGLE-WORD TITLES DO NOT USE ACRONYMS)

AA	<i>Artibus Asiae</i>
AcA	<i>Acta Asiatica</i>
AEMA	<i>Archivum Eurasiae medii aevi</i>
AM	<i>Asia Major</i>
AO	<i>Ars Orientalis</i>
ArA	<i>Arts of Asia</i>
AS	<i>Asiatische Studien</i>
BAI	<i>Bulletin of the Asia Institute</i>
BJHS	<i>British Journal for the History of Science</i>
BMFEA	<i>Bulletin of the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities</i>
BMFJ	<i>Bulletin de la Maison franco-japonaise</i>
BMIA	<i>Bulletin of the Minneapolis Institute of Art</i>
BSSCR	<i>Bulletin of the Society for the Study of Chinese Religions</i>
CA	<i>Chinese Archaeology</i>
CAAD	<i>China Archaeology and Art Digest</i>
CC	<i>Chinese Culture</i>
CEA	<i>Cahiers d'extrême-Asie</i>
CJ	<i>Chime Journal</i>
CLEAR	<i>Chinese Literature: Essays, Articles, Reviews</i>
CQ	<i>Chinese Quarterly</i>
CR	<i>China Report</i>
CSA	<i>Chinese Studies in Archaeology</i>
CSSAAME	<i>Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East</i>
CSSH	<i>Comparative Studies in Society and History</i>
DE	<i>Developing Economies</i>
DRHS	<i>Daoism, Religion, History, and Society</i>
EA	<i>Études asiatiques</i>
EAH	<i>East Asian History</i>
EALJ	<i>East Asian Library Journal</i>

ÉC	<i>Études chinoises</i>
EMC	<i>Early Medieval China</i>
FEQ	<i>Far Eastern Quarterly</i>
FHC	<i>Frontiers of History in China</i>
FPC	<i>Frontiers of Philosophy in China</i>
GSFFT	<i>Gastronomic Sciences: Food for Thought</i>
GSJ	<i>Galpin Society Journal</i>
HAT	<i>History and Theory</i>
HEW	<i>Historiography East and West</i>
HJAS	<i>Harvard Journal of Asian Studies</i>
HOH	<i>History of Humanities</i>
HR	<i>History of Religions</i>
JA	<i>Journal asiatique</i>
JAH	<i>Journal of Asian History</i>
JAOS	<i>Journal of the American Oriental Society</i>
JAS	<i>Journal of Asian Studies</i>
JCP	<i>Journal of Chinese Philosophy</i>
JCR	<i>Journal of Chinese Religions</i>
JEAA	<i>Journal of East Asian Archaeology</i>
JESHO	<i>Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient</i>
JHEW	<i>Journal of Humanities East/West</i>
JIABS	<i>Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies</i>
JOS	<i>Journal of Oriental Studies</i>
JRAS	<i>Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society</i>
JRP	<i>Journal of Religious Philosophy</i>
KASOP	<i>Kansai Asiatic Society Occasional Papers</i>
KS	<i>Korean Studies</i>
MA	<i>Musica Asiatica</i>
MC	<i>Modern China</i>
MIHEC	<i>Mélanges de l'Institut des hautes études chinoises</i>
MIO	<i>Mitteilungen des Instituts für Orientforschung</i>
MN	<i>Monumenta Nipponica</i>
MS	<i>Monumenta Serica</i>
MTSR	<i>Method and Theory in the Study of Religion</i>
NN	<i>Nan Nü: Men, Women and Gender in China</i>
OA	<i>Oriental Art</i>
OE	<i>Oriens Extremus</i>
OLP	<i>Orientalia Lovaniensia periodica</i>
OP	<i>Occasional Papers</i>
PEW	<i>Philosophy East and West</i>
PFEH	<i>Papers on Far Eastern History</i>
PNS	<i>Progress in Natural Science</i>
SI	<i>Studia Iranica</i>
SPP	<i>Sino-Platonic Papers</i>

<i>SRAA</i>	<i>Silk Road Art and Archaeology</i>
<i>TP</i>	<i>T'oung Pao</i>
<i>TR</i>	<i>Taoist Resources</i>
<i>TS</i>	<i>T'ang Studies</i>
<i>TSR</i>	<i>The Silk Road</i>

LIST OF ASIAN JOURNAL TITLES

Beichao yanjiu 北朝研究

Beida shixue 北大史學

Beijing daxue Zhongguo gu wenxian yanjiu zhongxin jikan 北京大学中国古文献研究中心集刊

Beijing shifan daxue xuebao (shehui kexue ban) 北京師範大學學報(社會科學版)

Bianjiang kaogu yanjiu 邊疆考古研究

Boli yu tangci 玻璃與搪瓷

Chongji xuebao 崇基學報

Dalu zazhi 大陸雜誌

Dalu zazhi shixue congshu 大陸雜誌史學叢書

Dongnan wenhua 東南文化

Dunhuang Tulufan yanjiu 敦煌吐魯番研究

Dunhuang yanjiu 敦煌研究

Fudan xuebao (shehui kexueban) 復旦學報(社會科學版)

Fujian shifan daxue xuebao (zhexue shehui kexue ban) 福建師範大學學報(哲學社會科學版)

Fumü yu liangxing xuekan 婦女與兩性學刊

Guangxi shehui kexue 廣西社會科學

Gugong bowuyuan yuankan 故宮博物院院刊

Guizhou minzu yanjiu 貴州民族研究

Guoli bianyiguan guankan 國立編譯館館刊

Guoli zhengzhi daxue xuebao 國立政治大學學報

Guoxue xuekan 國學學刊

Hebei xuekan 河北學刊

Hōsei shigaku 法政史學

Huagang wenke xuebao 華岡文科學報

Huagang Foxue xuebao 華岡佛學學報

HuaiBei shifan daxue xuebao (zhexue shehui kexueban) 淮北師範大學學報(哲學社會科學報)

- Huaxia kaogu* 華夏考古
Huaxue 華學
Huazhong shifan daxue xuebao (zheshe ban) 華中師範大學學報 (哲社版)
Huaihua xueyuan xuebao 懷化學院學報
Hunan kaogu jikan 湖南考古輯刊
Indogaku Bukkyōgaku kenkyū 印度學佛教學研究
Jiang Han kaogu 江漢考古
Jiang Han luntan 江漢論壇
Jiangxi shehui kexue 江西社會科學
Jiangxi shifan daxue xuebao 江西師範大學學報
Jiaoxue yanjiu 教學研究
Jinyang xuekan 晉陽學刊
Jiuzhou xuelin 九周學林
Kadai shigaku 鹿大史學
Kan Nihon: kai kenkyū nenpō 環日本海研究年報
Kaogu 考古
Kaogu tongxun 考古通訊
Kaogu xuebao 考古學報
Kaoguxue jikan 考古學集刊
Kaogu yu wenwu 考古與文物
Lanzhou daxue xuebao 蘭州大學學報
Lishi luncong 歷史論叢
Lishi yanjiu 歷史研究
Liucheng daxue xuebao (shekeban) 聊城大學學報 (社科版)
Minzu luntan 民族論壇
Minzu yanjiu 民族研究
Nagoya daigaku bungakubu kenkyū ronshū (shigaku) 名古屋大學文學部論集 (史學)
Nanjing Xiaozhuang xueyuan xuebao 南京曉莊學院學報
Nantong daxue xuebao (shehui kexue ban) 南通大學學報 (社會科學版)
Nariku Ajia gengo no kenkyū 內陸アジア言語の研究
Nei Menggu shida xuebao (zhixue shehui kexue ban) 內蒙古師大學報 (哲學社會科學版)
Ōriento オリエント
Ōryō shigaku 鷹陵史學
Ōtani shigaku 大谷史學
Qianyan 前沿
Qinghua xuebao 清華學報
Renwen xuebao 人文學報
Renwen zazhi 人文雜誌
Risshō shigaku 立正史學
Sanxia daxue xuebao (renwen shehui kexueban) 三峽大學學報 (人文社會科學版)

- Shandong daxue xuebao (zhexue shehui kexue ban)* 山東大學學報 (哲學社會科學版)
- Shanghai shehui kexueyuan xueshu jikan* 上海社會科學院學術季刊
- Shanxi shidaxue xuebao (shehui kexueban)* 山西師大學學報 (社會科學版)
- Shehui* 社會
- Shehui kexue jikan* 社會科學輯刊
- Shehui kexue yanjiu* 社會科學研究
- Shehui kexue zhanxian* 社會科學戰線
- Sheke zongheng (Xinlilun ban)* 社科縱橫 (新理論版)
- Shigaku zasshi* 史學雜誌
- Shibuo* 食貸
- Shibuo yuekan* 食貸月刊
- Shijie zongjiao yanjiu* 世界宗教研究
- Shixue jikan* 史學集刊
- Shixue nianbao* 史學年報
- Shixue yuekan* 史學月刊
- Shūkan Tōyōgaku* 集刊東洋学
- Sichuan shifan daxue xuebao* 四川師範大學學報
- Sichuan shifan xueyuan xuebao* 四川師範學院學報
- Sixiang zhanxian* 思想戰線
- Taida lishi xuebao* 臺大歷史學報
- Taiwan shida lishi xuebao* 臺灣師大歷史學報
- Tang yanjiu* 唐研究
- Tōdaishi kenkyū* 唐代史研究
- Tōhō gakubō* 東方學報
- Tōyō daigaku bungakubu kiyō* 東洋大学文學部研究紀要
- Tōyō daigaku bungakubu Kenkyū kiyō [shigakka hen]* 東洋大学文學部研究紀要 (史學科篇)
- Tōyō shien* 東洋史苑
- Tōyōshi kenkyū* 東洋史研究
- Tushuguan yanjiu* 圖書館研究
- Wei Jin Nanbeichao Sui Tang shi* 魏晉南北朝隋唐史
- Wei Jin Nanbeichao Sui Tang shi ziliao* 魏晉南北朝隋唐史資料
- Wei Jin Nanbeichao Sui Tang ziliao* 魏晉南北朝隋唐資料
- Wenbo* 文博
- Wen shi* 文史
- Wen shi zhe* 文史哲
- Wenwu* 文物
- Wenwu shijie* 文物世界
- Wu jian yanjiu* 吳簡研究
- Wulumuqi chengren jiaoyu xueyuan xuebao* 烏魯木齊成人教育學院學報
- Xiamen daxue xuebao (zhexue shehui kexue ban)* 廈門大學學報 (哲學社會科學版)

- Xi'an jiaoyu xueyuan xuebao* 西安教育學院學報
Xibei shida xuebao 西北師大學報
Xinjiang shifan daxue xuebao (zhe she ban) 新疆師範大學學報 (哲社版)
Xin kecheng xuexi (xia) 新課程學習 (下)
Xin shixue 新史學
Xin Ya xuebao 新亞學報
Xixue yanjiu 西學研究
Xiye yanjiu 西域研究
Xuchang xueyuan xuebao 許昌學院學報
Xuehai 學海
Xueshujie 學術界
Xuexi yu tansuo 學習與探索
Yan'an zhiye jishu xueyuan xuebao 延安職業技術學院學報
Yangzhou daxue xuebao 揚州大學學報
Yanjing xuebao 燕京學報
Yugong 禹貢
Yunnan minzu daxue xuebao (zhexue shehui kexue ban) 雲南民族大學學報 (哲學社會科學版)
Zaoqi zhongguo shi yanjiu 早期中國史研究
Zhengzhou daxue xuebao (zhexue shehui kexue ban) 鄭州大學學報 (哲學社會科學版)
Zhongguo gu taoci yanjiu 中國古陶瓷研究
Zhongguo guojia bowuguan guankan 中國國家博物館館刊
Zhongguo jingji shi yanjiu 中國經濟史研究
Zhongguo lishi wenwu 中國歷史文物
Zhongguo shehui jingjishi jikan 中國社會經濟史集刊
Zhongguo shehui jingjishi yanjiu 中國社會經濟史研究
Zhongguo shengqi 中國生漆
Zhongguo shi yanjiu 中國史研究
Zhongguo shi yanjiu dongtai 中國史研究動態
Zhongguo wenhua yanjiusuo xuebao 中國文化研究所學報
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Zhongshan daxue xuebao (shehui kexueban) 中山大學學報 (社會科學版)
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Zhongyuan wenwu 中原文物
Zongjiao zhexue 宗教哲學
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