



THE CAMBRIDGE HISTORY OF CHINA

VOLUME 2
THE SIX DYNASTIES,
220–589

EDITED BY ALBERT E. DIEN AND KEITH N. KNAPP

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Volume 2
The Six Dynasties, 220–589

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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)

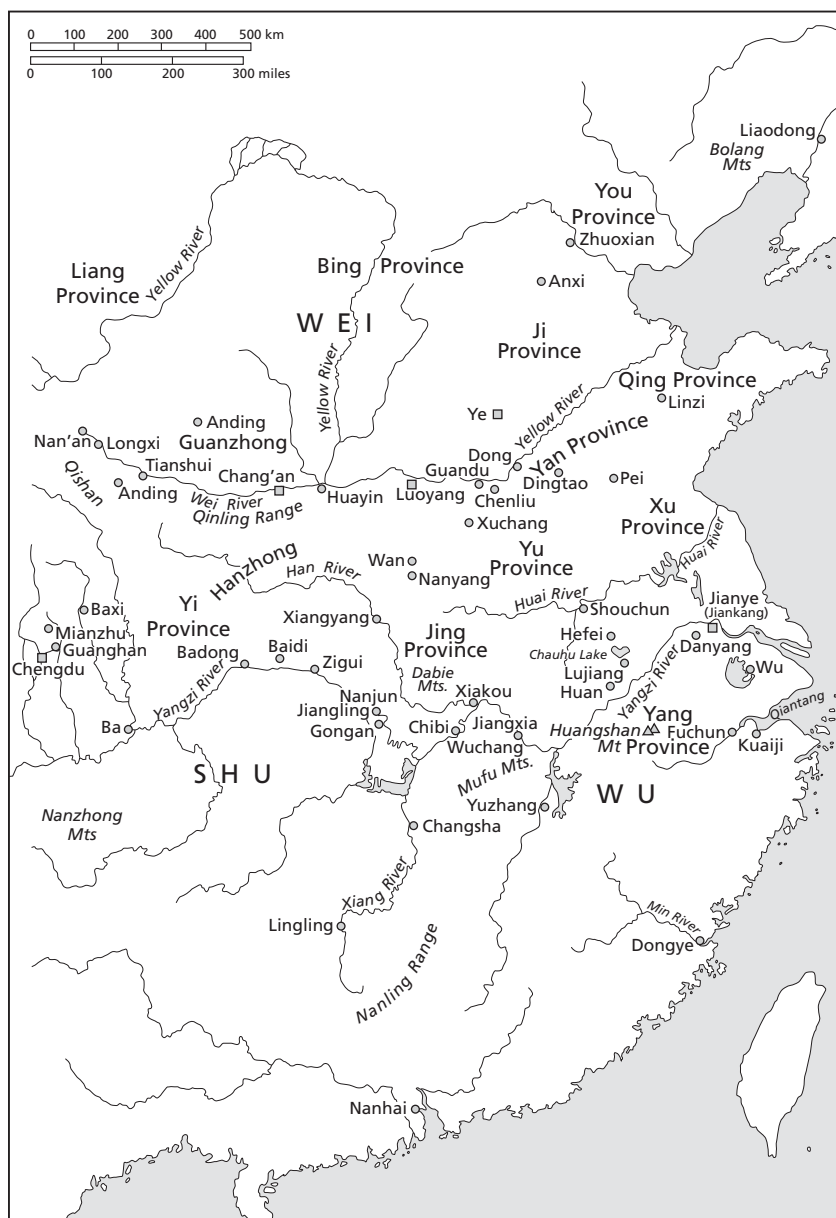
Northern Zhou (557–581) Northern Qi (550–577) Liang (502–557)

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



Map 0.1 *The Three Kingdoms*



Map 0.2 Western Jin and the Northern Dynasties



Map 0.3 *The Southern Dynasties*

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 zhuji 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 chitai to no kankei ni tsuite no sōgōteki 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 "jūkyō 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 bukkōshi kenkyū* (Kyoto, 2013); Endō Yūsuke, *Rikuchō ni okeru bukkō 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), I, 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 zhengzhi shi 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 zhi zhidu* (Beijing, 2017); Yan Buke, *Pinwei yu zhiwei: Qin Han Wei Jin Nanbeichao guanqian zhi 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 cunli* (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, *Zhonggu 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 guanba* (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 yanjiuuo, 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 Iconolatry,” *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 recensita* (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'en 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'ei 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 Chiin (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.