

battle for eight days, retreating as they fought, until all their weapons and arrows were gone and half the men had been killed. In the course of the fighting they managed to kill or wound over 10,000 of the enemy.

When they reached a point only 100 *li* or so from Juyan, the Xiongnu cornered them in a narrow valley and cut off their avenue of escape. Li Ling's food supplies were exhausted and no rescue troops were in sight, while the enemy pressed their attack and called on Li Ling to surrender. "I could never face the emperor and report such a disaster," Li Ling told his men, and finally surrendered to the Xiongnu. Practically all his soldiers perished in the fight; only some 400 managed to escape and straggle back to Han territory. The *Shanyu* had already heard of the fame of Li Ling's family and observed his bravery in battle, and as a result he gave him his own daughter as a wife and treated him with honour. When the emperor received news of this, he executed Li Ling's mother and his wife and children. From this time on the name of the Li family was disgraced and all the retainers of the family in Longxi were ashamed to be associated with it.<sup>4</sup>

The Grand Historian remarks: One of the old books says, "If he himself is upright, those under him will act without being ordered to; if he himself is not upright, they will not obey even when ordered."<sup>5</sup> It refers, no doubt, to men like General Li.

I myself have seen General Li — a man so plain and unassuming that you would take him for a peasant, and almost incapable of speaking a word. And yet the day he died all the people of the empire, whether they had known him or not, were moved to the profoundest grief, so deeply did men trust his sincerity of purpose. There is a proverb which says, "Though the peach tree does not speak, the world wears a path beneath it." It is a small saying, but one which is capable of conveying a great meaning.

<sup>4</sup>This last section in parentheses is most likely not by Sima Qian, but a later addition. It differs from the account of Li Ling's life in *Han shu* 54 and deals with events that are later than those described elsewhere in the *Shi ji*. It may be recalled that Sima Qian was condemned to castration for speaking out in defense of Li Ling to the emperor when the news of Li Ling's surrender reached the court. Sima Qian's own account of Li Ling's battle and surrender is found in his letter to Ren Shaoqing, translated in *Ssu-ma Ch'ien: Grand Historian of China*, pp. 57-67.

<sup>5</sup>*Analects* XIII, 6.

## SHI JI 110: THE ACCOUNT OF THE XIONGNU

**From the time of the Three Dynasties on, the Xiongnu have been a source of constant worry and harm to China. The Han has attempted to determine the Xiongnu's periods of strength and weakness so that it may adopt defensive measures or launch punitive expeditions as the circumstances allow. Thus I made "The Account of the Xiongnu".**

The ancestor of the Xiongnu was a descendant of the rulers of the Xia dynasty by the name of Chunwei. As early as the time of Emperors Yao and Shun and before, we hear of these people, known as Mountain Barbarians, Xianyun, or Hunzhu, living in the region of the northern barbarians and wandering from place to place pasturing their animals. The animals they raise consist mainly of horses, cows, and sheep, but include such rare beasts as camels, asses, mules, and the wild horses known as *taotu* and *tuoji*. They move about in search of water and pasture and have no walled cities or fixed dwellings, nor do they engage in any kind of agriculture. Their lands, however, are divided into regions under the control of various leaders. They have no writing, and even promises and agreements are only verbal. The little boys start out by learning to ride sheep and shoot birds and rats with a bow and arrow, and when they get a little older they shoot foxes and hares, which are used for food. Thus all the young men are able to use a bow and act as armed cavalry in time of war. It is their custom to herd their flocks in times of peace and make their living by hunting, but in periods of crisis they take up arms and go off on plundering and marauding expeditions. This seems to be their inborn nature. For long-range weapons they use bows and arrows, and swords and spears at close range. If the battle is going well for them they will advance, but if not, they will retreat, for they do not consider it a disgrace to run away. Their only concern is self-advantage, and they know nothing of propriety or righteousness.

From the chiefs of the tribe on down, everyone eats the meat of the domestic animals and wears clothes of hide or wraps made of felt or fur. The young men eat the richest and best food, while the old get what is left over, since the tribe

honours those who are young and strong and despises the weak and aged. On the death of his father, a son will marry his stepmother, and when brothers die, the remaining brothers will take the widows for their own wives. They have no polite names<sup>1</sup> but only personal names, and they observe no taboos in the use of personal names.

When the power of the Xia dynasty declined, Gong Liu, the ancestor of the Zhou dynasty, having lost his position as minister of grain, went to live among the Western Rong barbarians, adopting their ways and founding a city at Bin. Some 300 years later the Rong and Di tribes attacked Gong Liu's descendant, the Great Lord Danfu. Danfu fled to the foot of Mt. Qi and the whole population of Bin followed after him, founding a new city there. This was the beginning of the Zhou state.

A hundred and some years later Chang, the Zhou Earl of the West, attacked the Quanyishi tribe, and ten or twelve years later, his son, King Wu, overthrew Emperor Zhou, the last ruler of the Shang dynasty, and founded a new capital at Luo. He also occupied the regions of Feng and Hao, drove the barbarians north beyond the Jing and Luo rivers, and obliged them to bring tribute to his court at specified times. Their lands were known as "the submissive wastes".

Some 200 years later, when the power of the Zhou dynasty had declined, King Mu attacked the Dog Rong and brought back with him four white wolves and four white deer which he had seized. From this time on, the peoples of the "submissive wastes" no longer journeyed to court. (At this time the Zhou adopted the penal code of Marquis Fu.)<sup>2</sup>

Some 200 years after the time of King Mu, King You of the Zhou, egged on by his beloved concubine Baosi, quarrelled with Marquis Shen. In anger, Marquis Shen joined forces with the Dog Rong and attacked and killed King You at the foot of Mt. Li. Eventually the barbarians seized the region of Jiaohuo from the Zhou, occupied the area between the Jing and Wei rivers, and invaded and plundered the central region of China. Duke Xiang of Qin came to the rescue of the Zhou court, and King You's successor King Ping abandoned the regions of Feng and Hao and moved his capital east to the city of Luo. (At this time Duke Xiang of Qin attacked the barbarians and advanced as far as Mt. Qi; as a

<sup>1</sup>The text says "no family names or polite names", but the word "family names" is probably an error here. Polite names are names which are used in place of personal names to avoid the appearance of over-familiarity.

<sup>2</sup>The penal code now comprises a chapter of the *Book of Documents*, where it is known as the code of Marquis Lü.

result he was for the first time ranked among the feudal lords of the Zhou dynasty.)

Sixty-five years later (704 BC) the Mountain Barbarians crossed through the state of Yan and attacked Qi. Duke Li of Qi fought with them in the suburbs of his capital. Forty-four years later the Mountain Barbarians attacked Yan, but Yan reported its distress to Duke Huan of Qi, who rode north and attacked the barbarians, driving them off.

Some twenty years later the barbarians rode as far as the capital city of Luo and attacked King Xiang of the Zhou; King Xiang fled to the city of Fan in Zheng. Previously King Xiang had wanted to attack the state of Zheng and had therefore married a daughter of the barbarians and made her his queen; then, with the aid of the barbarian forces, he had made his attack on Zheng. Having accomplished his purpose, however, he cast aside his barbarian queen, much to her resentment. King Xiang's stepmother, Queen Hui, had a son named Zidai whom she wished to place on the throne, and therefore Queen Hui, her son, and the barbarian queen agreed to cooperate with the barbarian attackers from within the capital by opening the city to them. Thus the barbarians were able to enter, defeat and drive out King Xiang, and set up Zidai as Son of Heaven in his place.

After this the barbarians occupied the area of Luhun, roaming as far east as the state of Wey, ravaging and plundering the lands of central China with fearful cruelty. The empire was deeply troubled, and therefore the poets in the *Book of Odes* wrote:

We smote the barbarians of the north.  
We struck the Xianyun  
And drove them to the great plain.  
We sent forth our chariots in majestic array  
And walled the northern regions.<sup>3</sup>

After King Xiang had been driven from his throne and had lived abroad for four years, he sent an envoy to the state of Jin to explain his plight. Duke Wen of Jin, having just come to power, wanted to make a name for himself as dictator and protector of the royal house, and therefore he raised an army and attacked and drove out the barbarians, executing Zidai and restoring King Xiang to his throne in Luo.

<sup>3</sup>Sima Qian quotes from three different poems: "Bigong" of the "Temple Odes of Lu", and "Liuyue" and "Chuju" of the "Lesser Odes".



At this time Qin and Jin were the most powerful states in China. Duke Wen of Jin expelled the Di barbarians and drove them into the region west of the Yellow River between the Yun and Luo rivers; there they were known as the Red Di and the White Di. Shortly afterwards, Duke Mu of Qin, having obtained the services of You Yu,<sup>4</sup> succeeded in getting the eight barbarian tribes of the west to submit to his authority.

Thus at this time there lived in the region west of Long the Mianzhu, the Hunrong, and the Diyuan tribes. North of Mts. Qi and Liang and the Jing and Qi rivers lived the Yiqu, Dali, Wuzhi, and Quyan tribes. North of Jin were the Forest Barbarians and the Loufan, while north of Yan lived the Eastern Barbarians and Mountain Barbarians. All of them were scattered about in their own little valleys, each with their own chieftains. From time to time they would have gatherings of a hundred or more men, but no one tribe was capable of unifying the others under a single rule.

Some 100 years later Duke Dao of Jin sent Wei Jiang to make peace with the barbarians, so that they came to pay their respects to the court of Jin. A hundred or so years after this, Viscount Xiang of the Zhao family of Jin crossed Mt. Juzhu, defeated the barbarians, and annexed the region of Dai, bringing his state into contact with the Huhe tribes. Shortly afterwards he joined with the viscounts of the Hann and Wei families in wiping out their rival, Zhi Bo, and dividing up the state of Jin among the three of them. Thus the Zhao family held possession of Dai and the lands north of Mt. Juzhu, while the Wei family held the provinces of Hexi (Ordos) and Shang, bordering the lands of the barbarians.

After this the Yiqu tribes began to build walls and fortifications to protect themselves, but the state of Qin gradually ate into their territory and, under King Hui, finally seized twenty-five of their forts. King Hui also attacked the state of Wei, forcing it to cede to him the provinces of Hexi and Shang.

During the reign of King Zhao of Qin the ruler of the Yiqu barbarians had illicit relations with King Zhao's mother, the Queen Dowager Xuan, by whom he had two sons. Later the queen dowager deceived and murdered him at the Palace of Sweet Springs and eventually raised an army and sent it to attack and

<sup>4</sup>You Yu's ancestors came from the state of Jin; he himself had been born among the barbarians but could speak the language of Jin. The barbarian king sent him to the court of Duke Mu of Qin, who questioned him closely on the customs, lands, and military strength of the barbarians. Duke Mu later succeeded in arousing enmity between the barbarian ruler and You Yu, and the latter finally fled to Qin and became the duke's adviser on barbarian affairs. The fuller account is found in *Shi ji* 5, "The Basic Annals of Qin", in vol. III.

ravage the lands of the Yiqu. Thus Qin came into possession of Longxi, Beidi, and Shang Provinces, where it built long walls to act as a defence against the barbarians.

At the same time King Wuling of Zhao changed the customs of his people, ordering them to adopt barbarian dress and to practise riding and shooting, and then led them north in a successful attack on the Forest Barbarians and the Loufan. He constructed a defensive wall stretching from Dai along the foot of the Yin Mountains to Gaoque, establishing the three provinces of Yunzhong, Yanmen, and Dai.

A little later a worthy general named Qin Kai appeared in the state of Yan. He had earlier been sent as a hostage to the barbarians and had won their deepest confidence; on returning to his state, he led an attack on the Eastern Barbarians, defeating and driving them over 1,000 *li* from the border of the state. (The Qin Wuyang who took part with Jing Ke in the attempted assassination of the king of Qin was this man's grandson.) Yan also constructed a long wall from Zaoyang to Xiangping and set up the provinces of Shanggu, Yuyang, Youbeiping, Liaoxi, and Liaodong to guard against the attacks of the barbarians.<sup>5</sup>

By this time China, the land of caps and girdles, was divided among seven states, three of which bordered the territory of the Xiongnu. Later, while the Zhao general Li Mu was living, the Xiongnu did not dare to cross the border of Zhao.

Finally Qin overthrew the other six states, and the First Emperor of the Qin dispatched Meng Tian to lead a force of 100,000 men north to attack the barbarians. He seized control of all the lands south of the Yellow River and established border defences along the river, constructing forty-four walled district cities overlooking the river and manning them with convict labourers transported to the border for garrison duty. He also built the Direct Road from Jiuyuan to Yunyang. Thus he utilized the natural mountain barriers to establish the border defences, scooping out the valleys and constructing ramparts and building installations at other points where they were needed. The whole line of defences stretched over 10,000 *li* from Lintao to Liaodong and even extended across the Yellow River and through Yangshan and Beijia.

<sup>5</sup>From this it may be seen that the First Emperor of the Qin, in building the Great Wall, did not have to begin from scratch, as is often implied, but simply repaired and linked up the older walls of these northern states.

At this time the Eastern Barbarians were very powerful and the Yuezhi were likewise flourishing. The *Shanyu* or chieftain of the Xiongnu was named Touman. Touman, unable to hold out against the Qin forces, had withdrawn to the far north, where he lived with his subjects for over ten years. After Meng Tian died and the feudal lords revolted against the Qin, plunging China into a period of strife and turmoil, the convicts which the Qin had sent to the northern border to garrison the area all returned to their homes. The Xiongnu, the pressure against them relaxed, once again began to infiltrate south of the bend of the Yellow River until they had established themselves along the old border of China.

Touman's oldest son, the heir apparent to his position, was named Maodun, but the *Shanyu* also had a younger son by another consort whom he had taken later and was very fond of. He decided that he wanted to get rid of Maodun and set up his younger son as heir instead, and he therefore sent Maodun as hostage to the Yuezhi nation. Then, after Maodun had arrived among the Yuezhi, Touman made a sudden attack on them. The Yuezhi were about to kill Maodun in retaliation, but he managed to steal one of their best horses and escape, eventually making his way back home. His father, struck by his bravery, put him in command of a force of 10,000 cavalry.

Maodun had some arrows made that whistled in flight and used them to drill his troops in shooting from horseback. "Shoot wherever you see my whistling arrow strike!" he ordered, "and anyone who fails to shoot will be cut down!" Then he went out hunting for birds and animals, and if any of his men failed to shoot at what he himself had shot at, he cut them down on the spot. After this, he shot a whistling arrow at one of his best horses. Some of his men hung back and did not dare shoot at the horse, whereupon Maodun at once executed them. A little later he took an arrow and shot at his favourite wife. Again some of his men shrank back in terror and failed to discharge their arrows, and again he executed them on the spot. Finally he went out hunting with his men and shot a whistling arrow at one of his father's finest horse. All his followers promptly discharged their arrows in the same direction, and Maodun knew that at last they could be trusted. Accompanying his father, the *Shanyu* Touman, on a hunting expedition, he shot a whistling arrow at his father and every one of his followers aimed their arrows in the same direction and shot the *Shanyu* dead. Then Maodun executed his stepmother, his younger brother, and all the high officials of the nation who refused to take orders from him, and set himself up as the new *Shanyu*.

At this time the Eastern Barbarians were very powerful and, hearing that Maodun had killed his father and made himself leader, they sent an envoy to ask if they could have Touman's famous horse that could run 1,000 *li* in one day. Maodun consulted his ministers, but they all replied, "The thousand-*li* horse is one of the treasures of the Xiongnu people. You should not give it away!"

"When a neighbouring country asks for it, why should I begrudge them one horse?" he said, and sent them the thousand-*li* horse.

After a while the Eastern Barbarians, supposing that Maodun was afraid of them, sent an envoy to ask for one of Maodun's consorts. Again Maodun questioned his ministers, and they replied in a rage, "The Eastern Barbarians are unreasoning beasts to come and request one of the *Shanyu*'s consorts. We beg to attack them!"

But Maodun replied, "If it is for a neighbouring country, why should I begrudge them one woman?" and he sent his favourite consort to the Eastern Barbarians.

With this the ruler of the Eastern Barbarians grew more and more bold and arrogant, invading the lands to the west. Between his territory and that of the Xiongnu was an area of over 1,000 *li* of uninhabited land; the two peoples made their homes on either side of this wasteland.<sup>6</sup> The ruler of the Eastern Barbarians sent an envoy to Maodun saying, "The Xiongnu have no way of using this stretch of wasteland which lies between my border and yours. I would like to take possession of it!"

When Maodun consulted his ministers, some of them said, "Since the land is of no use you might as well give it to him," while others said, "No, you must not give it away!"

Maodun flew into a rage. "Land is the basis of the nation!" he said. "Why should I give it away?" And he executed all the ministers who had advised him to do so.

Then he mounted his horse and set off to attack the Eastern Barbarians, circulating an order throughout his domain that anyone who was slow to follow would be executed. The Eastern Barbarians had up until this time despised Maodun and made no preparations for their defence; when Maodun and his soldiers arrived, they inflicted a crushing defeat, killing the ruler of the Eastern Barbarians, taking prisoner his subjects, and seizing their domestic animals. Then he returned and rode west, attacking and routing the Yuezhi, and annexed

<sup>6</sup>The Gobi Desert.



the lands of the ruler of Loufan and the ruler of Boyang south of the Yellow River. Thus he recovered possession of all the lands which the Qin general Meng Tian had taken away from the Xiongnu; the border between his territory and that of the Han empire now followed the old line of defences south of the Yellow River, and from there he marched into the Chaona and Fushi districts and then invaded Yan and Dai.

At this time the Han forces were stalemated in battle with the armies of Xiang Yu, and China was exhausted by warfare. Thus Maodun was able to strengthen his position, massing a force of over 300,000 skilled crossbowmen.

Over 1,000 years had elapsed from the time of Chunwei, the ancestor of the Xiongnu, to that of Maodun, a vast period during which the tribes split up and scattered into various groups, sometimes expanding, sometimes dwindling in size. Thus it is impossible to give any ordered account of the lineage of the Xiongnu rulers. When Maodun came to power, however, the Xiongnu reached their peak of strength and size, subjugating all of the other barbarian tribes of the north and turning south to confront China as a rival nation. As a result of this, it is possible to give an account here of the later Xiongnu rulers and of the offices and titles of the nation.

Under the *Shanyu* are the Wise Kings of the Left and Right, the left and right Luli kings, left and right generals, left and right commandants, left and right household administrators, and left and right Gudu marquises. The Xiongnu word for "wise" is "tuqi", so that the heir of the *Shanyu* is customarily called the "Tuqi King of the Left". Among the other leaders, from the wise kings on down to the household administrators, the more important ones command 10,000 horsemen and the lesser ones several thousand, numbering twenty-four leaders in all, though all are known by the title of "Ten Thousand Horsemen". The high ministerial offices are hereditary, being filled from generation to generation by the members of the Huyan and Lan families, and in more recent times by the Xubu family. These three families constitute the aristocracy of the nation. The kings and other leaders of the left live in the eastern sector, the region from Shanggu east to the lands of the Huimo and Chaoxian peoples. The kings and leaders of the right live in the west, the area from Shang Province west to the territories of the Yuezhi and Qiang tribes. The *Shanyu* has his court in the region north of Dai and Yunzhong. Each group has its own area, within which it moves about from place to place looking for water and pasture. The Left and Right Wise Kings and Luli kings are the most powerful, while the Gudu marquises assist the *Shanyu* in the administration of the nation. Each of the

twenty-four leaders in turn appoints his own "chiefs of a thousand", "chiefs of a hundred", and "chiefs of ten", as well as his subordinate kings, prime ministers, chief commandants, household administrators, *juqu*<sup>7</sup> officials, and so forth.

In the first month of the year the various leaders come together in a small meeting at the *Shanyu*'s court to perform sacrifices, and in the fifth month a great meeting is held at Longcheng at which sacrifices are conducted to the Xiongnu ancestors, Heaven and Earth, and the gods and spirits. In the autumn, when the horses are fat, another great meeting is held at the Dai Forest when a reckoning is made of the number of persons and animals.

According to Xiongnu law, anyone who in ordinary times draws his sword a foot from the scabbard is condemned to death. Anyone convicted of theft has his property confiscated. Minor offences are punished by flogging and major ones by death. No one is kept in jail awaiting sentence longer than ten days, and the number of imprisoned men for the whole nation does not exceed a handful.<sup>8</sup>

At dawn the *Shanyu* leaves his camp and makes obeisance to the sun as it rises, and in the evening he makes a similar obeisance to the moon. In seating arrangements the left side or the seat facing north is considered the place of honour. The days *wu* and *ji* of the ten-day week are regarded as most auspicious.

In burials the Xiongnu use an inner and an outer coffin, with accessories of gold, silver, clothing, and fur, but they do not construct grave mounds or plant trees on the grave, nor do they use mourning garments. When a ruler dies, the ministers and concubines who were favoured by him and who are obliged to follow him in death often number in the hundreds or even thousands.

Whenever the Xiongnu begin some undertaking, they observe the stars and the moon. They attack when the moon is full and withdraw their troops when it wanes. After a battle those who have cut off the heads of the enemy or taken prisoners are presented with a cup of wine and allowed to keep the spoils they have captured. Any prisoners that are taken are made slaves. Therefore, when they fight, each man strives for his own gain. They are very skilful at using decoy troops to lure their opponents to destruction. When they catch sight of the enemy, they swoop down like a flock of birds, eager for booty, but when they find themselves hard pressed and beaten, they scatter and vanish like the mist.

<sup>7</sup> It is impossible to tell from the name alone what this title means. In later times, when these peoples invaded and conquered northern China, Juqu became a Chinese surname.

<sup>8</sup> Sima Qian is inviting a comparison with the situation in China in his own day, when the jails were full to overflowing with men awaiting sentence.

Anyone who succeeds in recovering the body of a comrade who has fallen in battle receives all of the dead man's property.

Shortly after the period described above, Maodun launched a series of campaigns to the north, conquering the tribes of Hunyu, Qushe, Dingling, Gekun, and Xinli. Thus the nobles and high ministers of the Xiongnu were all won over by Maodun, considering him a truly worthy leader.

At this time Gaozu, the founder of the Han, had just succeeded in winning control of the empire and had transferred Xin, the former king of Hann, to the rulership of Dai, with his capital at Mayi. The Xiongnu surrounded Mayi and attacked the city in great force, whereupon Hann Xin surrendered to them. With Hann Xin on their side, they then proceeded to lead their troops south across Mt. Juzhu and attack Taiyuan, marching as far as the city of Jinyang. Emperor Gaozu led an army in person to attack them, but it was winter and he encountered such cold and heavy snow that two or three out of every ten of his men lost their fingers from frostbite. Maodun feigned a retreat to lure the Han soldiers on to an attack. When they came after him in pursuit, he concealed all of his best troops and left only his weakest and puniest men to be observed by the Han scouts. With this the entire Han force, supplemented by 320,000 infantry, rushed north to pursue him; Gaozu led the way, advancing as far as the city of Pingcheng.

Before the infantry had had a chance to arrive, however, Maodun swooped down with 400,000 of his best cavalry, surrounded Gaozu on White Peak, and held him there for seven days. The Han forces within the encirclement had no way of receiving aid or provisions from their comrades outside, since the Xiongnu cavalry surrounded them on all sides, with white horses on the west side, greenish horses on the east, black horses on the north, and red ones on the south.<sup>9</sup>

Gaozu sent an envoy in secret to Maodun's consort, presenting her with generous gifts, whereupon she spoke to Maodun, saying, "Why should the rulers of these two nations make such trouble for each other? Even if you gained possession of the Han lands, you could never occupy them, and the ruler of the Han may have his guardian deities as well as you. I beg you to consider the matter well!"

<sup>9</sup>These four colours are symbolic of the four directions in Chinese belief and, if the narrative is correct, in Xiongnu belief as well.

Maodun had previously arranged for the troops of Wang Huang and Zhao Li, two of Hann Xin's generals, to meet with him, but though the appointed time had come, they failed to appear and he began to suspect that they were plotting with the Han forces. He therefore decided to listen to his consort's advice and withdrew his forces from one corner of the encirclement. Gaozu ordered his men to load their crossbows with arrows and hold them in readiness pointed toward the outside. These preparations completed, they marched straight out of the encirclement and finally joined up with the rest of the army.

Maodun eventually withdrew his men and went away, and Gaozu likewise retreated and abandoned the campaign, dispatching Liu Jing to conclude a peace treaty with the Xiongnu instead.

After this Hann Xin became a general for the Xiongnu, and Zhao Li and Wang Huang repeatedly violated the peace treaty by invading and plundering Dai and Yunzhong. Shortly afterwards, Chen Xi revolted and joined with Hann Xin in a plot to attack Dai. Gaozu dispatched Fan Kuai to go and attack them; he recovered possession of the provinces and districts of Dai, Yanmen, and Yunzhong, but did not venture beyond the frontier.

At this time a number of Han generals had gone over to the side of the Xiongnu, and for this reason Maodun was constantly plundering the region of Dai and causing the Han great worry. Gaozu therefore dispatched Liu Jing to present a princess of the imperial family to the *Shanyu* to be his consort. The Han agreed to send a gift of specified quantities of silk floss and cloth, grain, and other food stuffs each year, and the two nations were to live in peace and brotherhood. After this Maodun raided the frontier less often than before. Later Lu Wan, the king of Yan, revolted and led his party of several thousand followers across the border to surrender to the Xiongnu; they roamed back and forth in the region from Shanggu to the east, causing considerable disturbance.

After Emperor Gaozu passed away, Emperor Hui and Empress Lü in turn ruled the country. At this time the Han had just come to power and the Xiongnu, unimpressed by its strength, were behaving with great arrogance. Maodun even sent an insulting letter to Empress Lü.<sup>10</sup> She wanted to launch a campaign against him, but her generals reminded her that "even Emperor Gaozu, with all his wisdom and bravery, encountered great difficulty at Pingcheng", and she was

<sup>10</sup>In his letter Maodun suggested that, since both he and Empress Lü were old and lonely, they might get together and console each other.



finally persuaded to give up the idea and resume friendly relations with the Xiongnu.

When Emperor Wen came to the throne he renewed the peace treaty with the Xiongnu. In the fifth month of the third year of his reign (177 BC), however, the Xiongnu Wise King of the Right invaded the region south of the Yellow River, plundering the loyal barbarians of Shang Province who had been appointed by the Han to guard the frontier, and murdering and carrying off a number of the inhabitants. Emperor Wen ordered the chancellor Guan Ying to lead a force of 85,000 carriages and cavalry to Gaonu, where they attacked the Wise King of the Right. The latter fled beyond the frontier. The emperor in person visited Taiyuan, at which time the king of Jibei revolted. When the emperor returned to the capital he disbanded the army which Guan Ying had used in the attack on the barbarians.

The following year the *Shanyu* sent a letter to the Han court which read:

The great *Shanyu* whom Heaven has set up respectfully inquires of the emperor's health. Formerly the emperor broached the question of a peace alliance, and I was most happy to comply with the intentions expressed in his letter. Certain of the Han border officials, however, imposed upon and insulted the Wise King of the Right, and as a result he heeded the counsel of Houyi, Luhou, Nanzhi, and others of his generals and, without asking my permission, engaged in a skirmish with the Han officials, thus violating the pact between the rulers of our two nations and rupturing the bonds of brotherhood that joined us. The emperor has twice sent letters complaining of this situation and I have in turn dispatched an envoy with my answer, but my envoy has not been allowed to return, nor has any envoy come from the Han. As a result, the Han has broken off peaceful relations and our two neighbouring countries are no longer bound in alliance.

Because of the violation of the pact committed by the petty officials, and the subsequent events, I have punished the Wise King of the Right by sending him west to search out the Yuezhi people and attack them. Through the aid of Heaven, the excellence of his fighting men, and the strength of his horses, he has succeeded in wiping out the Yuezhi, slaughtering or forcing to submission every member of the tribe. In addition he has conquered the Loulan, Wusun, and Hujie tribes, as well as the twenty-six states nearby, so that all of them have become a part of the Xiongnu nation. All the people who live by

drawing the bow are now united into one family and the entire region of the north is at peace.

Thus I wish now to lay down my weapons, rest my soldiers, and turn my horses to pasture; to forget the recent affair and restore our old pact, that the peoples of the border may have peace such as they enjoyed in former times, that the young may grow to manhood, the old live out their lives in security, and generation after generation enjoy peace and comfort.

However, I do not as yet know the intentions of the emperor. Therefore I have dispatched my palace attendant Xihuqian to bear this letter. At the same time I beg to present one camel, two riding horses, and eight carriage horses. If the emperor does not wish the Xiongnu to approach his frontier, then he should order the officials and people along the border to withdraw a good distance back from the frontier. When my envoy has arrived and delivered this, I trust that he will be sent back to me.

The envoy bearing the letter arrived in the region of Xinwang during the sixth month. When it was delivered to the emperor, he began deliberations with his ministers as to whether it was better to attack or make peace. The high officials all stated, "Since the *Shanyu* has just conquered the Yuezhi and is riding on a wave of victory, he cannot be attacked. Moreover, even if we were to seize the Xiongnu lands, they are all swamps and saline wastes, not fit for habitation. It would be far better to make peace."

The emperor agreed with their opinion and in the sixth year of the former part of his reign (174 BC) he sent an envoy to the Xiongnu with a letter which read as follows:

The emperor respectfully inquires about the health of the great *Shanyu*. Your palace attendant Xihuqian has brought us a letter which states: "The Wise King of the Right, without asking my permission, heeded the counsel of Houyi, Luhou, Nanzhi, and others of his generals, violating the pact between the rulers of our two nations and rupturing the bonds of brotherhood that joined us, and as a result the Han has broken off peaceful relations with me, and our two neighbouring countries are no longer bound in alliance. Because of the violation of the pact committed by the petty officials, I have punished the Wise King of the Right by sending him west to attack the Yuezhi. Having

completed the conquest of the region, I wish to lay down my weapons, rest my soldiers, and turn my horses to pasture; to forget the recent affair and restore our old pact so that the peoples of the border may have peace, the young may grow to manhood, the old live out their lives in security, and generation after generation enjoy peace and comfort."

We heartily approve these words. This indeed is the way the sage rulers of antiquity would have spoken.

The Han has made a pact of brotherhood with the Xiongnu, and for this reason we have sent generous gifts to you. Any violations of the pact or ruptures of the bonds of brotherhood have been the work of the Xiongnu. However, as there has been an amnesty since the affair of the Wise King of the Right occurred,<sup>11</sup> you need not punish him too severely. If your intentions are really those expressed in your letter, and if you will make them clearly known to your various officials so that they will henceforth act in good faith and commit no more violations of the pact, then we are prepared to honour the terms of your letter.

Your envoy tells us that you have led your troops in person to attack the other barbarian nations and have won merit, suffering great hardship on the field of battle. We therefore send you from our own wardrobe an embroidered robe lined with patterned damask, an embroidered and lined underrobe, and a brocaded coat, one each; one comb; one sash with gold ornaments; one gold-ornamented leather belt; ten rolls of embroidery; thirty rolls of brocade; and forty rolls each of heavy red silk and light green silk, which shall be delivered to you by our palace counsellor Yi and master of guests Jian.

Shortly after this, Maodun died and his son Jizhu was set up with the title of Old *Shanyu*. When Jizhu became *Shanyu*, Emperor Wen sent a princess of the imperial family to be his consort, dispatching a eunuch from Yan named Zhonghang Yue to accompany her as her tutor. Zhonghang Yue did not wish to

<sup>11</sup> It is not clear what amnesty this refers to. The *Han shu* "Annals of Emperor Wen" records a general amnesty in the seventh year (173 BC), but none for the years between the Xiongnu attack and the date of this letter. Perhaps the letter should be dated in the seventh year. The whole statement about the amnesty is of course no more than a cleverly phrased assertion of the Han emperor's sovereignty over the Xiongnu.

undertake the mission, but the Han officials forced him to do so. "My going will bring nothing but trouble to the Han!" he warned them.

After Zhonghang Yue reached his destination, he went over to the side of the *Shanyu*, who treated him with the greatest favour.

The Xiongnu had always had a liking for Han silks and food stuffs, but Zhonghang Yue told them, "All the multitudes of the Xiongnu nation would not amount to one province in the Han empire. The strength of the Xiongnu lies in the very fact that their food and clothing are different from those of the Chinese, and they are therefore not dependent upon the Han for anything. Now the *Shanyu* has this fondness for Chinese things and is trying to change the Xiongnu customs. Thus, although the Han sends no more than a fifth of its goods here, it will in the end succeed in winning over the whole Xiongnu nation. From now on, when you get any of the Han silks, put them on and try riding around on your horses through the brush and brambles! In no time your robes and leggings will be torn to shreds and everyone will be able to see that silks are no match for the utility and excellence of felt or leather garments. Likewise, when you get any of the Han foodstuffs, throw them away so that the people can see that they are not as practical or as tasty as milk and kumiss!"

He also taught the *Shanyu*'s aides how to make an itemized accounting of the number of persons and domestic animals in the country.

The Han letters addressed to the *Shanyu* were always written on wooden tablets one foot and one inch in length and began, "The emperor respectfully inquires about the health of the great *Shanyu* of the Xiongnu. We send you the following articles, etc., etc." Zhonghang Yue, however, instructed the *Shanyu* to use in replying to the Han a tablet measuring one foot two inches, decorated with broad stamps and great long seals, and worded in the following extravagant manner: "The great *Shanyu* of the Xiongnu, born of Heaven and Earth and ordained by the sun and moon, respectfully inquires about the health of the Han emperor. We send you the following articles, etc., etc."

When one of the Han envoys to the Xiongnu remarked scornfully that Xiongnu custom showed no respect for the aged, Zhonghang Yue began to berate him. "According to Han custom," he said, "when the young men are called into military service and sent off with the army to garrison the frontier, do not their old parents at home voluntarily give up their warm clothing and tasty food so that there will be enough to provide for the troops?"

"Yes, they do," admitted the Han envoy.

"The Xiongnu make it clear that warfare is their business. And since the



old and the weak are not capable of fighting, the best food and drink are naturally allotted to the young men in the prime of life. So the young men are willing to fight for the defence of the nation, and both fathers and sons are able to live out their lives in security. How can you say that the Xiongnu despise the aged?"

"But among the Xiongnu," the envoy continued, "fathers and sons sleep together in the same tent. And when a father dies, the sons marry their own stepmothers, and when brothers die, their remaining brothers marry their widows! These people know nothing of the elegance of hats and girdles, nor of the rituals of the court!"

"According to Xiongnu custom," replied Zhonghang Yue, "the people eat the flesh of their domestic animals, drink their milk, and wear their hides, while the animals graze from place to place, searching for pasture and water. Therefore, in wartime the men practise riding and shooting, while in times of peace they enjoy themselves and have nothing to do. Their laws are simple and easy to carry out; the relation between ruler and subject is relaxed and intimate, so that the governing of the whole nation is no more complicated than the governing of one person. The reason that sons marry their stepmothers and brothers marry their widowed sisters-in-law is simply that they hate to see the clan die out. Therefore, although the Xiongnu encounter times of turmoil, the ruling families always manage to stand firm. In China, on the other hand, though a man would never dream of marrying his stepmother or his brother's widow, yet the members of the same family drift so far apart that they end up murdering each other! This is precisely why so many changes of dynasty have come about in China! Moreover, among the Chinese, as etiquette and the sense of duty decay, enmity arises between the rulers and the ruled, while the excessive building of houses and dwellings exhausts the strength and resources of the nation. Men try to get their food and clothing by farming and raising silkworms and to insure their safety by building walls and fortifications. Therefore, although danger threatens, the Chinese people are given no training in aggressive warfare, while in times of stability they must still wear themselves out trying to make a living. Pooh! You people in your mud huts — you talk too much! Enough of this blubbery and mouthing! Just because you wear hats, what does that make you?"

After this, whenever the Han envoys would try to launch into any sermons or orations, Zhonghang Yue would cut them off at once. "Not so much talk from the Han envoys! Just make sure that the silks and grainstuffs you bring to the Xiongnu are of the right measure and quality, that's all. What's the need for

talking? If the goods you deliver are up to measure and of good quality, all right. But if there is any deficiency or the quality is no good, then when the autumn harvest comes we will take our horses and trample all over your crops!"

Day and night he instructed the *Shanyu* on how to manoeuvre into a more advantageous position.

In the fourteenth year of Emperor Wen's reign (166 BC) the *Shanyu* led a force of 140,000 horsemen through the Chaona and Xiao passes, killing Sun Ang, the chief commandant of Beidi Province, and carrying off large numbers of people and animals. Eventually he rode as far as Pengyang, sent a surprise force to break into and burn the Huizhong Palace, and dispatched scouts as far as the Palace of Sweet Springs in Yong.<sup>12</sup>

Emperor Wen appointed the palace military commander Zhou She and the chief of palace attendants Zhang Wu as generals and put them in command of a force of 1,000 chariots and 100,000 horsemen to garrison the vicinity of Chang'an and guard the capital from the barbarian invaders. He also appointed Lu Qing, the marquis of Chang, as general of Shang Province; Wei Su, the marquis of Ning, as general of Beidi; Zhou Zao, the marquis of Longlu, as general of Longxi; Zhang Xiangru, the marquis of Dongyang, as general in chief; and Dong Chi, the marquis of Cheng, as general of the vanguard, and sent them with a large force of chariots and cavalry to attack the barbarians. The *Shanyu* remained within the borders of the empire for a little over a month and then withdrew. The Han forces pursued him beyond the frontier but returned without having been able to kill any of the enemy.

The Xiongnu grew more arrogant day by day, crossing the border every year, killing many of the inhabitants, and stealing their animals. Yunzhong and Liaodong suffered most severely, while in Dai Province alone over 10,000 persons were killed. The Han court, greatly distressed, sent an envoy with a letter to the Xiongnu, and the *Shanyu* in turn dispatched one of his household administrators to apologize and request a renewal of the peace alliance.

In the second year of the latter part of his reign (162 BC) Emperor Wen sent an envoy to the Xiongnu with a letter that read:

The emperor respectfully inquires about the health of the great *Shanyu*. Your envoys, the household administrator and *juqu* Diao

<sup>12</sup> Bringing them within sight of the capital.

Qunan and the palace attendant Han Liao, have delivered to us two horses, which we have respectfully accepted.

According to the decree of the former emperor, the land north of the Great Wall, where men wield the bow and arrow, was to receive its commands from the *Shanyu*, while that within the wall, whose inhabitants dwell in houses and wear hats and girdles, was to be ruled by us; thus might the countless inhabitants of these lands gain their food and clothing by agriculture, weaving, or hunting; father and son live side by side; ruler and minister enjoy mutual security; and all forsake violence and rebellion. Now we have heard that certain evil and deluded men, succumbing greedily to the lure of gain, have turned their backs upon righteousness and violated the peace alliance, forgetting the fate of the countless inhabitants and disrupting the concord which existed between the rulers of our two states.

This, however, is an affair of the past. In your letter, you say that "since our two countries have been joined again in peace and the two rulers are once more in concord," you desire "to rest your soldiers and turn your horses to pasture, in order that generation after generation may know prosperity and joy and we may make a new beginning in peace and harmony." We heartily approve these words. The sage, it is said, renews himself daily, reforming and making a new beginning in order that the old people may have rest and the young grow to manhood, that each may preserve his own life and fulfil the years which Heaven has granted him. So long as we and the *Shanyu* join in walking this road, following the will of Heaven and pitying the people, bestowing the blessing of peace on generation after generation without end, then there will be no one in the whole world who will not benefit.

Our two great nations, the Han and the Xiongnu, stand side by side. Since the Xiongnu dwell in the north, where the land is cold and the killing frosts come early, we have decreed that our officials shall send to the *Shanyu* each year a fixed quantity of millet, leaven, gold, silk cloth, thread, floss, and other articles.

Now the world enjoys profound peace and the people are at rest. We and the *Shanyu* must be as parents to them. When we consider past affairs, we realize that it is only because of petty matters and trifling reasons that the plans of our ministers have failed. No such matters are worthy to disrupt the harmony that exists between brothers.

We have heard it said that Heaven shows no partiality in sheltering mankind, and Earth no bias in bearing it up. Let us, then, with the *Shanyu*, cast aside these trifling matters of the past and walk the great road together, wiping out former evils and planning for the distant future, in order that the peoples of our two states may be joined together like the sons of a single family. Then, from the countless multitudes of the people down to the very fish and turtles, the birds which fly above, all creatures that walk or breathe or move, there will be none that fail to find peace and profit and relief from peril.

To allow men to come and go without hindrance is the way of Heaven. Let us both forget past affairs. We have pardoned those of our subjects who fled to the Xiongnu or were taken prisoner. Let the *Shanyu* likewise ask no further concerning Zhang Ni and the other Xiongnu leaders who surrendered to us.

We have heard that the rulers of ancient times made their promises clearly known and that, once they had given their consent, they did not go back on their words. The *Shanyu* should consider this well, so that all the world may enjoy profound peace. Once the peace alliance has been concluded, the Han shall not be the first to violate it! Let the *Shanyu* ponder these words!

When the *Shanyu* expressed his willingness to abide by the peace agreement, Emperor Wen issued an edict to the imperial secretary which read:

The great *Shanyu* of the Xiongnu has sent us a letter signifying that the peace alliance has been concluded. No action need be taken concerning those who have fled from one state to the other, since they are not sufficiently numerous to affect the population or size of our territories. The Xiongnu shall not enter within our borders, nor shall the Han forces venture beyond the frontier. Anyone who violates this agreement shall be executed. It is to the advantage of both nations that they should live in lasting friendship without further aggression. We have given our consent to this alliance, and now we wish to publish it abroad to the world so that all may clearly understand it.

Four years later the Old *Shanyu* Jizhu died and was succeeded by his son Junchen. After Junchen assumed the title of *Shanyu*, Emperor Wen once more renewed the former peace alliance. Zhonghang Yue continued to act as adviser to the new *Shanyu*.



A little over a year after Junchen became *Shanyu* (158 BC)<sup>13</sup> the Xiongnu again violated the peace alliance, invading Shang and Yunzhong provinces in great numbers; 30,000 horsemen attacked each province, killing and carrying off great numbers of the inhabitants before withdrawing. The emperor dispatched three generals with armies to garrison Beidi, the Juzhu Pass in Dai, and the Flying Fox Pass in Zhao, at the same time ordering the other garrisons along the border to guard their defences in order to hold off the barbarians. He also stationed three armies in the vicinity of Chang'an at Xiliu, at Jimen north of the Wei River, and at the Ba River, so as to be prepared for the barbarians in case they entered that area. The Xiongnu cavalry poured through the Juzhu Pass in Dai, and the signal fires along the border flashed the news of their invasion to Chang'an and the Palace of Sweet Springs. After several months the Han troops reached the border, but by that time the Xiongnu had already withdrawn far beyond and the Han troops were recalled.

A year or so later Emperor Wen passed away and Emperor Jing came to the throne. At this time Liu Sui, the king of Zhao, sent envoys in secret to negotiate with the Xiongnu. When Wu, Chu, Zhao, and the other states revolted, the Xiongnu planned to cooperate with Zhao and cross the border, but the Han forces besieged and defeated the king of Zhao, and the Xiongnu called off their plans for an invasion.

After this Emperor Jing once more renewed the peace alliance with the Xiongnu, allowing them to buy goods in the markets along the Han border and sending them supplies and a princess of the imperial family, as had been done under the earlier agreements. Thus, throughout Emperor Jing's reign, although the Xiongnu from time to time made small plundering raids across the border, they did not carry out any major invasion.

When the present emperor came to the throne he reaffirmed the peace alliance and treated the Xiongnu with generosity, allowing them to trade in the markets of the border stations and sending them lavish gifts. From the *Shanyu* on down, all the Xiongnu grew friendly with the Han, coming and going along the Great Wall.

The emperor then dispatched Nie Wengyi, a native of the city of Mayi, to carry contraband goods to the Xiongnu and begin trading with them. This done, Nie Wengyi deceived them by offering to hand over the city of Mayi to the

<sup>13</sup> Following the reading in *Han shu* 94A.

*Shanyu*, intending by this ruse to lure him into the area. The *Shanyu* trusted Nie Wengyi and, greedy for the wealth of Mayi, set out with a force of 100,000 cavalry and crossed the border at the barrier of Wuzhou. The Han in the meantime had concealed 300,000 troops in the vicinity of Mayi, headed by four generals under the imperial secretary Han Anguo, who was the leader of the expeditionary forces, ready to spring on the *Shanyu* when he arrived.

The *Shanyu* crossed the Han border but was still some 100 *li* from Mayi when he began to notice that, although the fields were full of animals, there was not a single person in sight. Growing suspicious, he attacked one of the beacon warning stations. A defence official of Yanmen who had been patrolling the area but had caught sight of the barbarian invaders had at this time taken refuge in the warning station, for he knew of the plan of the Han forces to ambush them. When the *Shanyu* attacked and captured the warning station, he was about to put the defence official to death when the latter informed him of the Han troops hiding in the valley. "I suspected as much!" exclaimed the *Shanyu* in great alarm, and proceeded to lead his forces back to the border. After they had safely crossed the border he remarked, "Heaven was on my side when I captured this defence official. In effect Heaven sent you to warn me!" and he awarded the defence official the title of "Heavenly King".

The Han forces had agreed to wait until the *Shanyu* had entered Mayi before launching their attack but, since he never proceeded that far, they had no opportunity to strike. Meanwhile another Han general, Wang Hui, had been ordered to lead a special force from Dai and attack the Xiongnu baggage train, but when he heard that the *Shanyu* had retreated and that his forces were extremely numerous, he did not dare to make an attack. When it was all over the Han officials condemned Wang Hui to execution on the grounds that, though he was the one who had engineered the entire plot, he had failed to advance when the time came.

After this the Xiongnu broke off friendly relations with the Han and began to attack the border defences wherever they happened to be. Time and again they crossed the frontier and carried out innumerable plundering raids. At the same time they continued to be as greedy as ever, delighting in the border markets and longing for Han goods, and the Han for its part continued to allow them to trade in the markets in order to sap their resources.

Five years after the Mayi campaign, in the autumn (129 BC), the Han government dispatched four generals, each with a force of 10,000 cavalry, to make a surprise attack on the barbarians at the border markets. General Wei

Qing rode out of Shanggu as far as Longcheng, killing or capturing 700 of the enemy. Gongsun He proceeded from Yunzhong, but took no captives. Gongsun Ao rode north from Dai Province, but was defeated by the barbarians and lost over 7,000 of his men. Li Guang advanced from Yanmen, but was defeated and captured, though he later managed to escape and return to the Han. On their return, Gongsun Ao and Li Guang were thrown into prison by the Han officials but were allowed to purchase a pardon for their offences and were reduced to the status of commoners.

In the winter the Xiongnu several times crossed the border on plundering expeditions, hitting hardest at Yuyang. The emperor dispatched General Han Anguo to garrison Yuyang and protect it from the barbarians. In the autumn of the following year 20,000 Xiongnu horsemen invaded the empire, murdered the governor of Liaoxi, and carried off over 2,000 prisoners. They also invaded Yuyang, defeated the army of over 1,000 under the command of the governor of Yuyang, and surrounded Han Anguo's camp. Han Anguo at this time had a force of over 1,000 horsemen under his command, but before long even these were on the point of being wiped out. Relief forces arrived from Yan just in time, and the Xiongnu withdrew. The Xiongnu also invaded Yanmen and killed or carried off over 1,000 persons.

The Han then dispatched General Wei Qing with a force of 30,000 cavalry to ride north from Yanmen, and Li Xi to ride out from Dai Province to attack the barbarians. They succeeded in killing or capturing several thousand of the enemy.

The following year Wei Qing again rode out of Yunzhong and proceeded west as far as Longxi, attacking the kings of the Loufan and Baiyang barbarians south of the Yellow River, capturing or killing several thousand of the enemy, and seizing over 1,000,000 cattle and sheep. Thus the Han regained control of the area south of the bend of the Yellow River and began to build fortifications at Shuofang, repairing the old system of defences that had been set up by Meng Tian during the Qin dynasty and strengthening the frontier along the Yellow River. The Han also abandoned claims to the district of Shibi and the region of Zaoyang that had formed the extreme northern part of the province of Shanggu, handing them over to the Xiongnu. This took place in the second year of the era *yuanshuo* (127 BC).

The following winter the *Shanyu* Junchen died and his younger brother, the Luli King of the Left, Yizhixie, set himself up as *Shanyu*. He attacked and defeated Junchen's heir, Yudan, who fled and surrendered to the Han. The Han

enfeoffed Yudan as marquis of Shean, but he died several months later.

The summer after Yizhixie became *Shanyu* the Xiongnu invaded the province of Dai with 20,000 or 30,000 cavalry, murdering the governor, Gong You, and carrying off over 1,000 persons. In the fall the Xiongnu struck again, this time at Yanmen, killing or carrying off over 1,000 of the inhabitants. The following year they once more invaded Dai, Dingxiang, and Shang Provinces with 30,000 cavalry in each group, killing or carrying off several thousand persons. The Wise King of the Right, angry that the Han had seized the territory south of the Yellow River and built fortifications at Shuofang, several times crossed the border on plundering raids; he even went so far as to invade the region south of the river, ravaging Shuofang and killing or carrying off a large number of the officials and inhabitants.

In the spring of the following year (124 BC) the Han made Wei Qing a general in chief and sent him with an army of over 100,000 men and six generals to proceed north from Shuofang and Gaoque and strike at the barbarians. The Wise King of the Right, convinced that the Han forces could never penetrate far enough north to reach him, had drunk himself into a stupor when the Han army, marching 600 or 700 hundred *li* beyond the border, appeared and surrounded him in the night. The king, greatly alarmed, barely escaped with his life, and his best horsemen managed to break away in small groups and follow after him; the Han, however, succeeded in capturing 15,000 of his men and women, including over ten petty kings.

In the autumn a Xiongnu force of 10,000 cavalry invaded Dai Province, killed the chief commandant Zhu Ying, and carried off over 1,000 men.

In the spring of the following year (123 BC) the Han again dispatched the general in chief Wei Qing with six generals and a force of over 100,000 cavalry; they rode several hundred *li* north from Dingxiang and attacked the Xiongnu. All in all they succeeded in killing or capturing over 19,000 of the enemy, but in the engagements the Han side lost two generals and over 3,000 cavalry. Of the two generals one of them, Su Jian, the general of the right, managed to escape, but the other, Zhao Xin, the marquis of Xi, who was acting as general of the vanguard, surrendered to the Xiongnu when he saw that his men could not win a victory.

Zhao Xin was originally a petty king of the Xiongnu who later went over to the side of the Han. The Han enfeoffed him as marquis of Xi and made him general of the vanguard, sending him to accompany Su Jian, the general of the right, on a different line of advance from that of the rest of the expedition. Zhao



Xin and the forces under his command were alone, however, when they encountered the *Shanyu*'s men, and as a result his troops were wiped out. The *Shanyu*, having accepted Zhao Xin's surrender, appointed him to the rank of Zici king, gave him his own sister as a wife, and began to plot with him against the Han. Zhao Xin advised the *Shanyu* to withdraw farther north beyond the desert instead of manoeuvring near the Chinese border. In this way he would be able to lure the Han troops after him and, when they were thoroughly exhausted, take advantage of their weakness to wipe them out. The *Shanyu* agreed to follow this plan.

The following year 10,000 barbarian horsemen invaded Shanggu and killed several hundred inhabitants.

In the spring of the next year (121 BC) the Han dispatched the general of swift cavalry Huo Qubing to lead 10,000 cavalry out of Longxi. They rode more than 1,000 *li* beyond Mt. Yanzhi and attacked the Xiongnu, killing or capturing over 18,000 of the enemy cavalry, defeating the Xiutu king, and seizing the golden man which he used in worshipping Heaven.<sup>14</sup>

In the summer Huo Qubing, accompanied by Gongsun Ao, the Heqi marquis, led a force of 20,000 or 30,000 cavalry some 2,000 *li* out of Longxi and Beidi to attack the barbarians. They passed Juyan, attacked in the region of the Qilian Mountains, and captured or killed over 30,000 of the enemy, including seventy or more petty kings and their subordinates.

Meanwhile the Xiongnu invaded Yanmen in Dai Province, killing or carrying off several hundred persons. The Han dispatched Zhang Qian, the Bowang marquis, and General Li Guang to ride out of Youbeiping and attack the Xiongnu Wise King of the Left. The Wise King of the Left surrounded Li Guang's army and came near to wiping out his 4,000 men, though he managed to inflict extraordinary damage on the enemy. Zhang Qian's forces came to the rescue just in time and Li Guang was able to escape, but the Han losses amounted to several thousand men. When the armies returned to the capital, Gongsun Ao was accused of having arrived late at a rendezvous with Huo Qubing and was condemned to die along with Zhang Qian; both men purchased pardons and were reduced to the rank of commoners.

The *Shanyu* was angry at the Hunye and Xiutu kings who lived in the

<sup>14</sup>Scholars have long speculated whether the "golden man" might not have been a Buddhist image. If so, this passage would mark the earliest record of Chinese contact with the Buddhist religion.

western part of his domain because they had allowed the Han to capture or kill 20,000 or 30,000 of their men; in the autumn he sent them a summons, intending to execute them. The Hunye and Xiutu kings, terrified, sent word to the Han that they were willing to surrender. The Han dispatched Huo Qubing to go and meet them, but on the way the Hunye king murdered the Xiutu king and combined the latter's forces with his own. When he surrendered to the Han, he had a force of over 40,000 men, though it was commonly referred to as a force of 100,000. Having gained the allegiance of the Hunye king, the Han found itself far less troubled by barbarian invasions in the regions of Longxi, Beidi, and Hexi. It therefore moved a number of poor people from east of the Pass to the region south of the bend of the Yellow River known as New Qin, which had been seized from the Xiongnu, in order to populate the area, and reduced the number of garrison troops along the border west of Beidi to half.

The following year (120 BC) the Xiongnu invaded Youbeiping and Dingxiang with a force of 20,000 or 30,000 cavalry in each region, killing or carrying off over 1,000 persons before withdrawing.

In the spring of the following year (119 BC) the Han strategists plotted together, saying, "Zhao Xin, the marquis of Xi, who is acting as adviser to the *Shanyu*, is convinced that, since the Xiongnu are living north of the desert, the Han forces can never reach them." They agreed therefore to fatten the horses on grain and send out a force of 100,000 cavalry, along with 140,000 horses to carry baggage and other equipment (this in addition to the horses provided for transporting provisions). They ordered the force to split up into two groups commanded by the general in chief Wei Qing and the general of swift cavalry Huo Qubing. The former was to ride out of Dingxiang and the latter out of Dai; it was agreed that the entire force would cross the desert and attack the Xiongnu.

When the *Shanyu* received word of the approach of these armies, he ordered his baggage trains to withdraw to a distance and, with his finest soldiers, waited on the northern edge of the desert, where he closed in battle with the army of Wei Qing. The battle continued throughout the day and, as evening fell, a strong wind arose. With this the Han forces swooped out to the left and right and surrounded the *Shanyu*. The *Shanyu*, perceiving that he was no match for the Han forces, abandoned his army and, accompanied by only a few hundred of his finest horsemen, broke through the Han encirclement and fled to the northwest. The Han forces set out after him in the night and, though they did not succeed in capturing him, cut down or seized 19,000 of the enemy on the way. They proceeded north as far as Zhao Xin's fort at Mt. Tianyan before

turning back.

After the *Shanyu* had fled, his soldiers, mingling with the Han forces in the confusion, little by little made their way after him. It was therefore a considerable time before the *Shanyu* was able to reassemble his army again. The Luli King of the Right, believing that the *Shanyu* had been killed in battle, declared himself the new *Shanyu*, but when the real *Shanyu* gathered his forces together again the Luli king renounced the title and resumed his former position.

Huo Qubing had meanwhile advanced some 2,000 *li* north from Dai and closed in battle with the Xiongnu Wise King of the Left. The Han forces killed or captured over 70,000 of the enemy and the Wise King and his generals all fled. Huo Qubing performed a Feng sacrifice at Mt. Langjuxu and a Shan sacrifice at Mt. Guyan, gazing out across the sea of sand before returning. After this the Xiongnu withdrew far from the Chinese border, and their leaders no longer established their courts south of the desert.

In the territory beyond the Yellow River from Shuofang west to Lingju the Han established irrigation works and set up garrison farms here and there, sending 50,000 or 60,000 officials and soldiers to man them. Gradually the farms ate up more and more territory until they bordered the lands of the Xiongnu to the north.

In the campaign just concluded, when the two Han generals advanced north in great force and surrounded the *Shanyu*, the Han had succeeded in killing or capturing 80,000 or 90,000 of the enemy. At the same time, however, 20,000 or 30,000 Han soldiers lost their lives in the expedition and over 100,000 horses were killed. Thus, although the Xiongnu had withdraw far to the north to nurse their wounds, the Han, being short of horses, was unable to strike at them again. Following the advice of Zhao Xin, the Xiongnu dispatched an envoy to the Han court to use soft words and request a peace alliance. When the emperor referred the proposal to his ministers for deliberation, some of them spoke in favour of a peace pact, while others urged that the Han pursue the Xiongnu and force them to submission. Ren Chang, the chief secretary to the chancellor, announced his opinion, "Since the Xiongnu have just recently been defeated and their spirits broken, they should be treated as foreign vassals and required to come to the border in the spring and autumn to pay their respects to the Han."

The emperor accordingly sent Ren Chang to the *Shanyu* with this counter-proposal. When the *Shanyu* heard Ren Chang's suggestion, he flew into a rage and detained him in his camp, refusing to send him back to China. (Earlier, one of the Xiongnu envoys had gone over to the side of the Han and remained in

China and the *Shanyu* therefore detained Ren Chang by way of retaliation.)

The Han then began to gather together a force of men and horses in preparation for another campaign, but just at that time the general of swift cavalry Huo Qubing died and so for several years the Han made no further attacks on the Xiongnu.

The *Shanyu* Yizhixie, after having ruled for thirteen years, died and was succeeded by his son Wuwei. This occurred in the third year of the *yuanding* era (114 BC). At the time that Wuwei became *Shanyu*, the Son of Heaven made his first imperial tour of the various provinces, and after that the Han armies were busy in the south putting down the rebellion in the two kingdoms of Southern and Eastern Yue, so no attacks were made on the Xiongnu. The Xiongnu for their part likewise made no raids across the border.

Three years after Wuwei became *Shanyu* the Han, having wiped out the kingdom of Southern Yue, dispatched the former master of carriage Gongsun He at the head of a force of 15,000 cavalry; they rode more than 2,000 *li* north from Jiuyuan, advancing as far as Fujujing before turning back, but they did not catch sight of a single Xiongnu. The Han also dispatched Zhao Ponu, the former Congpiao marquis, with over 10,000 cavalry to ride out of Lingju; Zhao Ponu proceeded several thousand *li*, reaching the Xionghe River before turning back, but he too failed to see a single Xiongnu.

At this time the emperor was making a tour of the border. When he reached Shuofang, he held an inspection of 180,000 cavalry soldiers in order to make a display of military might, at the same time dispatching a man named Guo Ji to the *Shanyu* to make sure that the Xiongnu were fully informed of the event.

When Guo Ji reached the Xiongnu, the Xiongnu master of guests asked him what his business was. Replying in very polite and humble terms, Guo Ji said, "I would like to wait until I am granted an audience with the *Shanyu* before stating my business."

When he was shown before the *Shanyu* he said, "The head of the king of Southern Yue hangs above the northern gate of the Han capital. Now, if you are able, advance and engage the Han forces in battle! The Son of Heaven has led his troops in person and is waiting on the border. But if you are not able, then turn your face to the south and acknowledge yourself a subject of the Han! Why this useless running away and hiding far off north of the desert in a cold and bitter land where there is no water or pasture? It will get you nowhere!"

When he had finished speaking, the *Shanyu*, livid with rage, ordered the master of guests who had ushered him in to be cut down on the spot. He detained



Guo Ji and would not let him return to China; later he moved him to the shore of the Northern Sea (Lake Baikal). In the end, however, the *Shanyu* refused to be provoked into invading the Han border but turned his horses to pasture, rested his troops, and practised archery and hunting instead, sending envoys to the Han from time to time to speak with soft words and honeyed phrases and request a peace alliance.

The Han in turn sent Wang Wu and others as envoys to observe the Xiongnu. According to Xiongnu law, unless an envoy from the Han surrendered his credentials and allowed his face to be tattooed in black, he would not be admitted to the *Shanyu*'s tent. Wang Wu had been born in the north and was familiar with the barbarian customs, and therefore he readily gave up his credentials, submitted to the tattooing, and was able to gain admittance to the *Shanyu*'s tent. The *Shanyu* showed a great liking for him and pretended to agree amiably with whatever he said, even with the suggestion that he send his son, the heir apparent to the position of *Shanyu*, as a hostage to the Han in order to secure a peace alliance. The Han then dispatched Yang Xin as envoy to the Xiongnu.

At this time the Han forces in the east had conquered the barbarian states of Huimo and Chaoxian and made provinces out of them, while in the west the Han had created the province of Jiuquan in order to drive a wedge between the Xiongnu and the Qiang barbarians and cut off communications between them. It had also established relations with the Yuezhi people and Daxia (Bactria) farther west and had sent an imperial princess to marry the ruler of the Wusun people, all in an effort to create a split between the Xiongnu and the states to the west which had up to this time aided and supported them. In addition, the Han continued to expand its agricultural lands in the north until the frontier had been pushed out as far as Xuanlei. In spite of all these moves, however, the Xiongnu did not dare to voice any objections. This year Zhao Xin, the marquis of Xi, who had been acting as adviser to the *Shanyu*, died.

The Han administrators believed that the Xiongnu had already been sufficiently weakened and could now be made to acknowledge themselves subjects of the Han and submit to Chinese rule, and therefore they had dispatched Yang Xin as envoy to the *Shanyu*. But Yang Xin was by nature very outspoken and unyielding and had never been high in the Han bureaucracy; the *Shanyu* showed no liking for him. When summoned for an interview in the *Shanyu*'s tent, he refused to surrender his credentials, and so the *Shanyu* had mats spread outside his tent and received Yang Xin there. "If you wish to conclude a peace alliance,"

Yang Xin announced when he had been shown into the *Shanyu*'s presence, "you must send your heir to the Han court as a hostage!"

"That is not the way things were done under the old alliance!" the *Shanyu* objected. "Under the old alliance the Han always sent us an imperial princess, as well as allotments of silks, foodstuffs, and other goods, in order to secure peace, while we for our part refrained from making trouble on the border. Now you want to go against the old ways and make me send my son as a hostage. I have no use for such proposals!"

It is the way with the Xiongnu that, whenever an envoy from the Han comes who is not a high court official, if he is the scholarly Confucian type, they assume that he has come to lecture them and they do all they can to squelch his rhetoric, while if he is a young man, they assume he has come with assassination in mind and concentrate on destroying his nerve. Every time a Han envoy arrives among the Xiongnu, they send an envoy of their own to the Han in exchange. If the Han detains the Xiongnu envoy, then the Xiongnu detain the Han envoy and will not release him until they have received what they consider just treatment.

After Yang Xin returned from his mission to the Xiongnu, the Han dispatched Wang Wu again, and once more the *Shanyu* began to talk in a mild and conciliatory way, hoping to be given a sizable grant of Han goods. As part of the deception he told Wang Wu, "I would like to make a trip to the Han and visit the Son of Heaven so that face to face we may swear a pact of brotherhood!"

When Wang Wu returned and reported on his mission, the Han built a residence for the *Shanyu* in Chang'an. The *Shanyu*, however, sent word that "unless some important member of the Han government is sent as envoy, I cannot discuss the matter seriously."

Meanwhile the Xiongnu dispatched one of their important men as envoy to the Han. When the man reached China, however, he fell ill and, although the Han doctors gave him medicine and tried to cure him, he unfortunately died. The Han then sent Lu Chongguo to act as envoy and to accompany the body of the dead Xiongnu back to his country, spending several thousand gold pieces on a lavish funeral for him. Lu Chongguo was given the seals of a 2,000 picul official to wear at his belt and bore assurances to the Xiongnu that "this man is an important official of the Han". The *Shanyu*, however, was convinced that the Han had murdered the Xiongnu envoy and therefore detained Lu Chongguo and refused to let him return to China. By this time everyone on the Han side was of the opinion that the *Shanyu* had only been deceiving Wang Wu with empty talk and in fact had no intention of coming to China or sending his son as a

hostage. After this the Xiongnu several times sent surprise parties of troops to raid the border, and the Han for its part conferred on Guo Chang the title of "Barbarian Quelling General" and sent Zhao Ponu, the marquis of Zhuoye, to garrison the area from Shuofang to the east and defend it against the Xiongnu.

Lu Chongguo had been detained by the Xiongnu for three years when the *Shanyu* Wuwei died, having ruled for ten years. He was succeeded by his son, Wushilu. Wushilu was still young and was therefore called the Boy *Shanyu*. The change took place in the sixth year of the *yuanfeng* era (105 BC).

After this the *Shanyu* gradually moved farther to the northwest, so that the soldiers of his left or eastern wing occupied the area north of Yunzhong, while those of his right wing were in the area around Jiuquan and Dunhuang provinces.

When the Boy *Shanyu* came to power the Han dispatched two envoys, one to the new *Shanyu* to convey condolences on the death of his father, and the other to convey condolences to the Wise King of the Right, hoping in this way to cause dissension between the two leaders. When the envoys entered Xiongnu territory, however, the Xiongnu guides led them both to the *Shanyu*. The *Shanyu*, discovering what they were up to, was furious and detained them both. The Xiongnu had already detained over ten Han envoys in the past, while the Han had likewise detained a proportionate number of Xiongnu envoys. This same year the Han sent the Sutrishna General Li Guangli west to attack Dayuan (Ferghana) and ordered the Yinyu General Gongsun Ao to build a fortified city called Shouxiangcheng, the "City for Receiving Surrender".

In the winter the Xiongnu were afflicted by heavy snowfalls, and many of their animals died of starvation and cold. The *Shanyu*, still a young boy, had a great fondness for warfare and slaughter, and many of his subjects were restless under his leadership. The Xiongnu chief commandant of the left wanted to assassinate the *Shanyu* and sent a messenger in secret to report to the Han, "I wish to assassinate the *Shanyu* and surrender to the Han, but the Han is too far away. If the Han will send a party of troops to meet me, however, I will at once carry out the plot."

It was in fact because of this report that the Han had built the fortified City for Receiving Surrender. But the Han still considered that the chief commandant of the left was too far away to carry out his plot successfully.

In the spring of the following year the Han sent Zhao Ponu, the marquis of Zhuoye to lead a force of over 20,000 cavalry some 2,000 *li* northwest from Shuofang and make contact with the chief commandant of the left at Mt. Junji before returning. Zhao Ponu arrived at the point of rendezvous but, before the

chief commandant of the left could carry out the assassination, his plot was discovered. The *Shanyu* had him executed and dispatched the forces from his left wing to attack Zhao Ponu. Zhao Ponu had by this time begun to withdraw, taking prisoners and killing several thousand Xiongnu soldiers on the way. When he was still 400 *li* from the City for Receiving Surrender, however, 80,000 Xiongnu cavalry swooped down and surrounded him. Zhao Ponu slipped out of the encirclement during the night and went by himself to look for water, but was captured alive by Xiongnu scouts. The main body of the Xiongnu then pressed their attack on Zhao Ponu's army. Guo Zong and Wei Wang, two of the high officers in the Han army, plotted together, saying, "All of us, down to the company commanders, are afraid that, having lost our commanding general, we will be executed under military law. Therefore no one is anxious to return home." Eventually the whole army surrendered to the Xiongnu. The Boy *Shanyu* was delighted with his catch and sent a raiding party to attack the City for Receiving Surrender, but the city held fast. The party then plundered the border area and withdrew.

The following year the *Shanyu* again set out to attack the City for Receiving Surrender, this time in person, but before he reached his destination he fell ill and died. He had been *Shanyu* only three years. Since his son was still very small, the Xiongnu appointed his uncle Goulihu, the former Wise King of the Right and younger brother of the *Shanyu* Wuwei, as the new *Shanyu*. This took place in the third year of the era *taichu* (102 BC).

After Goulihu had become *Shanyu* the Han sent the superintendent of the imperial household Xu Ziwei to ride out of the barrier at Wuyuan and range through the area from several hundred to 1,000 *li* or more north of the border, building forts and watch stations as far as Mt. Luqu. The Han also dispatched the scouting and attacking general Han Yue and the marquis of Changping, Wei Kang, to garrison the region, at the same time sending the chief commandant of strong crossbowmen Lu Bode to build fortifications along the swamp at Juyan.

In the autumn the Xiongnu invaded Dingxiang and Yunzhong in great force, murdering or carrying off several thousand persons. They also defeated several officials of the 2,000 picul rank before withdrawing, and destroyed the forts and watch stations that Xu Ziwei had built as they went along. At the same time the Wise King of the Right invaded Jiuquan and Zhangye provinces and carried off several thousand persons. The Han general Ren Wen, however, came to the rescue, attacking the Xiongnu and forcing them to give up all the spoils and prisoners they had taken.



This year the Sutrishna General Li Guangli defeated the kingdom of Dayuan, cut off the head of its ruler, and returned. The Xiongnu tried to block his return but could not reach him in time. In the winter they planned an attack on the City for Receiving Surrender, but just at that time the *Shanyu* died. The *Shanyu* Goulihu had ruled for only a year when he died. The Xiongnu set up his younger brother, Judihou, the former chief commandant of the left, as *Shanyu*.

At this time the Han had just conquered the kingdom of Dayuan, and its might filled the neighbouring states with terror. The emperor had hopes of carrying out the final suppression of the Xiongnu and issued an edict which read:

Emperor Gaozu has left us the task of avenging the difficulties which he suffered at Pingcheng. Furthermore, during the reign of Empress Lü the *Shanyu* sent to the court a most treasonable and insulting letter. In ancient times when Duke Xiang of Qi avenged an insult which one of his ancestors nine generations earlier had suffered, Confucius praised his conduct in the *Spring and Autumn Annals*.

This year was the fourth year of the era *taichu* (101 BC).<sup>15</sup>

After Judihou became *Shanyu* he returned all of the Han envoys who had not gone over to his side. Thus Lu Chongguo and the others were able to come home. When the new *Shanyu* assumed the rule, he was afraid that the Han would attack him and so he said, "I consider that I am but a little child. How could I hope to equal the Han Son of Heaven? The Son of Heaven is like a father to me."

The Han dispatched the general of palace attendants Su Wu to present generous gifts to the *Shanyu*. With this the *Shanyu* grew increasingly arrogant and behaved with great rudeness, betraying the hopes of the Han.

The following year Zhao Ponu managed to escape from the Xiongnu and return home. The year after, the Han sent Li Guangli with 30,000 cavalry north from Jiuquan to attack the Wise King of the Right in the Heavenly Mountains. He killed or captured over 10,000 of the enemy before returning. The Xiongnu,

<sup>15</sup> Sima Qian's narrative probably ends somewhere around this point; the remainder of the chapter down to the closing remarks, a series of rather choppy notes, is most likely the work of Chu Shaosun or one of the other writers who undertook to make additions to the *Shi ji*.

however, surrounded him in great force and he was barely able to escape; six or seven out of every ten of his men were killed.

The Han also sent Gongsun Ao north from Xihe; at Mt. Zhuotu he joined forces with Lu Bode, but neither of them succeeded in killing or capturing any of the enemy. The Han also sent the cavalry commandant Li Ling with a force of 5,000 infantry and cavalry to march north from Juyan. After they had proceeded over 1,000 *li* they engaged the *Shanyu* in battle. Li Ling killed or wounded over 10,000 of the enemy, but his provisions soon gave out and his men began to scatter and flee for home. The Xiongnu then surrounded Li Ling, who surrendered to them. Most of his men were wiped out, only 400 of them managing to return to safety. The *Shanyu* treated Li Ling with great honour and gave him his own daughter for a wife.

Two years later the Han again dispatched Li Guangli with 60,000 cavalry and 100,000 infantry to march north from Shuofang. Lu Bode led some 10,000 men to join them, while Han Yue advanced with 30,000 infantry and cavalry from Wuyuan. Gongsun Ao proceeded from Yanmen with 10,000 cavalry and 30,000 infantry. When the *Shanyu* received word of their advance, he moved all his family and wealth far to the north beyond the Yuwu River. He himself, with 10,000 cavalry, waited south of the river and engaged Li Guangli in battle. Li Guangli's lines broke and he began to retreat, fighting a running battle with the *Shanyu* for over ten days. But when word reached him that his entire family had been wiped out as a result of the witchcraft affair,<sup>16</sup> he and all his men surrendered to the Xiongnu. Only one or two out of every 1,000 men who set out with him managed to return to China. Han Yue did not succeed in killing or capturing any of the enemy, while Gongsun Ao, though he fought with the Wise King of the Left, was unable to win any advantage and likewise retreated. From all the parties that went out to attack the Xiongnu this year, among those who returned there were none to testify as to what degree of success the various generals had achieved and therefore no honours were awarded. An imperial edict had been issued ordering the arrest of the grand physician Sui Dan. He in turn gave out the news that Li Guangli's family had been exterminated and thereby caused Li Guangli to surrender to the Xiongnu.

<sup>16</sup> In 91 BC the heir apparent, Prince Li, and his mother, Empress Wei, were accused of attempting to kill the emperor by black magic. Many high officials of the dynasty were implicated in the investigations that followed, among them Li Guangli. But the battle referred to above took place in 99 BC, so the text is obviously out of order.



The Grand Historian remarks: When Confucius wrote the *Spring and Autumn Annals*, he was very open in treating the reigns of Yin and Huan, the early dukes of Lu; but when he came to the later period of Dukes Ding and Ai, his writing was much more covert. Because in the latter case he was writing about his own times, he did not express his judgments frankly, but used subtle and guarded language.<sup>17</sup>

The trouble with the ordinary run of men these days who discuss Xiongnu affairs is that they seek only for some temporary advantage, resorting to any kind of flattery in order to have their own views accepted, without considering what the effect may be on all parties concerned. At the same time the generals and military leaders, relying upon the vastness and might of China, grow increasingly bold, and the ruler follows their advice in making his decisions. Thus no profound achievement is ever reached.

Emperor Yao in ancient times, as wise as he was, was not completely successful as a ruler; the nine provinces of China had to wait until the reign of Emperor Yu before they knew real peace. If one would establish a truly worthy dynasty such as those of old, therefore, nothing is more important than selecting the right generals and ministers! Nothing is more important than selecting the right generals and ministers!

<sup>17</sup> Sima Qian's purpose in making these seemingly irrelevant remarks about Confucius and the *Spring and Autumn Annals* is of course to warn the reader that he too is obliged to use "guarded language" in his discussion of the Xiongnu problem.

### SHI JI 111: THE BIOGRAPHIES OF GENERAL WEI QING AND THE SWIFT CAVALRY GENERAL HUO QUBING

**They patrolled the winding frontier, broadened our lands south of the bend of the Yellow River, defeated the enemy at Qilian, opened up contact with the western states, and overpowered the northern barbarians. Thus I made "The Biographies of General Wei Qing and the Swift Cavalry General Huo Qubing".**

The general in chief Wei Qing was a native of Pingyang. His father, Zheng Ji, was a clerk in the household of the marquis of Pingyang, where he had illicit relations with Dame Wei, a concubine of the marquis. From this union Wei Qing was born. Before this Dame Wei had already given birth to a boy, Wei Changzi, and a girl, Wei Zifu. The latter, because she was employed in the household of the princess of Pingyang, the wife of the marquis of Pingyang and older sister of Emperor Wu, later managed to obtain favour with the emperor. For this reason Wei Qing also adopted the family name Wei and the polite name Zhongqing, and his brother Zhangzi changed his name to Changjun. The oldest daughter of their mother was named Wei Ru, her second daughter Wei Shaoer, and her third daughter Wei Zifu. Later she had another son named Buguang. All her children adopted the surname Wei.<sup>1</sup> Wei Qing became a servant in the household of the marquis of Pingyang.

When he was young Wei Qing went to live with his father, but his father set him to herding sheep and all his half-brothers, sons of his father's legitimate wife, treated him like a slave and refused to recognize him as a brother.

Once, while Wei Qing was a servant, he had occasion to visit the prison at the Palace of Sweet Springs. There one of the convicts in chains examined his

<sup>1</sup>The narrative is remarkably confused. Was Zheng Ji the father of all Dame Wei's children, and was Wei her own family name? Or did she have a husband named Wei? Apparently Sima Qian was not certain of the facts when he wrote the passage.