

JI HU 稽胡: INDIGENOUS INHABITANTS OF SHAANBEI AND WESTERN SHANXI

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Introduction

In the earliest historical records we find the Chinese settlements in the Central Plain of the Yellow River and the adjoining valleys of its main tributaries, the Wei in Shaanxi and the Fen in Shanxi surrounded and interpenetrated by tribes at a lower level of state organization. Wars against such tribes figure prominently on the Shang oracle bones and much of the history of early Zhou and the Spring and Autumn period is concerned with the defence of the Chinese (Hua-Xia) against various non-Chinese peoples. By Warring States times the 'barbarian' menace had largely subsided. We no longer hear of hostile groups of non-Chinese living interspersed among the central Chinese states, presumably because they had been sinicized and absorbed by their Chinese neighbours. There were still many non-Chinese living south of the Yangtze and in Sichuan and after the unification of the Chinese states by Qin in 221 B.C. the extension of Chinese state power was actively pursued in that direction, together with colonization and sinification of the original inhabitants, a process that has continued to the present day. To the north, on the other hand, the steppe frontier constituted an impenetrable barrier to the spread of Chinese civilization based on intensive agriculture. This was reached with the conquest of Dai 代 in Northern Shanxi by the state of Zhao in the fourth century B.C., which brought the Chinese into direct contact for the first time with a new way of life, that of the steppe nomads who did not live in permanent settlements but moved about in search of grass and water for their herds, and practised a new and formidable method of warfare based on the technique of mounted archery. From then on the history of the northern frontier was very different from that of the southern frontier. The menace of nomad aggression became a constant preoccupation of Chinese regimes and there were times when North China and even the whole of China were overrun by invaders from the steppe.

Previously, in Spring and Autumn times, 'barbarians' to the north and northwest of the Chinese states were known as Rong and Di. They lived mainly in the

upland regions of Shanxi, Shaanxi and eastern Gansu, not in the Mongolian grasslands, which had not yet come into the purview of the Chinese. Nevertheless it is widely assumed, especially in China, that they were racially and linguistically akin to the Xiongnu and other later inhabitants of the steppe and that they had moved into China from the north in prehistoric times.¹ The reason for this is undoubtedly that the Han historian Sima Qian begins his chapter on the Xiongnu with an account of peoples to the north whom the Chinese had encountered from the earliest legendary times down to the unification by Qin. Sima Qian was a great historian but we need to ask whether he had solid evidence for his assumption that the Xiongnu of his own day were the same as the peoples who had menaced the Chinese from the same direction in earlier times.

Another widely held assumption that stems from the same source is that the Rong and Di, who are seldom mentioned as such after the end of Spring and Autumn period, had either been sinicized like the other non-Chinese within Chinese territory or had moved back out onto the steppe from whence they had come in the first place. There is no room in this assumption for the possibility that there were remnants of sedentary non-Chinese peoples still living in parts of north China descended from Rong and Di of Spring and Autumn times like the descendants of Southern Man whom one can recognize in the Miao in Hunan even at the present day. As late as the first century of Tang, however, we find a sedentary people known as the Ji Hu 稽胡 living in the loess covered uplands between the Wei valley and the Ordos now known as Shaanbei and the remote valleys of the Lüliang Mountains across the Yellow River to the east in Shanxi, a region that had once been occupied by Rong and Di. According to one account they were descendants of Xiongnu who had moved into China in Han times but there was also a tradition connecting them with the Rong and Di. The sources about them are meagre but what they have to tell us is not only interesting in itself for the light it throws on the role of ethnicity in Chinese history but also for evidence it may provide for the vexed question of the origins of the Xiongnu.

¹ This is, for instance, the assumption in Ma 1962. See also Hsü and Linduff 1988:25, 45, 50-51 and *passim*.

The Ji Hu

The principal source on the Ji Hu is in the chapter on Foreign Regions in the *Zhoushu*, the standard history of the Northern Zhou dynasty.² It begins with the following brief ethnographic description:

The Ji Hu 稽胡, also called Buluoji 步落稽, are a separate branch of the Xiongnu, distant descendants of the Five Divisions of Liu Yuanhai 劉元海 (that is, Liu Yuan 劉淵, founder of the Former Zhao kingdom, 304-329). Some say they are descendants of the Mountain Rong 山戎 and the Red Di 赤狄. From Lishi 離石 (in present Shanxi) westward and Anding 安定 (a large commandery centred on the Jing River 涇川 in eastern Gansu) eastward in a territory 700-800 *li* square living in the mountain valleys their kind are numerous and flourishing. They live in fixed settlements and they also know how to plant fields. There are few mulberries and silkworms in their territory and they mostly wear³ hempen cloth. The men are more or less the same as Chinese in their dress⁴ and burial practices. The women are much given to stringing clam shells to make ear and neck ornaments. They also live mixed in among the Chinese people. Their chiefs have a rough idea of written characters but their speech is like that of barbarians (*yidi* 夷狄) and they require interpreters to communicate. They squat on the ground without ceremony and are greedy and cruel. Their custom is to practise wantonness, especially the unmarried girls. Only on the night of their weddings do they

² *Zhoushu* 49:896-899. See also *Beishi* 96:3194-3196, *Tongdian* 197:1067.

³ The *Zhoushu* omits the word 衣 'wear' which is found in the *Beishi* and the *Tongdian*.

⁴ Instead of 其丈夫衣服及死亡殯葬 'The men's dress and burial practices ...' the *Tongdian* reads 其丈夫服皮死亡殯葬 'The men wear skins. Their funeral practices ...'. That is, the graph 衣 has been omitted and the graph 及 'and' has been changed to 皮 'skin' which it resembles. That the text of the *Zhoushu* is original seems guaranteed not only by the fact that it is repeated unchanged in the *Beishi* but also by the fact that the *Tongdian* text is apparently self-contradictory, since it begins by saying that the Ji Hu, without restriction as to sex, mostly wear hempen cloth and then says that the men wear skins. The question is of some importance, since the wearing of skins could be used as an argument in support of the view that the Ji Hu were descendants of nomads who had moved into China from the north. The substitution of 皮 for 及 may have been influenced by the fact that the cliché about wearing of skins by nomadic peoples occurs in the immediately preceding passage on the High Carts 高車.

leave their lovers and when their husbands' families hear of it, they think the more [lovers they have had] the more they are to be prized. After they are married, they are closely guarded. If there are any who commit adultery they are punished accordingly. Also when brothers die, the wives are taken (by another brother). Though they are divided up under commanderies and counties and organized as registered households, their taxes and labour services are kept light and they are treated differently from the common people. Moreover those who are cut off in remote mountain valleys are never subjected to labour service but are fierce and untamed, relying on their defensible positions, and frequently make robberies and disturbances.

The text goes on to tell how during the Xiaochang period of Wei (525-527) a certain Liu Lisheng 劉叢升 living at Yunyang Valley 雲陽谷 (in present Zuoyun xian 左雲縣 in Northern Shanxi) led an uprising, declared himself Son of Heaven, and maintained his independence for about ten years until he was overthrown in 535 by a combination of trickery and military force by Gao Huan, the founder of Eastern Wei (later Northern Qi). The Ji Hu living west of the Yellow River in the territory of Western Wei (later Northern Zhou) did not submit and they, as well as their fellows east of the Yellow River, continued to cause trouble to both Qi and Zhou until the reunification of North China by Zhou in 577.⁵ The last event recorded in the *Zhoushu* account is an uprising by a Ji Hu leader in Fenzhou 汾州, Shanxi, in 578. After his defeat and capture, we are told, 'incursions largely ceased.'

There is no account of the Ji Hu in the *Suishu* or either of the standard histories of Tang but there are occasional references to them in other Sui and Tang sources which show their continued existence. Most interestingly of all, there are some more sympathetic Buddhist accounts that do not treat them simply as an alien

⁵ In addition to the chronological record in the chapter on Foreign Regions, scattered references to the Ji Hu elsewhere in the *Zhou shu*, as well as references to them under the name Mountain Hu in the *Bei Qi shu* (see below) and to parallel passages in the *Beishi* are listed in chronological order in Lin 1984a. See also Lin 1988. There is a reference to conflicts with the Ji Hu in Northern Zhou which helps to pinpoint their geographical location in a recently excavated tomb inscription (Shaanxisheng Wenwu guanli Weiyuanhui 1966; Yan 1986).

nuisance to the Chinese authorities but give us a glimpse of their own ethnic consciousness.

On the secular side it is recorded that at the beginning of Sui in 581 the Sui official, Wei Chong 韋冲, succeeded by peaceful persuasion in rounding up a body of Ji Hu who had been conscripted from Nanfenzhou 南汾州 (present Ji xian 吉縣 in southwestern Shanxi) to be sent north to help in rebuilding the Great Wall but had absconded en route⁶. Other incidents occurred during the civil wars at the end of Sui. In 617 Danzhou 丹州 (northeast of present Yichuan xian 宜川縣 in Shaanxi) was the base for the 'Hu bandit, Liu Bulu 劉步祿'.⁷ In 621 Li Jiancheng 李建成, then the Tang Crown Prince, defeated a rising of Ji Hu farther west in Fuzhou 鄜州 (present Fuxian in Shaanxi) and executed over six thousand of them after they had surrendered.⁸ In 683 an insurrection led by a Ji Hu, Bai Tieyu 白鐵余, occurred at Suizhou 綏州 (present Suidexian 綏德縣 in Shaanxi).⁹ A few years later in a memorial submitted when the Khitan were threatening Hebei, the famous writer Chen Zi'ang 陳子昂 proposed that, among others, crack Ji Hu troops from Sui 綏, Yan 延, Dan 丹 and Xi 隰 prefectures, should be recruited and sent to the northeast frontier.¹⁰ Nearly a hundred years after that Ji Hu were again mentioned in a decree of 774 as potential recruits, this time for an army to oppose Tibetan invaders from the west.¹¹ Whether this is a genuine contemporary reference is not certain, however, since archaizing terms are used in the decree for place names and names of other barbarian peoples, including Yiqu 義渠 (see below) and Xianbei 鮮卑. Thereafter the Ji Hu disappear from notice in historical sources. The accounts in Buddhist sources to be discussed below also cease after the seventh century.

Though the name Ji Hu is not found in this form before the sixth century, it is obvious that a people with such a distinct identity and widespread geographical distribution could not have suddenly come into existence just at that time. It has long been recognized that they must be the same as the Shan Hu 山胡 'Mountain Hu'

⁶ *SS* 47:1269-70, compare *Beishi* 64

⁷ *YHJXZ* 3.19b. The given name Bulu, EMC ɸ^h lawk, is reminiscent of Buluoji, EMC ɸ^h lak kej.

⁸ *JTS* 64:2414, cf. Tang 1955: 444

⁹ *ZZTJ* 203:6413-6414, *JTS* 83:2785

¹⁰ *Chen Boyu ji* 8 上軍國機要八條, cf. Tang 1955:444

¹¹ *JTS* 196B:5244; *CFYG* 992:19a,b; Pelliot 1961:38

living in the same regions of Shanxi and Shaanxi who are mentioned repeatedly as troublesome subjects or neighbours of Northern Wei from the end of the fourth century onward. Liu Lisheng's uprising in 525 is, in fact, attributed to 'Mountain Hu' in the *Weishu*.¹²

References to the Ji Hu in geographical texts

Before discussing modern theories about the Ji Hu we need to look at passages in other sources that confirm or amplify the ethnographic description in the *Zhoushu*. In the first place there are references to the Mountain Hu/Ji Hu in geographical texts of Sui provenance. In the general description of Yongzhou 雍州 (the ancient name for the Guanzhong region) in the Geographical Monograph of the *Suishu*¹³ we read:

'Diaoyin, Yan'an and Honghua commanderies adjoin the Mountain Hu. By nature they are very inflexible and stubborn. The girls are promiscuous but the wives are chaste, for such is their custom.

This corresponds to the description of the sexual mores of the Ji Hu women in the *Zhoushu* account.

Other geographical references are not found in extant Sui sources but are included in the *Yuanhe junxian zhi* of the early ninth century or the *Taiping huanyu ji* of the eleventh century. Two passages explicitly cite the *Sui tujing*, that is, the *Sui zhuzhou tujingji* 隋諸州圖經集 in 100 *juan* by Lang Mou 郎茂¹⁴ listed in the Bibliographical Monograph of the *Suishu*, and the other passages that refer to the Ji Hu must also come from the same original source. The most important is inserted under Danzhou 丹州 (northeast of present Yichuanxian 宜川縣 in Shaanxi).¹⁵ It reads as follows:

The *Sui tujing* says: 'Originally in Spring and Autumn times Yichuan was in the territory of the White Di. Now the popular name of Danzhou is White House (bai shi 白室). They have *hu* heads but Chinese tongues. That is, they resemble the Hu in appearance but in their speech they have become accustomed to Chinese. White House is just a corruption of White Di. In

¹² *WS* 9:242

¹³ *SS* 29:817

¹⁴ *SS* 33:987,66:1555

¹⁵ *YHJXZ* 3.19b; *TPHYJ* 35.11a, with underlined additions

recent times they are called Buluoji. The Hu say of themselves that they are the descendants of the White Di.'

The other passages that mention the Ji Hu in the *Yuanhe junxian zhi* and the *Taiping huanyu ji* are glosses explaining local toponyms as borrowing from the Hu language.

(1) The name of the Kuli River 庫利川, south of the outer wall of Yunyan xian 雲巖縣 in Danzhou, is explained by the statement, 'In previous times slave bandits (*nuzei* 奴賊) occupied [the neighbourhood of] this river. The Ji Hu call 'slave' *kuli*. Hence they used it as the name.'¹⁶

(2) The name of the (same ?) Kuli 庫利川 River running 15 *li* north of Linzhen xian in 臨真縣 Yanzhou is explained by the statement, 'The elders say, 'The land is fertile and the five grains grow abundantly. The Hu call storing old grain *kuli*.'¹⁷

(3) The name of the Kutuo River 庫碣川 northwest of Yichuan xian in Danzhou is explained thus, 'South of the river are Chinese (Han), north of the river are Hu. The Hu and the Chinese meet in the river to make compacts by burning incense. Formerly burning incense was called Kutuo, hence the name.'¹⁸

(4) Also under Yichuan xian in Danzhou the name of the Weiya River 渭牙川 is explained by the statement, 'In the river there is "water wood" (driftwood?). The Ji Hu call "water wood" *weiya* 渭牙. Hence the name.'¹⁹

(5) Under Yunyan xian in Danzhou is the passage, 'The abandoned Keye Monastery 可野寺 is fifteen *li* north of the *xian*. The elders have a tradition that it is the place where Liu Sahe 劉薩河 sat in meditation. The Ji Hu call a fort (*bao* 堡) *keye*. It is cut off on all four sides. Only on the north side is there a path by which a person can get through to it.' Liu Sahe is the name of a monk known from other sources about whom more will be said below.²⁰

¹⁶ YHJXZ 3.20b, TPHYJ 36.5b

¹⁷ TPHYJ 36.5b

¹⁸ TPHYJ 35.11b

¹⁹ TPHYJ 35.12b-13a

²⁰ TPHYJ 35.13a

(6) The name of Guhu River 骨胡川 in Yanshui xian 延水縣 in Yanzhou is explained thus, 'The elders say that the Hu name is Guhu River and the Chinese name is Dry River (Gan chuan 乾川). Now there is no water.'²¹

'Hu women's cloth'

The *Zhoushu* mentions the hempen clothing of the Ji Hu. In the light of this it is interesting to find that a special kind of cloth belonging to and presumably made by Ji Hu women was levied as local tribute (*gong* 貢) in the Tang period. The *Tang liudian* 3 lists 'Woman Ji cloth' (女稽布) as tribute of Shengzhou 勝州 and Yinzhou 銀州 in Guannei Province and 'Hu woman cloth' (胡女布) as tribute of Xizhou 隰州 and Shizhou 石州 under Hedong Province. *Tongdian* 6 has the same under Yinzhou, Xizhou and Shizhou, adding the specification 5 *duan* 端 (a measure of cloth variously defined as 20 feet, 60 feet and 16 feet) in each case. The *Yuanhe junxianzhi*, which gives separate lists prefecture by prefecture for Kaiyuan (713-742) and Yuanhe (806-820), has the same items as the *Tang liudian* as tribute of Kaiyuan. The Geographical Monograph of the New Tang History also lists the local tribute of each prefecture. It agrees with the earlier sources for the four prefectures mentioned above (except that the tribute of Shengzhou is simply called 'Hu cloth' instead of 'Woman Ji cloth') and adds 'Hu woman cloth' to the tribute listed for Qingzhou 慶州²², Suizhou 綏州, and Chanyu daduhufu 單于大督護府 in Guannei. The westernmost of these prefectures, Qingzhou, was north and somewhat east of Anding, the western end of Ji Hu territory as delimited in the *Zhoushu* while Suizhou and Yinzhou were both places bordering on the north-south course of the Yellow River which are mentioned in the *Zhoushu* in connection with Ji Hu uprisings, as also are Xizhou and Shizhou on the other side of the Yellow River. The inclusion of Shengzhou and Chanyu daduhufu extends Ji Hu territory farther north than other sources to beyond the southward bend of the Yellow River. In their study of local tribute in the Tang period based on the *Xin Tangshu* Schafer and Wallacker (1957-58) include a map for 'Hu woman linen.' It shows a strip along both sides of the north to south course of the Yellow River with a westward extension south of the Ordos that gives a very good outline of what must have been Ji Hu territory.

²¹ *TPHYJ* 36.2b

²² *YHJXZ* 3.13a lists 'Hu cloth' under Qingzhou but as 'tax' (*fu* 賦) rather than 'tribute.'

Unfortunately there seems to be no way of telling what the special characteristics of this cloth were. In the light of what the *Zhoushu* says about Ji Hu costume it was no doubt made of hemp fibre and one may guess that it was dyed in some distinctive way. One might hope that some Tang writer had described it in a poem but standard reference works have failed to turn up any trace of this so far.

A Ji Hu monk

As already mentioned, besides the accounts of the Ji Hu in secular sources, there are some references to them in Buddhist sources that are of great interest. We have seen that the Keye Monastery in Yunyan xian in Danzhou was said to be where Liu Sahe sat in meditation. Liu Sahe, whose Buddhist name was Huida 慧達, has biographies in the *Gaoseng zhuan*²³ and *Xu gaoseng zhuan*²⁴ and is also mentioned in the *Liangshu*²⁵. There is also an item about him in the early Tang Buddhist encyclopaedia *Fayuan zhulin*.²⁶ The *Gaoseng zhuan* does not specify his ethnic origin but the *Liangshu* calls him a *huren* and the *Xu gaoseng zhuan* and the *Fayuan zhulin* explicitly use the term Ji Hu. Lin Gan includes references to him in the material on the Ji Hu appended to his collection of sources on the Xiongnu.²⁷ Both the *Gaoseng zhuan* and the *Liangshu* say that he came from Lishi, that is, the place where Liu Lisheng established his short-lived state. The *Xu gaoseng zhuan*, which provides a variant form for his name, Suhe 率和, gives his place of birth as Gaopingyuan 高平原, southeast of Cizhou 慈州 (present Jixian 吉縣 in Shanxi), where he had a temple with an image 'that was worshipped by both Chinese and barbarians.' This is considerably farther south but still within the known territory of the Ji Hu, and the *Fayuan zhulin* is in agreement with this. According to the *Gaoseng zhuan*, which was written in the Liang period and records events down to the year 519, he was fond of hunting as a young man. In his thirty-first year he suddenly died but came to life again. While in the underworld he observed the tortures of hell and met a religious

²³ *Gaoseng zhuan* 13, Taisho Tripitaka no.2059, vol.50:409-410

²⁴ *Xu gaoseng zhuan* 25, Taisho Tripitaka no.2060, vol.50:644-645

²⁵ *Liangshu* 54:791, 海南扶南國傳

²⁶ *Fayuan zhulin* 31, Taisho Tripitaka no.2122, vol.53:516-517

²⁷ Lin 1988/2:712 copies the passage in *Liangshu* 54:791, 海南扶南國傳, and cites the *Gaoseng zhuan* and *Xu gaoseng zhuan*. but does not refer to the *Fayuan zhulin*, for which see Yan 1985.

person (*daoren*) who said he was his teacher in a former life and who, after expounding the Buddhist law, instructed him to become a monk and as penance for his past evil deeds to go to Danyang (that is, the Liang capital, present Nanjing) and other centres in South China to find and worship at stupas magically built in ancient times by command of King Ashoka. The *Liangshu* tells the same story with slightly different details, identifying his instructor in the underworld as the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara. After his recovery he duly became a monk and at Danyang was able to locate the site of the stupa of King Ashoka from a distance by the aura that it gave off and to bring to light relics of the Buddha hidden beneath it. According to the *Gaoseng zhuan* this was in the Ningkan period (373-375). The *Gaoseng zhuan* goes on to tell of further marvels including the discovery of another stupa of King Ashoka at Guiji 會稽 (modern Shaoxing in Zhejiang), after which it says, 'it is not known where he went.'

The *Xu gaoseng zhuan* gives additional details of his pre-Buddhist life as a strong and fierce huntsman and warrior with a wealthy family background. It alludes only summarily to his conversion and his travels in the south with the statement that these things are recorded in the previous biography, and goes on to tell of events towards the end of his life that further illustrate his capacity for second sight until his death at Suzhou in Gansu in 435 and of events after his death that gave evidence of his prophetic powers. The author of this biography, Daoxuan (596-647), appends a personal note that is of great interest:

At the beginning of Zhen'guan (627-649) I travelled through the region outside the passes (*guanbiao*) and visited Huida's home temple [at his birthplace in Cizhou]. The image was majestic and dignified and was solemnly honoured daily. Throughout the prefectures of Shi 石, Xi 隰, Ci 慈, Dan 丹, Yan 延, Sui 綏, Wei 威, and Lan 嵐 his image is painted and he is worshipped everywhere. He is called the Teacher Buddha Liu. Many are those who have through this reformed their barbarian (*hu*) natures and submitted to the rules of religion.

The places mentioned by Daoxuan correspond to the territory of the Ji Hu as delimited in the *Zhoushu* and it is evident that Liu Sahe must have been a local hero of this whole ethnic community in early Tang. This will account for the fact that,

although there is no specific mention of Danzhou in his biographies, there was a legend there connecting him with an abandoned monastery.

The *Fayuan zhulin* (preface dated 668), which is slightly later than the *Xu gaoseng zhuan*, calls him a man of Western Jin (265-317). If this means that he was born in Western Jin, it means that he would have already been quite old by 372-374 when he is said to have arrived in Danyang. It is clearly incompatible with his having died in 435 as stated in the *Xu gaoseng zhuan*. Even if we suppose that Western Jin is a mistake for Eastern Jin, it is hard to reconcile the various dates given for his life since he is said to have already been over 30 at time of his miraculous conversion. Obviously we are dealing with the stuff of legend rather than sober history. Nevertheless, the fact that the accounts of him come not only from the north, where he was a hero, or saint, of the Ji Hu people, but also from the south, where his exploits also had a local interest, provides assurance that he must have been a real person and the role that his legend came to play among the Ji Hu gives evidence of an ethnic consciousness stretching back long before their existence as a people emerges clearly in Chinese historical records.

The *Fayuan zhulin* is especially valuable for the evidence it provides of the role of Liu Sahe in this ethnic consciousness during the first century of Tang. In the light of the tradition that the Ji Hu were descended from the Di it is interesting that this text remarks that Cizhou, where Liu Sahe was born, was where the famous Duke Wen of Jin of the Spring and Autumn Period went into exile before coming to power, the point being that, as every one knew, the future Duke Wen had taken refuge among the Di. The *Fayuan zhulin* repeats with additional details the story of how Liu Sahe was restored to life after visiting the underworld. It tells how Avalokiteśvara lectured him on his evil ways but allowed him to return to life because he had sinned in ignorance. He reformed his behaviour, sought out knowledge of Buddhist teachings and through his preaching was responsible for converting the Ji Hu people. A festival of worship was held each year on the eighth day of the fourth month at his birthplace.

It tells a curious story about his Ji Hu name, of which it gives a third version, Suhe 蘇何, said to be the Ji Hu word for 'cocoon.' It was said that he would pass the night in a cocoon and reemerge in the morning. The three versions of the name, Sahe 薩何 (EMC sat ɣa), Suhe 率和 (EMC swət ɣwa) and Suhe 蘇何 (EMC sɔ ɣa), must all be variants of the same original Ji Hu word but, as we do not know

the language, we are no farther ahead. One suspects that the legend about his nightly retreat into a cocoon, as a silkworm lies dormant in its cocoon and emerges as a moth, alludes to the story of his rebirth from the dead. This could also explain the choice of *su* 蘇 in the third version of his name, which may not have been phonetically as appropriate as a representation of the foreign word, since it lacked the final -t of the other two transcriptions, but which means 'to revive' in Chinese. The author reports that throughout the territory of the Ji Hu, naming the same eight prefectures that are mentioned by Daoxuan, the people built earthen pagodas with flagpoles of cypress wood to which they tied silkworm cocoons.

There was a belief that he was actually an incarnation of Avalokiteśvara. The author reports that a sutra attributed to him in the Hu language was circulating among the people which they could read and understand. Unfortunately we do not know what script it was written in, presumably Chinese characters used phonetically. His statue at Cizhou was believed to have magical powers and was carried around to the various villages of the prefecture in the first month of each year. It had a will of its own. If it wished to visit a village, its face had a happy expression and two men could carry it. The village would have a good year with few deaths or diseases. If it did not, its face frowned and looked sad and ten men could not carry it. That village would suffer calamities all year long.

Who were the Ji Hu?

As we have seen, the *Zhoushu* offers two alternative theories to explain the origin of the Ji Hu, (1) that they were descended from the Southern Xiongnu, (2) that they were descended from the Rong and Di of Spring and Autumn times. A different version of the second theory without any reference to the Xiongnu was recorded independently in the *Sui zhuzhou tujingji*. Modern studies by Chinese scholars have, however, mostly accepted the first opinion and ignored the second. Zhou Yiliang (1950) argued that they were mainly caucasoid Central Asians who had come into China along with the Southern Xiongnu during Eastern Han. Tang Changru (1955) included a discussion of the Ji Hu in his thorough study of the various 'mixed barbarians' (*zahu* 雜胡) in North China in the troubled times of the fourth to sixth centuries following the collapse of Western Jin. His conclusion was that, though they no doubt included other ethnic components, they were, as stated in the *Zhoushu*,

mainly descendants of the Southern Xiongnu. Both he and Zhou Yiliang regarded as 'incredible' the alternative tradition cited in the *Zhoushu* that they were descendants of the Rong or Red Di. Ma Changshou (1962) agreed and treated the story of the Mountain Hu/Ji Hu as the final chapter in the history of the involvement of the Xiongnu with China. This is still the prevailing opinion but more recently Lin Gan (1984b) has argued that even though the Ji Hu contained Xiongnu and Central Asian elements, they were essentially neither Xiongnu nor Central Asians but 'an autochthonous, self-formed nationality' (tusheng-tuzhangde duzi-xingchengde buzhu 土生土長的獨自形成部族) of the Wei, Jin and the Northern and Southern Dynasties period. (Surprisingly he does not mention the second theory, though it seems highly relevant to his proposal.) Zhou Weizhou (1987) rejects Lin's arguments and supports Tang Changru.

The reasoning behind Tang Changru's claim that the Ji Hu were basically descendants of Xiongnu is quite understandable. Though I think his assumption that they could not have been descendants of the Rong and Di was too hasty, one has to admit that it is a very natural one for a properly sceptical twentieth century scholar to make. The Rong and Di with whom the Chinese fought in the Spring and Autumn period largely cease to be mentioned except retrospectively during the Warring States period and it is natural to assume that this is because by that time they had been assimilated into the general Chinese population. Moreover, the well-known propensity of traditional Chinese historians to make connections wherever possible between phenomena of the present and things recorded in the classics requires that one be suspicious of statements of that kind. If then the Ji Hu were not descendants of the ancient non-Chinese inhabitants of those regions, they must have been immigrants from outside and it seems quite plausible to accept the statement in the *Zhoushu* connecting them with the Southern Xiongnu of Liu Yuan. Tang argued that although the places associated with Mountain Hu or Ji Hu extended far beyond the Five Divisions of the Southern Xiongnu which Cao Cao established in A.D. 216 along the course of the Fen River in Shanxi and which formed the centre for Liu Yuan's uprising, this region did correspond in a general way to one of the main theatres of activity of the Mountain Hu in Northern Wei. Furthermore, he noted that other Xiongnu elements, including peoples of other ethnic origins who had come into China as subjects of the Xiongnu, had settle farther west. He observed that groups that were

still known by separate names such as Tuge 屠各, Lushui Hu 盧水胡, Tiefu 鐵弗 and Zhi Hu 支胡 at the beginning of Northern Wei cease to be mentioned by the beginning of the sixth century and he surmised that they had either assimilated to the Chinese or retreated into the mountains and become a western extension of the remnants of the Southern Xiongnu in Shanxi, which were also quite mixed in ethnic composition already in Han times.

Lin Gan's radically different proposal is mainly based on discrepancies between the customs and life style of the Ji Hu as described in the *Zhoushu* and elsewhere and those of the Southern Xiongnu and other peoples, such as the Jie 羯, who came into China with the Xiongnu and are believed to have originated in Central Asia. His most telling point is, no doubt, that the Ji Hu lived in settled agricultural communities and were not nomadic cattle breeders. His attempt to show that their language was not Altaic and therefore different from the Xiongnu is not very impressive (more will be said on this point below). He argues that other aspects of their life style, such as the fact that they wore hempen clothing, that women were allowed to be promiscuous before marriage and adorned themselves with strings of clam shells, and so forth, were peculiarities not shared by the Xiongnu or Central Asians. In rejecting Lin Gan's theory Zhou Weizhou (1987) suggests that, after Liu Yuan's short-lived Former Zhao state was overthrown by Shi Le in 328 and its leaders were massacred, the rest of his people fled into the hills and settled in amongst the local Chinese where they would have had to adapt their lifestyle and economy to the local environment and that this circumstance is amply sufficient to account for the divergencies between their customs as described two or three hundred years later and the Xiongnu of the time of Liu Yuan, let alone those of Former Han.

This is fairly persuasive, but does it really account for the impression one gets both from the *Zhoushu* and from the quotations from the *Sui Tujing* that the Ji Hu were true indigenes in northern Shaanxi as well as in western Shanxi?. Lin Gan has not argued his case very well but I think it is based on a sound intuition. Put baldly without any reference to earlier times his suggestion that the Ji Hu were 'an autochthonous, self-formed nationality of the Wei, Jin and the Northern and Southern Dynasties period' is rather startling to say the least. If they were truly autochthonous, their ancestors must surely have been living in the same areas long before the end of the fourth century when the name 'Mountain Hu' begins to be used. Yet Lin does not

draw what is surely the obvious inference, namely, that one should consider seriously the statements in the sources that they were descendants of the original inhabitants of those parts, the Rong and Di.

The more closely one looks at the descriptions of the Ji Hu culture as it existed in the fifth and sixth centuries, the more one doubts that they were recent immigrants from the steppe lands of Mongolia. It is true that migratory pastoralism would have been scarcely possible in the mountain valleys occupied by the Ji Hu and that erstwhile nomads who took refuge in such terrain would have had to adapt themselves to their new situation. If so, however, they must have done so while retaining their own language and distinctive culture and a strong enough sense of ethnic identity to bring together under a common name groups who had been separated for centuries living in different parts of North China (assuming that Tang was right in his claim that the Ji Hu of Shaanbei, who were outside the area of the Five Divisions of the Southern Xiongnu, were descended from the followers of the Hunye and Xiutu Kings who surrendered to Han in 121 B.C., see below).

Lin Gan mentions the hempen clothing of the Ji Hu as an argument for thinking they were not Xiongnu. The evidence, not cited by Lin, that the distinctive hempen cloth of the Ji Hu women was an article of local tribute in Tang times adds strength to this. One could argue that dressing in hempen cloth rather than leather was simply an adaptation of Xiongnu refugees to their new environment but a distinctive tradition of textile manufacture that set them apart from their Chinese neighbours could hardly have been imported by pastoralists from the steppe and points rather to a local tradition of long standing. The custom of the women to adorn themselves with strings of clam shells also does not sound like something that is likely to have been imported from the steppe.

Some of Lin's other arguments are less conclusive. I doubt whether we know enough about sexual mores of the Xiongnu to know whether young women were allowed to be promiscuous before marriage. The practise of levirate whereby men took the wives of their dead brothers, on the other hand, is something that was common to the Ji Hu and the Xiongnu and could be used as an argument in favour of the accepted theory. I shall discuss the question of the Ji Hu language separately below. What I find surprising about Lin Gan's article is that he does not draw what to me is the obvious conclusion, that if the Ji Hu were not immigrants from the steppe, they must

have been living in the same regions from long before the Northern Wei period and that one should look more seriously at the possibility that they were descendants of the Rong and Di who lived in the same region in earlier times.

The Yiqu connection

The universal assumption, which it would seem that even Lin shares, is that the Rong and Di, who largely drop out of sight in our sources after the end of the Spring and Autumn period, had completely merged with the general Chinese population before the beginning of Han. Thus, Zhou Weizhou (1987:372) speaks of 'long since sinicized Mountain Rong and Red Di 早已漢化的山戎赤狄之類'. The fact that tribal communities in the uplands were no longer able to compete with the large centralized Chinese states of the plains that had emerged by the middle of the fifth century B.C. and had lost their political independence does not, however, necessarily mean that they had ceased to exist. It is possible, even probable, that unassimilated pockets of non-Chinese Di could survive for a long time in the remote valleys of the Lüliang Mountains between the Fen River and the Yellow River.

Farther west across the Yellow River we know that the Rong state of Yiqu 義渠 held out against Qin at least until nearly the beginning of the third century B.C. Its principal city is said to have been near Ningxian which is east of Jingchuan, that is, Anding, the western limit of Ji Hu territory as set out in the *Zhoushu*, but it must have covered quite an extensive area. The earliest datable mention of the Yiqu seems to be in 444 B.C. when Duke Ligong of Qin attacked them and captured their king. In 430 they in turn invaded Qin, reaching the south side of the Wei River.²⁸ Hostilities continued in the following century. Yiqu built fortifications to defend itself but Qin kept up its attack and King Huiwen (337-311) captured twenty-five of their walled towns.²⁹ It is reported in the Qin annals that in 327 Qin annexed Yiqu and converted it into a prefecture (*xian*) but this was not the end and there continue to be references to Yiqu as an independent state. We are told that in 318 the ruler of Yiqu was persuaded to take advantage of the combined attack on Qin by the five Chinese states of Han,

²⁸ *SJ* 5:199 (Chavannes 1967/2:56)

²⁹ *SJ* 110:2885 (Watson 1961/2:159)

Zhao, Wei, Yan and Qi to attack Qin in the rear.³⁰ This seems to correspond to a statement in the Qin annals that the allied states led the Xiongnu to attack Qin which, if reliable, would be the earliest reference to Xiongnu by name and some scholars have taken it as evidence for identifying the Yiqu with the Xiongnu.³¹ Like other pre-Han occurrences of the name Xiongnu it may be an anachronism but there are other reasons for suspecting a close relationship between Yiqu and the Xiongnu which will be discussed more fully below. More intimate relations between Qin and Yiqu occurred during the reign of King Zhao of Qin (reg. 306-251). The Dowager Queen, King Zhao's mother (died 265), took the king of Yiqu as a lover and bore him two sons, then betrayed and murdered him and sent an army to invade and annex Yiqu territory³². It was after this that Qin established its western and northern commanderies of Longxi, Beidi and Shang and built a long wall to repel the Hu (who, in this case, must be the ancestors of the Xiongnu) in the Ordos steppe. What this tells us is that in the third century the Chinese inhabitants of Qin were separated from the proto-Xiongnu in the Ordos by a non-Chinese population of Rong origin who lived in settlements that included walled towns.

Though Yiqu drops out of sight for a time as a separate entity, one can hardly imagine that its people were suddenly replaced by Chinese or converted into Chinese peasants and, indeed, they reappear in the following century after Qin had united the whole of China, lost the mandate and been replaced by Han. In a memorial submitted in the year 169 or thereabouts in the reign of the Emperor Wen of Han, the Confucian scholar Chao Cuo 趙錯 referred to the people of Yiqu as 'surrendered Hu' who had 'returned to allegiance'³³. 'Returned to allegiance' must mean that they had either established their independence temporarily during the civil wars between the collapse of

³⁰ *Shiji* 70:2303, Biography of Xi Shou 犀首, following *Zhanguo ce* 4:144 (Crump 1970:65-66)

³¹ The correspondence between Xiongnu in the Qin annals and Yiqu in the *Zhanguo ce* has been noted, presumably independently, by Meng Wentong 蒙文通 (1936/7:13 ff., see also 1958), Haloun (1937: 306 n.1) and Huang Wenbi 黃文弼 (1943). Haloun regarded Xiongnu as an interpolation. The Chinese scholars took it as evidence for identifying the Xiongnu with Yiqu.

³² *SJ* 110:2885 (Watson 1961/2:159)

³³ *HS* 49:2282 merely places the memorial in the time of Emperor Wen. The specific date 169 B.C. is assigned in *ZZTJ* 15.487.

Qin and the founding of Han or had been incorporated for a time by the Xiongnu when the latter had moved back into the Ordos from which they had been expelled by the First Emperor of Qin. In calling them Hu Chao Cuo clearly meant that at least a part of them had adopted the way of life and military techniques of the Xiongnu, for he added, 'their skills and food and drink are the same as the Xiongnu' and he recommended that they be supplied with 'hard armor and rough clothing, strong bows and sharp arrows' and employed for frontier defence. Even earlier than this in Han there is a reference to 'barbarians of the frontier forts' or 'frontier-guarding barbarians' (*baosai manyi* 葆塞蠻夷) in Shang Commandery, the jurisdiction responsible for the central part of the territory lying between the Ordos and the long-established Chinese settlements in the Wei valley, which implies that Han was already relying on non-Chinese inhabitants of the frontier regions for defence against Xiongnu attacks.³⁴ These must surely have been, like the Yiqu, unassimilated remnants of peoples who would earlier have been called Rong or Di.

On the other hand, in spite of what Chao Cuo says about their way of life, it is clear from other contemporary references that the elite among the people of Yiqu were already much sinicized. Gongsun He 公孫賀, who was from Yiqu and of 'Hu' stock, was an important general and rose to the position of Chancellor under the Emperor Wu.³⁵ His father, Gongsun Hunye 渾邪, was not only a general but also the author of a book in 15 chapters (*pian*) classified as belonging to the Yinyang School in the Bibliographical Monograph of the *Hanshu*.³⁶

Gongsun Hunye's given name is of great interest. It is clearly non-Chinese and it coincides with the title of a subordinate King of the Xiongnu who surrendered to Han with his people in 121 B.C. The surrender of the Hunye and Xiutu Kings who had been responsible for defending the western sector of the Xiongnu territory and had incurred the wrath of the Chanyu by suffering defeats by Han forces was a momentous event in Han relations with their northern enemies. The two kings were fearful for their lives and instead of answering the Chanyu's summons offered their submission to Han. On the way the Hunye King killed the Xiutu King and combined his forces with

³⁴ *SJ* 110:2895 (Watson 1961/2:167), *HS* 94A:3756. Cf. Yü 1967:68.

³⁵ *SJ* 111:2941, Watson 1961: II, 211-212, *HS* 66:2877-78.

³⁶ *HS* 30:1734

his own.³⁷ He was rewarded with a Han marquisate and lavish gifts and those who had surrendered with him were distributed in the commanderies of Longxi, Beidi, Shang, Shuofang and Yunzhong, forming an arc from the upper reaches of the Wei River in the west across the Ordos and Shaanbei.³⁸ The correspondence between Hunye as the name of division of the Xiongnu and Hunye as the personal name of a sinicized Yiqu could be a pure coincidence but it could also be an indication that the Hunye King's people spoke the same language as the people of Yiqu and, perhaps like the Yiqu, had been swept up into the Xiongnu confederacy. If so, in moving from the Mongolian steppe to the Chinese borderlands they were returning to the land of their ancestors where, in all likelihood, many of their compatriots were still living.

The coming of mounted archery to the Chinese frontier

In spite of the general assumption which seems to be shared by most Chinese scholars that the northern enemies of the Chinese had been horse-riding nomads like the later Xiongnu, Turks and Mongols from the earliest times³⁹, it is doubtful if, even on the steppes of Mongolia, full-scale nomadism of the classic type had appeared in the first half of the first millennium B.C. The key to this development was not merely the domestication of the horse, which can be traced back at least to the fourth millennium in the western steppe and which had already reached China along with the chariot in Shang times, but the technique of mounted archery. The earliest historical evidence for this revolutionary technique of warfare is the appearance of the Cimmerians and the Scythians in Western Asia around the eighth century B.C. It is very likely that it spread fairly rapidly eastward across Eurasia in much the same way that mounted warfare spread northward from Mexico across the plains of western North America in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries after the Indians acquired horses from the Spaniards, transforming the economy as it went (Secoy 1953). That is, the greatly enhanced mobility provided by this military technique would have forced

³⁷ *SJ* 110:2909, Watson 1961: II, 181; *HS* 94A:3769

³⁸ *SJ* 111:2933-34, Watson 1961: II, 204-205; *HS* 55:2482-83

³⁹ See, for instance, Hsü and Linduff (1988:25, 45, 50-51 and *passim*). The authors date the 'nomadization' of Inner Asia to the 'late second millennium' but their only reference is to Watson (1971), who in fact dates the appearance of full nomadism to the usual dates, the eighth and seventh centuries (p.100).

neighbours either to submit or to adopt the technique themselves in self-defence. There is no need to imagine, as some have done, far-ranging Scythian or Cimmerian migrations to the borders of China. It is quite likely that the mounted archers who began to impinge on the Chinese at the end of the fourth century were not newcomers from distant parts but longtime residents, perhaps already pastoralists more than agriculturalists, but only recently converted to full-scale horserider nomadism by the pressure and example of other peoples from farther west such as the Indo-European Yuezhi 月氏. The Yiqu who were building walled cities in the fourth century but who were called Hu in the second, with the same way of life as the Xiongnu, are a clear example.

The Chinese themselves adopted the technique of mounted archery for self defence on the frontier, though it had a less profound influence on the way of life of the population as a whole. As is well known, the first explicit mention of mounted archery in Chinese sources is in the famous debate at the court of King Wuling of Zhao in 307 B.C. over the adoption of Hu 胡 clothing, that is, the accoutrements of nomad cavalry.⁴⁰ This is also the time when Hu makes its first appearance as the name for a kind of non-Chinese people. In the Han period it referred especially to the Xiongnu who by then had established their hegemony over the whole of the eastern Eurasian steppe but it was also used in a general way for any people who practised mounted archery. Nevertheless it is likely that it was originally the name of a specific ethnic group. In the account of the debate at the court of Zhao three groups of Hu are distinguished, the Loufan 樓煩, whose territory was just east of the southward bend of the Yellow River on the steppe frontier of Zhao in northern Shanxi, the Lin Hu 林胡, who were also to the west of Zhao, and the Hu proper, whose territory lay more to the east. The location of these latter Hu, to whom the name is most likely to have belonged in the first place, thus corresponds to that of the Eastern Hu in Han times and it is natural that the Tang commentator to the *Shiji*, Zhang Shoujie 張守節, made this identification.⁴¹ He was followed in this by Chavannes, which is probably correct.

⁴⁰ *SJ* 43:1805 ff. (Chavannes, 1967.5:70 ff.), *Zhanguo ce* 19 (Crump 1970:296-303)

⁴¹ The *Zhanguo ce* has Eastern Hu instead of Hu and there is at least one other text referring to pre-Qin times that seems to confirm the identification of Hu with Eastern Hu. Qin Kai 秦開, a general of the state of Yan in northern Hebei, is said to have spent time as a hostage

A fourth group of so-called Hu in the third century were those in the Ordos against whom Qin built its long wall after occupying the territory of the Yiqu (see above). They must be the same as the Hu whom the Qin general, Meng Tian 蒙恬, drove north out of the Ordos in 215 B.C., establishing the Qin frontier beyond the loop of the Yellow River where Zhao had already built a wall along the southern slopes of the Yinshan mountains at the beginning of the century. The expulsion of the Hu from the Ordos is the first event in the connected history of the Xiongnu.⁴² Since we are told in the next paragraph that Touman 頭曼, the first Xiongnu ruler whom we know by name, had been forced to move north because of pressure from Qin, it is clear that these 'Hu' were Xiongnu. This was followed by the murder of Touman by his son Modun 冒頓 (or Maodun⁴³) and successful wars against the Eastern Hu and

among the Hu and gained their confidence. After he returned to Yan led a surprise attack on them but this time they are called Eastern Hu (*Shiji* 110:2885-6, Watson 1961: II, 159).

⁴² In the biography of Meng Tian (*SJ* 88:2565, Bodde 1938) they are called Rong and Di.

⁴³ The first character in this transcription is most commonly read *mào* EMC *məw^h* and means 'to cover; to risk; to claim falsely, etc.' but it also has a less common reading *mò* EMC *mək* meaning 'covetous.' A Tang dynasty commentary to the *Shiji*, the *Shiji suoyin*, says that in this proper name it should be read EMC *mək*, i.e. *mò* in Modern Mandarin, adding, however, 'also like [the usual reading of] the character 又如字' which shows that there was uncertainty in the tradition already at that period. In the 2nd century B.C. when the transcription was invented the two readings were probably closer to each other than they were in Tang. EMC *məw^h* probably ended in velar fricative, **məwx*. In the interests of scholarly precision it is probably best to read *mò* rather than *mào*. We know too little about the Xiongnu language to judge the significance of the different readings at present but there is always the possibility that new information or new hypotheses may emerge. The second character in the name has only one Middle Chinese reading and none of the early commentators to the *Shiji* or *Hanshu* suggest that it should be read in any special way in this Xiongnu name. The eleventh century historian Song Qi 宋祁, one of the authors of the New Tang History, is, however, quoted as saying that it should be read like *dú* 毒 EMC *dawk* (*Hanshu* *buzhu* 94A: 5307; I have not yet found the original source of this comment) and on his authority the reading *dú* is included in the *Kangxi* dictionary (17th century) and is met with in writings in English by some modern Chinese scholars. Such a reading, with a final -k, for the character 頓 does not make sense, however, nor is it easy to see why, if the second syllable of the Xiongnu name had such a pronunciation, the character 頓, rather than 毒 (used, for instance in Shendu 身毒 = *Hinduka, India), was used for it. Where did Song Qi get his information? No one knows. I am glad to find that not all modern Chinese scholars

the Yuezhi, another powerful nomadic people to the west by which the Xiongnu established the first steppe empire in Mongolia.⁴⁴

There are a few occurrences of the name Xiongnu in Han dynasty texts referring to the pre-Qin period but most, if not all, must be suspected of anachronism. The occurrence of the name Xiongnu in the Qin annals as an ally of the five Chinese states that attacked Qin in 318 B.C., apparently corresponding to Yiqu in other sources, has been mentioned above. Though it is interesting for its apparent confirmation of the close relation between Yiqu and the Xiongnu that we suspect on other grounds, it remains isolated and therefore doubtful.

An apparently circumstantial account of the Xiongnu in pre-Qin times tells how Li Mu 李牧, a general of the state of Zhao, is said to have conducted an effective frontier defence against them in the first half of the third century. The scene of his operations, however, was north of walls constructed by Zhao that stretched along the line of the Yinshan mountains right across the loop of the Yellow River. This makes sense only if the Xiongnu were already the most formidable power in the Mongolian steppe but is difficult to reconcile with the story of the founding of the Xiongnu empire which states that when they were driven out of the Ordos in 215, they had to fight for living space with the Eastern Hu. The story of how Li Mu for years successfully frustrated all nomad raids by steadfastly defending a fixed line of frontier fortifications and refusing to be drawn into battle and then at last mounted an expedition with 1300 chariots, 13,000 horsemen and 100,000 (or 150,000) crack troops (infantrymen?) that succeeded in killing over 100,000 Xiongnu horsemen and driving the *chanyu* away from the frontier for over ten years is, no doubt, based on some kind of reality but is obviously exaggerated for effect and does not ring true as it stands. In the time of Emperor Wen (179-157) Li Mu's example was being cited to show how a ruler ought to treat his frontier generals and how the frontier generals ought to deal with the contemporary Xiongnu problem.⁴⁵ Xiongnu is probably an anachronistic substitute for Hu in the account of his exploits.

feel compelled to adopt this reading. See for instance Yü Ying-shih in Volume 1 of the *Cambridge History of China*. See also footnote 5 below

⁴⁴ *Shiji* 110:2886 ff., Watson 1961: II, 160 ff.; *Hanshu* 94A:3749 ff.

⁴⁵ *Shiji* 102:2449-50, Biography of Feng Tang, Watson 1961, I p. 540

An anecdote in the *Shuoyuan*, a collection of anecdotes from about the end of the first century B.C., has King Zhao of Yan during the first year of his reign (311 B.C.E.) speak about the Xiongnu and Loufan as enemies endangering his northern frontier.⁴⁶ This is also unreliable as an isolated piece of evidence because of the late date of the text in which it is recorded. Finally, there is a reference to the Xiongnu from around the year 228 which also places them in the Mongolian steppe, north of the Great Wall. Crown Prince Dan of Yan is advised by his counsellor to send a Qin general who has defected to Yan north to the Xiongnu so as to avoid the wrath of Qin.⁴⁷ The *Shiji* account appears to be based on that of the *Zhanguo ce* which is undoubtedly fictionalized even if based on historical fact and the name Xiongnu is probably again an anachronistic substitute for Hu.

The origin of the Xiongnu

If the Xiongnu were confined within the Ordos at the time of the Qin unification of China, we must entertain the possibility that they, like the Yiqu, were descended from peoples who had long been neighbours of the Chinese and would have been called Rong in earlier times, and who had only recently adopted the horserider way of life for which they became famous. The first part of this hypothesis is, of course, the assumption that lies behind the account of their prehistory as told by Sima Qian. What is lacking in this traditional view, which is still tacitly or explicitly held by very many Chinese scholars at the present day, is consciousness of the very recent revolutionary changes that must have occurred both in the Chinese borderlands and on the steppe beyond in the centuries immediately preceding the creation of the Xiongnu empire, no less revolutionary than the changes that were taking place at the same time within China itself as the multistate system of the Warring States period was replaced by the unified empire of Qin and Han. The Xiongnu may have been descendants of the Rong and Di who inherited their language and other basic cultural traits from their many centuries of living in the borderlands of China but as conquerors of the steppe they were a new phenomenon that owed much to influences coming from farther afield.

⁴⁶ *Shuoyuan* 1:16

⁴⁷ *Shiji* 86: 2529 Biography of Jing Ke 荊軻, Watson 1969:57; *Zhanguo ce* 31:1129, Crump 1970:553; see also *Zizhi Tongjian* 6:224

Unfortunately, in the absence of written testimony from the Xiongnu themselves and depending on the scanty evidence provided by Chinese accounts, with their inevitably limited and biased perspective, many of our conclusions must remain speculative and tentative. The best hope for new evidence seems to be archaeology but that, if and when it comes, will still have to be interpreted. Meanwhile it may be useful to reexamine the written record such as it is in the light of these new ideas.

The fact that there was a Hunye King in the Xiongnu confederacy whose title duplicated the given name of a sinicized 'Hu' of Yiqu origin has been adduced above as a possible linguistic connection between the Xiongnu and Yiqu. To strengthen that possibility we may note that there were other Xiongnu 'kings' whose titles seem to have been taken from the names of tribes of the Chinese borderlands that had been swept up into the Xiongnu confederacy. Another tribe of horse-rider nomads on the Chinese frontier that, like Yiqu, are referred to both as Rong and as Hu by Sima Qian are the Loufan 樓煩, whose territory was just east of the southward bend of the Yellow River on the steppe frontier of Zhao in northern Shanxi, that is, at the northern end of Ji Hu territory in Tang times.⁴⁸ They were one of the 'three Hu' mentioned in the debate in Zhao on the adoption of Hu clothing in 307 B.C. The Loufan were incorporated by the Xiongnu early in their expansion after the collapse of Qin⁴⁹ and in the time of the first emperor of Han the Loufan King, together with the Baiyang 白羊 (White Sheep, presumably another tribal name) King, was occupying part of the Ordos region (not the original Loufan territory) on behalf of the Xiongnu, within striking distance of Chang'an.⁵⁰ As in the case of Yiqu, there were also Loufan on the Chinese side. We hear of a Loufan who was a skilled horseback archer in the Chinese army at the same period.⁵¹ The incorporation by the Xiongnu of tribes from the borderlands between the Ordos and China, who may have been ethnically related, at the time when they were founding their steppe empire may be contrasted with the implacable hostility

⁴⁸ *SJ* 110: 2883, Watson 1961: II, 158

⁴⁹ *SJ* 110: 2890, Watson 1961: II, 162

⁵⁰ *SJ* 99: 2719, Watson 1961: I, 290

⁵¹ *SJ* 7: 328, Watson 1961: I, 66. Watson thinks that the term Loufan here does not actually refer to a member of the Loufan tribe but was simply used metonymically to describe a skilled bowman but there is nothing in the text to justify such an assumption.

that apparently existed between the Xiongnu and the previous steppe powers, the Eastern Hu and the Yuezhi.

The view that before their rise to power on the steppe the Xiongnu had long been neighbours of the Chinese and were not newcomers from north of the Gobi is supported by evidence of Chinese influence that we find in their state organization. The full title of their ruler, Chengli gutu chanyu 撐犁孤塗單于, of which the first four characters are translated into Chinese as Son of Heaven, is clearly borrowed from China. Chinese directional color symbolism appears in the four divisions of their army at the siege of Pingcheng in 201 B.C., with white horses on the west, dappled (bluish) horses on the east, black horses on the north and red horses on the south.⁵² This was another enduring organizational trait that was passed on to later nomadic empires.⁵³ Long standing Chinese influence may explain why the Xiongnu were much more successful in state building than the Xianbei, the fraction of the Eastern Hu who succeeded them as masters of the steppe in the second century A.D.⁵⁴

The Ji Hu language

The *Zhoushu* tells us that although some of the elite could read and write (and presumably also speak) Chinese, the language of the Ji Hu was 'like that of barbarians' and required interpreters to be understood. On the other hand, according to the *Sui tujing*, though they looked non-Chinese, they spoke Chinese. There is no necessary contradiction in these two statements. One may assume that, living in a world where

⁵² *SJ* 110:2894, Watson 1961 II, 165-166; *HS* 94A:3753

⁵³ Pritsak 1954. Ma (1962) thinks that directional colour symbolism was an age-old tradition of northern peoples and explains the terms Red and White Di in this way as part of his argument that the Di were Turkish. It is possible but by no means certain that the terms Red and White referring to sections of the Di reflect the same directional colour symbolism but, if so, it must reflect a Chinese, rather than a steppe, tradition. Association of the four colours, green/blue, red, white and black with east, south, west and north, as well as with the annual revolution of the seasons, spring, summer, autumn, winter, sometimes with the addition of yellow for the centre, was part of very ancient Chinese cosmological ideas. It was incorporated in the speculations of the Five Phases School that originated with Zou Yan in the Warring States period and flourished in Han but it certainly goes back much earlier. As applied to military organization we find it in the description of the army of Wu that confronted Jin at Huangchi in 482 B.C. in *Guoyu* 19.

⁵⁴ On Xiongnu titles passed on to later nomad overlords of the steppe see Pulleyblank 1962.

the dominant language was Chinese, some degree of bilingualism would have been necessary for survival. This would, however, have varied from place to place and different Chinese observers could easily have interpreted the situation differently. The statement in the Sui gazeteer, if taken at face value, seems to mean that by Sui times the Ji Hu had lost their own language, but the Buddhist sources from Tang make it clear that this could not have been true, even if many of them could also use Chinese in communicating with Chinese people. We have already noted the statement in the *Fayuan zhulin* that seems to imply that they even had books written in their native language.

As to the nature of that language, the sources tell us very little. There is the puzzling statement that there was a popular name White House for Danzhou and that this was somehow connected with the name of the White Di of the Spring and Autumn period. *Bai* 白 'white' is, of course, Chinese and contrasts with *chi* 赤 'red' applied to a more easterly branch of the Di whose main area of operations in Spring and Autumn times was in the Taihang mountains between Shanxi and Hebei (with whom, as we have seen, the Ji Hu were also tentatively identified in the *Zhoushu*). The term *shi* 室 'house' (assuming it is the ordinary Chinese word and not a transcription of a Ji Hu word) remains difficult to explain as a part of a place name. In the end all we can take from the statement is that the author of the passage in the *Sui tuijing* evidently thought it provided evidence of a local tradition connecting the natives of Danzhou with the White Di. It is also worth noting that Bai occurs as a surname of Ji Hu leaders. In 567 Bai Yujiutong 白郁久同 was a Ji Hu leader who opposed a general of Western Zhou at Yinzhou 銀州⁵⁵ and the insurrection of Bai Tieyu in 683 has been mentioned above. Other interpretations are of course possible. Zhou Yiliang took the surname Bai as evidence of Central Asian connection, since Bai was the surname of the rulers of Kucha and Tang Changru noted that Bai was also found as a surname among the Lushui Hu who may have had connections with the Little Yuezhi as well as the Xiongnu.

It may be worth noting that the name Buluoji 步落稽, EMC pɔ lak keʃ, could correspond to the Old Chinese pronunciation of Bai 白, EMC baijk < *ǎpra'k, turned into a polysyllable, either as an early borrowing from Chinese or as a cognate, if it should turn out that the Ji Hu language belonged to the Sino-Tibetan family. I

⁵⁵ *Zhoushu* 49:898

throw this in as an interesting speculation which, unfortunately cannot be verified by existing evidence.

The other glosses in the gazeteers are uninformative in the present state of knowledge. Tang Changru pointed out that the word *kuli* glossed as *nu* 'slave' was different from another supposedly Xiongnu word for 'slave', namely, *zi* 質, Tibetan Aza, one of the names of the Tuyuhun. Lin Gan uses this as an argument for saying that the Ji Hu were not Xiongnu, but it is hardly conclusive. 'Slave' can have different meanings and a language can have more than one word that fits one or more of them. The Kuli River to which this gloss refers is said to have received its name because of some *nu zei* 奴賊 'nu bandits' who had formerly used it as a base. Does *nu* here mean 'slave' or could it be an abbreviation of Xiongnu? If it means 'slave,' whose slaves were they? Moreover the same word, *kuli*, occurs again as the name of a river in an adjacent county where it is interpreted quite differently as meaning 'to store old grain'. It could, of course, be a case of two unrelated homonyms but this seems unlikely when it is a river name in both cases. If *kuli* showed any resemblance to a known word in some language, it might be possible to make some headway but so far no one has found such a resemblance. Nor has any plausible explanation of any of the other glosses on Ji Hu words been suggested.

Negatively, one can feel certain that the language of the Ji Hu was not a form of Chinese. It is also unlikely to have been the same as, or close to, the Xianbei language used by the rulers of Northern Wei, which is believed on substantial grounds to have been related to Mongolian.⁵⁶ Old Turkish, the language of the Tiele or High Carts⁵⁷, who were a well-known power on the steppe in the time of Northern Wei, and of the Tujue (Türk), who had become the rulers of Mongolia in the time of Northern Zhou, can also be ruled out, since it would also have been familiar at the Wei and Zhou courts. If one believed, as do Ma Changshou and Lin Gan among others, that the Xiongnu spoke a form of Mongolian or Turkish, this would be grounds for ruling out the identification of the Ji Hu with the Xiongnu. As I have argued elsewhere, however, it is very unlikely that the Xiongnu spoke an Altaic language. A general characteristic of Altaic languages is not to allow words beginning with [r]. Initial [l] is also very rare in both Turkish and Mongolian and, though it does occur in Tungusic,

⁵⁶ Ligeti 1970, Pulleyblank 1983:452-454

⁵⁷ Pulleyblank 1990

Poppe regards it as of secondary origin there.⁵⁸ Yet among the Chinese transcriptions of common words and proper names from the Han period many begin with [l], which very likely was pronounced as [r] at that time, and there are also words transcribed with Middle Chinese [j] or [d] which can be reconstructed as Old Chinese *l. This conclusion is independent of my proposal, following Ligeti, that the Xiongnu language was related to the Palaeo-Siberian language Ket, which is admittedly much more difficult to prove.⁵⁹

I have nothing to add at present to my previous discussion of the Xiongnu language except to remark that, on the one hand, identifying the Xiongnu as descendants of the Western Rong who lived in the Ordos and between the Ordos and the Wei Valley in Zhou times implies a much greater geographical separation between them and the homeland of the Ket and their extinct linguistic relatives in Southern Siberia than thinking of the Xiongnu as invaders from north of the Gobi and could therefore make the hypothesis less persuasive, while, on the other hand, the hypothesis could make sense in terms of the old theory, recently revived by the Russian linguist, S. Starostin⁶⁰, that Kettish and other Palaeo-Siberian languages are related to Sino-Tibetan, a subject on which I remain agnostic.

Conclusion

The most likely conclusion about the ethnic identity of the Ji Hu seems to be that, as argued by Lin Gan, they consisted primarily of indigenous, settled, inhabitants of the uplands of Shaanxi and Shanxi rather than nomadic immigrants from the north. Their nation could not, however, have recently come into being in the post-Han period, as Lin seems to be saying. As suggested in both the *Zhoushu* and the *Sui tujing*, they must have been descendants of the non-Chinese tribes who had occupied those same lands a thousand years earlier. Even though they had come under Chinese domination by the time of the Qin-Han empire, they were still not completely sinicized and when that empire broke down, they were able to reassert themselves and attempt to play a role on their own behalf in the political struggles that followed. Such a history is quite consistent with what we know of parallel cases of ethnic minorities in the

⁵⁸ Poppe 1960: 73

⁵⁹ Pulleyblank 1962

⁶⁰ Starostin 1982

uplands of central and south China, many of whom remain unassimilated to the present day.

The connection with the Southern Xiongnu which is also explicitly made in the *Zhoushu* and supported by a variety of other evidence could, as Lin Gan suggests, simply have come about through Xiongnu elements taking refuge among them after the fall of Former Zhao. The possibility of that happening would, however, have been greatly increased if, as I am suggesting, the Xiongnu originally came from the same stock and spoke the same or a closely related language. The story of Yiqu, a Rong state that was absorbed by Qin and in which there was a highly sinicized element but which also looked outward toward the steppe and adapted itself to the nomadic model of warfare, provides a link that has been strangely neglected in previous discussions. The coincidence in the name of Gongsun Hunye from Yiqu and the Hunye King of the Xiongnu who surrendered to Han with his people and was settled lands that included Yiqu may even provide a direct linguistic link between Yiqu and the Xiongnu.

The hypothesis that the Xiongnu were not invaders who appeared on the Chinese frontier from far out on the steppe but close neighbours of long standing who moved north into Mongolia under pressure from the Chinese has interesting points of similarity with Lattimore's theory (1942) of the origin of nomadism in the eastern steppe. The main difference is that Lattimore thought the nomads of Mongolia had adopted their way of life as a creative adaptation to their environment after having been pushed out into the steppe by the advancing Chinese agriculturalists. It is much more likely, however, that the new adaptation came to the Chinese frontier from farther east and established itself through its military effectiveness. The Xiongnu must have been frontier dwellers in the Ordos who adopted this technique, which led to their being driven out into the steppe as a defensive measure by the Qin empire. This in turn forced them into the struggles for living space with other inhabitants of the steppe which resulted in their creation of a northern steppe empire mirroring the Qin/Han empire to the south.

Other kinsmen remained behind in the original homeland. Though they were under the domination of the Chinese state, they at first kept their own language and culture and when Buddhism came to East Asia, they adopted it in their own way and used it to foster their ethnic identity. One of the most interesting by-products of this investigation into the texts relating to the Ji Hu is the fascinating glimpse it gives

into the history of popular religion and its role among a minority people in Tang and pre-Tang times.

Many aspects of this story inevitably remain conjectural because of the limitations in our sources. It is to be hoped that in future archaeology will throw further light on the matter.

ABBREVIATIONS

EMC Early Middle Chinese, see Pulleyblank 1991

LMC Late Middle Chinese, see Pulleyblank 1991

YHJXZ *Yuanhe junxianzhi*

JTS *Jiu Tangshu*

ZZTJ *Zizhi tongjian*

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