

~~A
DS3
.A2G4
no. 17
2c~~

ROR KUANG-WU

(A.D. 25-57)

AND THE NORTHERN BARBARIANS

By

HANS BIELENSTEIN

*The Seventeenth
George Ernest Morrison
Lecture in Ethnology*

THE AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL UNIVERSITY

PROFESSOR HANS BIELENSTEIN, who was appointed Professor and Head of the School of Oriental Studies at the Canberra University College in 1952, is a fil. dr. of the University of Stockholm, Sweden, his special subjects of study there being history, geography, and sinology. He spent the years 1948 and 1949 in Peking, China. In 1952, he was a research visitor at the University of California, Berkeley.

THE
AUSTRALIAN
NATIONAL
UNIVERSITY
LIBRARY

Presented by

~~Register~~ A.N.U.

EMPEROR KUANG-WU

(A.D. 25-57)

AND THE NORTHERN BARBARIANS

By

HANS BIELENSTEIN

*The Seventeenth
George Ernest Morrison
Lecture in Ethnology*

Wednesday, 2 November, 1955



1956

THE AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL UNIVERSITY

CANBERRA



25 SEP 1956

102923.

Printed in Australia by
Melbourne University Press, Carlton, N.3 Victoria

EMPEROR KUANG-WU (A.D. 25-57) AND THE NORTHERN BARBARIANS

CHINA'S most vulnerable border has almost always been the north. It is only since the last century that maritime powers have constituted a threat to China's shores. In no earlier period did a serious danger arise from this direction. Instead, continuous struggle with the northern barbarians runs like a red thread through Chinese history. The names of the tribes changed, but the menace remained the same. Sometimes the Chinese were successful and able to dominate vast areas in Central Asia. Often, however, they were defeated, and their enemies succeeded several times in conquering great parts of the empire, even the whole of China. The most famous instances are the so-called period of Southern and Northern Dynasties, and the Mongol and Manchu conquests. In A.D. 317, the Chinese were forced to abandon the entire north, and during the following centuries controlled no more than central and southern China; the rest of the country fell into the hands of various northern tribes who founded dynasties of their own and claimed the Mandate of Heaven. Only in 589 was the empire unified again under Chinese rule. Later, the Mongols governed all of China from 1280 to 1367, while the Manchus conquered the state in 1644 and remained its masters until 1912.

Far back in time, at the dawn of history, the Chinese were settled on the Great Plain. In course of time, their civilization spread in all directions, by force of arms and through peaceful penetration. Towards the south, natural routes of expansion were provided by the river valleys. As the colonists went farther and farther upstream, they reached and crossed the watersheds, and found new watercourses along which they could proceed. In this way, they gradually advanced as far as Indo-China. Sometimes compulsory transfers of people occurred to newly conquered areas, but more often the Chinese migrated of their own accord. Various reasons compelled the farmers to evacuate their old homes in the north. The younger men, especially, went south, settled in the river valleys, and frequently must have taken aboriginal women as their wives. Those of the aborigines

who accepted Chinese culture were gradually assimilated, and the others were pushed into the mountains or areas less suited to agriculture. Some of these tribes have continued to live there until the present time. Occasional uprisings took place, but these were never any serious challenge to the Chinese rulers. Although the officials often complained about the oppressive climate in the south, the fertile land along the many rivers was eminently suitable for agriculture and eventually supported enormous numbers of farm-households.

The situation was quite different in the north and north-west. The more the Chinese colonists penetrated in this direction, the more arid the ground they encountered, since rainfalls were irregular and often insufficient. The land gradually changed from fertile soil to steppe and desert, where the Chinese farmers could not make a living. Instead, these areas were occupied by virile nomadic and half-nomadic tribes who became far more formidable opponents of the Chinese than the aborigines in the south. In spite of the fact that they were looked down upon as barbarians, they developed into a veritable scourge to the Kingdom of the Middle.

Even early Chinese sources complain about the raids of the barbarians. They refer to those who inhabited the steppes in the north as Ti, while others who had their homeland in the mountainous north-west were denominated Jung. Gradually, the records begin to distinguish between the various tribes, and new names appear. After some fluctuation, the most powerful tribal confederation in the north became known as Hsiung-nu, and the Ch'iang emerged as the strongest group in the north-west and west. Hsiung-nu means literally Hsiung-slaves, which exemplifies the Chinese habit of often transliterating foreign names by hardly flattering characters. They lived as nomads on the vast steppes north of China and had large herds of horses, cattle, sheep, and camels. Their usual diet consisted of meat and milk products, the latter regarded as inedible by the Chinese. They were magnificent horsemen, brave and proud warriors, and hereditary enemies of the Chinese. It has been considered a possibility that, later, Attila and his Huns were a branch of this fierce tribe. The Chinese found it difficult to resist their attacks and, as early as the beginning of the third century B.C., the feudal

states of Chao and Yen built long walls in order to protect their northern borders. The Ch'iang, on the other hand, were Tibetan tribes who had herds, especially of cattle, horses, and sheep, but who also seem to have practised some agriculture. They pressed against the north-western border where other Chinese states built similar walls in the middle of the fourth century B.C. as well as some fifty years later.

In 221 B.C., the remnants of the feudal system of China were overthrown, and the ruler of the Ch'in state proclaimed himself as Shih-huang-ti, the 'First Emperor'. He divided the state into administrative units which henceforth were governed by appointed officials instead of hereditary princes. Laws, weights, measures, and writing were standardized, and highways were built to all the corners of the state. He also repaired, connected, and enlarged the earlier walls in the north into a coherent system of fortifications which stretched from the Yalu River in the east to and around the Ordos bend of the Yellow River in the west. This was the first of the Great Walls of China.

The Ch'in house was shortlived, and as early as 206 B.C. it was replaced by the Han dynasty, one of the most famous in Chinese history. However, the new emperors continued in many ways the policies of Shih-huang-ti, including the upkeep and improvement of the great fortifications in the north. It was, of course, quite impossible to have soldiers stationed all along the wall. Instead, defence was based on a system of watch-towers and military colonies. At certain distances along the bulwark, which consisted mainly of earth, special towers were built. Each of these had a small garrison under an officer who was responsible for the continuous surveillance of the terrain outside the fortifications. If hostile movements of the barbarians were observed, signals were given from the watch-towers. These age-old signals mainly consisted of smoke by day and fire by night. As soon as they were noticed in the self-supporting military colonies situated behind the wall, the troops marched out to intercept the enemies.

The Chinese had good reason to fear the barbarians. At about the same time as Shih-huang-ti had founded the first empire of China, the Hsiung-nu also had been organized into a power of first importance. Their first great leader was T'ou-man who,

however, was murdered by his even more talented son, Mao-tun. The latter expanded the territory of the Hsiung-nu into a tremendous central Asiatic state, and henceforth the Chinese suffered under continuous raids. These were sometimes carried right into the heart of the empire, in spite of the wall, the watch-towers, and the military colonies. The Hsiung-nu were by now a far from uncivilized people who even gave or transmitted cultural impulses to China itself. They were strictly organized into dignitaries to the left or east and to the right or west, each in control of a definite area and a certain number of horsemen. The supreme ruler had a title which, transliterated into Chinese characters and pronounced in modern Chinese, was Shan-yü. He resided in the northern part of present Mongolia. For a long time, the Chinese forces were unable to curb the Hsiung-nu. The situation actually became so embarrassing that the early emperors of the Han dynasty were frequently forced to send presents and even occasional princesses to the Shan-yü, which had, of course, a rather unfortunate resemblance to tribute.

Emperor Wu, who ruled from 140 to 87 B.C. and became the most powerful sovereign of Former Han, attempted once and for all to break the power of the Hsiung-nu. He launched a number of great military expeditions against them, and, although he never was able to gain a decisive victory, his enemies were forced back on the defensive and lost great parts of their territory to China. Emperor Wu took possession of the western parts of present Kan-su, divided the land into commanderies, appointed Chinese officials, and built a continuation of the Great Wall in order to protect these new parts of the empire. Even the so-called Western Region, the area of present Chinese Turkestan in Central Asia, was brought under Chinese rule. In Kan-su, considerable numbers of non-Chinese tribes, especially Ch'iang (i.e. Tibetans), were henceforth placed under Chinese administration. They were governed by Chinese officials and came into closer and closer contact with Chinese settlers. These relations were often strained, and the Ch'iang frequently rose against their masters, sometimes aided by other Ch'iang tribes outside the Chinese borders.

In the following decades, fighting between the Chinese and Hsiung-nu continued. In 60 B.C., however, a schism broke out

among the latter which produced unexpected political results. During eight years of confusion, a number of men fought for the position of ruler of the Hsiung-nu until two factions emerged, each of which supported a Shan-yü of its own. In 51 B.C. an extraordinary event occurred: one of these Shan-yü came in person to the imperial court and submitted to China. He was treated with utmost courtesy by Emperor Hsüan and received an imperial seal. This indicated that he was considered an equal to the Son of Heaven, not a vassal. The Chinese placed him under their protection, gave him valuable gifts, and eventually returned him to his territory accompanied by auxiliary Chinese troops. The rival Shan-yü realized that he had lost, and withdrew westwards. Finally, in 36 B.C., he was defeated and killed by an expeditionary Chinese force, and his head was sent to the imperial capital.

Subsequently, for more than half a century, the relations between the Hsiung-nu and Chinese remained most cordial. Young Hsiung-nu nobles were often educated in China, and many entered into imperial service. Only after the fall of Former Han did this tribe again become aggressive.

The Former Han dynasty lasted until A.D. 9, when it was overthrown through a well-prepared intrigue in the capital itself. Wang Mang, a distaff relative of the imperial house, had gradually, through a series of clever manoeuvres, achieved complete control of the central government. On 10 January, A.D. 9, he finally demoted the infant emperor, ascended the throne himself, and proclaimed the beginning of the Hsin dynasty. For a long time he met with no serious opposition, but at the end of 22 a rebellion broke out which he was unable to suppress. It was led by distant relations of the imperial Liu family of Former Han, and they succeeded in defeating the troops of the government. On 6 October, A.D. 23, Wang Mang was killed on a terrace of his palace.

Technically, the first ruler of the Later Han dynasty was a certain Liu Hsüan, in history known as the Keng-shih Emperor. Pushing aside and later executing Liu Po-sheng, the actual organizer of the rebellion, he was elevated to the throne on 11 March, A.D. 23. However, less than three years later, he was forced to abdicate and was subsequently killed by a rival faction.



Many pretenders fought each other during the following years, and the civil war lasted until the end of 36. Nevertheless, one man emerged early who was able eventually to restore peace and who is regarded as the real founder of the Later Han dynasty. This was Liu Hsiu or Emperor Kuang-wu, a younger brother of the murdered Liu Po-sheng. He was proclaimed emperor on 5 August, A.D. 25, and lived until 29 March 57.

During the civil war, the Hsiung-nu had resumed their old ways and became a greater menace to China than ever before. The first trouble had already broken out in the time of Wang Mang, and the Chinese historians have not hesitated to place the blame for this, as well as for the subsequent problems, squarely on the shoulders of this ruler himself. Western scholars have had a tendency to repeat their verdict. It must be remembered, however, that the early Chinese historians had a certain bias, although not necessarily or always a conscious one. They were influenced by the Confucian theory of the Mandate of Heaven. If an emperor lost his throne, it was because Heaven had withdrawn its mandate; if a pretender was able to become the sole ruler of China, it was because Heaven recognized his worthiness and hence bestowed the mandate upon him. Quite apart from the fact that the memory of Wang Mang was not popular with the Later Han emperors, he had been overthrown, and hence, from the Confucian point of view, Heaven had been against him. The historian therefore only had to assemble material showing why he had been unworthy. In this way, Wang Mang became the deterring example of a usurper, ugly in appearance and demented in his policies, who fell because of his own mistakes. In another context, I have shown that this picture is far from supported by the historical facts, and the same is true of Wang Mang's relations to the Hsiung-nu. After he had pushed aside the Former Han dynasty, it was a simple matter of routine to bestow on the Shan-yü a new seal instead of the one that had been granted in 51 B.C. In this connection, the historians have hurried to accuse Wang Mang of a terrible blunder: instead of an imperial seal like the earlier one, he granted another implying a lower status. This is supposed again to have unleashed the hatred of the Hsiung-nu for the Chinese so that they resumed their raids into the border lands and even-

tually even reconquered the Western Region or Chinese Turkestan. Now, it might be quite true that Wang Mang showed tactlessness towards the Shan-yü. It turns out, however, that Emperor Kuang-wu, in another connection, acted in exactly the same manner. After the Hsiung-nu had assumed control again of the Western Region, the king of Yarkand, named Hsien, tried to make contact with Kuang-wu. He was the son of King Yen, who once had been a hostage in the imperial capital, had become a stout supporter of China, and had educated his heirs in this spirit. In A.D. 38 Hsien sent messengers to the court. In 41, he dispatched another embassy and asked for the appointment of a Protector-general for Central Asia. Emperor Kuang-wu thereupon appointed Hsien himself as 'Protector-general of the Western Region', and gave his messenger a seal authorizing this position. Meanwhile, the Grand Administrator of Tun-huang, P'ei Tsun, memorialized that it was inadvisable to grant a high authority to a barbarian. On the basis of this counsel, the emperor changed his mind and ordered that Hsien should receive only the seal of a 'General-in-chief of Han'. P'ei Tsun intercepted the envoy, and when the latter refused to return the first seal, he took it away by force and replaced it by the other indicating the lower rank. Hsien is said to have resented this bitterly. He turned against China and began in Central Asia to pursue an aggressive policy of his own.

The point in case is that Kuang-wu acted with even greater tactlessness than Wang Mang. In spite of this, the latter has been despised in history as a usurper with delusions of grandeur while Kuang-wu was praised as the sagacious restorer of the Han dynasty and as a model for later emperors.

The preceding discussion makes it clear that one must see through the technique employed by the early historian in order to arrive at the actual facts. It then becomes apparent that the affair of the seal has been twisted in such a way as to place Wang Mang in an unfavourable light. It is, however, not logical to blame him alone, while Kuang-wu goes off scot-free. Rather, both emperors made mistakes, although Kuang-wu's seems to have been the greater. The simple historical truth, hidden behind the conscious or unconscious prejudice of the historian, must be this, that by the time of Wang Mang the Hsiung-nu were again ready

to embark on an aggressive policy. The impolite procedure in connection with the new seal might have aggravated prevailing conditions but would hardly in itself have caused the outbreak of new wars. As a matter of fact, the situation became really serious only after Wang Mang's death, when China for a long time was torn by civil strife. It would, actually, have been too much to expect that the Hsiung-nu should not take advantage of this favourable opportunity.

After the overthrow of Wang Mang, the first official contact between the Chinese and the Hsiung-nu occurred when the Keng-shih Emperor in A.D. 24 sent three emissaries to the Shan-yü, whose name was Yü. The purpose was again to present an imperial seal. The Shan-yü, however, treated the envoys arrogantly. He remarked that the Hsiung-nu and Chinese were brothers. When there had been a schism among the former, Emperor Hsüan had assisted one Shan-yü who consequently had submitted to China. Later, when disorder broke out in China and Wang Mang usurped the throne, the Hsiung-nu had attacked him. Hence, Wang Mang had been defeated and the restoration of the Han dynasty had been made possible. It therefore was fitting that China now in turn should honour the Shan-yü. Although this was a gross misstatement of the situation, it clearly illustrates the shift in power that had taken place. The Shan-yü was well aware of his strong position, and began actively to interfere in the gamble for power in China.

After the death of the Keng-shih Emperor which, according to western chronology, occurred in the beginning of 26, the situation was briefly as follows: Kuang-wu, Son of Heaven since 5 August 25, controlled the northern part of the Great Plain. His capital was Lo-yang. A rival group, the so-called Red Eyebrows, had in July or August of 25 proclaimed a certain Liu P'en-tzu as their emperor. They occupied the old capital, Ch'ang-an, and the lower part of the Wei River valley. Kung-sun Shu was in possession of the area of present Ssu-ch'uan and had ascended the throne in May or June of 25. Liu Yung had announced himself Son of Heaven after the defeat of the Keng-shih Emperor. He dominated the Shan-tung peninsula and adjacent parts of the Great Plain north of the Huai River. In addition to the Keng-shih Emperor, three other pretenders had

already been killed by the beginning of A.D. 26. Three more appeared after this date. The political picture was therefore far from simple. Not only were eleven emperors proclaimed during the civil war, but a further complication was provided by the existence of powerful warlords who tried to maintain their independence as long as possible. Wei Ao and Tou Jung belonged to the most important among these. The former controlled parts of Kan-su east of the Yellow River, while the latter was in possession of the section of this province situated west of the same watercourse.

In this situation, where the success of each pretender rested on the tip of his sword, the Shan-yü of the Hsiung-nu decided to throw in his weight behind one of the candidates for the imperial throne of China. He sponsored a man by name of Lu Fang.

Nothing is known about Lu Fang's background except that he was a native of north-western China. When the civil war began, he fabricated a genealogy according to which his grandfather was the fruit of a union between none other than Emperor Wu of Former Han and a Hsiung-nu princess. He thus claimed a right to the imperial throne and also kept the door open for a recognition by the Shan-yü. Lu Fang raised troops which included Ch'iang (i.e. Tibetans) and other non-Chinese tribesmen living within the north-western commanderies. When the Keng-shih emperor in A.D. 24 took up his residence in Ch'ang-an, the old capital of the Han dynasty, he summoned Lu Fang to his court, appointed him a Chief Commandant of Cavalry, and recognized his *de facto* position in the north. After the emperor had died, Lu Fang assumed the title of a king and the rank of a Supreme General.

At this stage, the Hsiung-nu appeared on the scene. One of their nobles arrived at the head of a troop of horsemen, and Lu Fang formed an alliance with him. It is not quite clear whether this deal was forced upon him or whether he acted voluntarily. In any case, he left China and followed the Hsiung-nu into their territory. There, he was proclaimed Emperor of Han. On this occasion, the Shan-yü is again supposed to have emphasized the fact that times had changed, that China had become weak and now needed the protection of the Hsiung-nu.

His turn had come to set up a ruler for it who in future would honour and serve him.

At about the same time, the hand of the Hsiung-nu was further strengthened. In A.D. 23, the Keng-shih Emperor had appointed a man by the name of P'eng Ch'ung as Acting Grand Administrator of the Yü-yang commandery, situated in the extreme north of present Ho-pei. In the following year, when Kuang-wu began to pacify the northern part of the Great Plain, P'eng Ch'ung changed sides, joined up with him, and rendered valuable assistance. When Kuang-wu ascended the throne in A.D. 25, P'eng Ch'ung had therefore good reason to hope for substantial rewards. However, the new emperor passed him by completely, merely letting him remain Grand Administrator of Yü-yang. He added insult to injury by appointing as ministers two former subordinate officials of P'eng Ch'ung. To make things still worse, a certain Chu Fou was the official in charge of the province within which the Yü-yang commandery was situated. This man was conceited and boastful, but he was nevertheless a favourite of the emperor. Since P'eng Ch'ung for his part was ambitious and strong-minded, the two officials soon took a violent dislike to each other. P'eng Ch'ung began to disobey the orders of Chu Fou, and Chu Fou slandered P'eng Ch'ung at the court.

In A.D. 26, matters came to a head. Chu Fou memorialized secretly to the emperor that P'eng Ch'ung had treated his wife better than his mother, that he had killed and harmed friends, that he was corrupt, and that he was storing provisions. Kuang-wu thereupon summoned P'eng Ch'ung to the capital. The latter feared an intrigue of his enemy and petitioned that they should both be summoned together. When the emperor refused to do so, the suspicions of P'eng Ch'ung were increased. He discussed the situation with his wife and officials. They all disliked Chu Fou and are stated to have encouraged P'eng Ch'ung to disobey the imperial order. Consequently, he remained in his commandery and revolted. On top of all this, Chu Fou, instead of trying to master the situation, wrote P'eng Ch'ung a long and remarkably obnoxious letter. It thus is clear that the situation in the north had got thoroughly out of hand and that, strictly speaking, the emperor had only himself to blame.

P'eng Ch'ung's first step was to dispatch soldiers, who surrounded Chu Fou in the city of Chi. Furthermore, towards the end of 26, he succeeded in defeating imperial troops. His position remained, for the time being, relatively strong. A serious attack could only come from one direction, the south, since Yü-yang in the north bordered on the territory of the Hsiung-nu. It was, moreover, a wealthy commandery, with both salt and iron deposits. These commodities were highly coveted, and P'eng Ch'ung had previously bartered them for grain. Emperor Kuang-wu had his hands full in other parts of China and could for a while do little to master this new problem.

The following year, A.D. 27, was very successful for P'eng Ch'ung. He enlarged the area under his control, and formed an alliance with the Hsiung-nu. The Shan-yü sent horsemen, led by Hsiung-nu nobles, in order to assist him. P'eng Ch'ung, in turn, presented to the Shan-yü one of his daughters and gifts. Meanwhile, starvation broke out in the besieged Chi, but when the city finally was taken, Chu Fou managed to escape, together with his wife and some troops. However, he was so hated, even by his own officers, that these mutinied against him. Chu Fou feared that he would not be able to escape. True to character, he killed his wife and saved his life alone.

In spite of this temporary success, the tide began to turn. From the middle of 28 onwards, P'eng Ch'ung was on the defensive and suffered disastrous defeats. On one occasion, the imperial troops even succeeded in attacking and killing two high dignitaries of the Hsiung-nu who fought for him.

In the spring of 29, P'eng Ch'ung's time ran out. One day, after he had withdrawn to his rooms and was resting on a bed, three of his slaves, Tzu-mi and two others whose names are not recorded, entered, overpowered, and tied him. They then issued an order in P'eng Ch'ung's name that all other slaves should be fettered, that no one should enter his chamber, and that all officials should retire. They then called for his wife. When she came, Tzu-mi and another slave forced her to take them to the treasury, which they looted. The third slave was left behind to watch P'eng Ch'ung. The latter tried to move him to pity and asked him to unfasten the ropes. In exchange, he offered the young slave his daughter Pearl and valuable gifts. The boy seems



to have been tempted, but when he glanced outside the door and discovered that Tzu-mi had been listening, he lost his nerve. The slaves now saddled six horses and forced P'eng Ch'ung's wife to sew two bags of silk. When it had become dark, they untied P'eng Ch'ung's hands and made him write a document permitting them to leave the town. Thereafter, they cut off the heads of P'eng Ch'ung and his wife and placed them in the silk bags. They succeeded in making their escape and arrived at Lo-yang, the imperial capital. Undoubtedly, in accordance with the usual practice, the slaves were thoroughly questioned, and a detailed report was prepared about the entire case. This report was later used by the historian for his description of the event. The whole affair created a *cause célèbre* at the court. In an earlier proclamation, the emperor had promised the rank of marquis to anyone who would put P'eng Ch'ung to death. On the other hand, it was a hair-raising thought that a slave should be rewarded for having killed his master. Finally, it was decided to grant Tzu-mi the title of a Marquis Who is Not Righteous.

The Hsiung-nu lost in P'eng Ch'ung an important ally, and now had to throw their entire support behind the pretender, Lu Fang, the one whom they previously had proclaimed emperor of China. During A.D. 28, one of the Hsiung-nu dignitaries had entered north-western China and forced a number of minor warlords to recognize Lu Fang. In 29, the year of P'eng Ch'ung's death, these men went to the residence of the Shan-yü and invited Lu Fang to come back to China. At the very end of that Chinese year, which corresponds to the beginning of A.D. 30 in the western calendar, he returned with them and established his capital at the Ordos bend of the Yellow River. In addition, he controlled parts of northern Shan-si. The history records that Lu Fang now called himself Son of Heaven. It will, however, be remembered that he already had been proclaimed Emperor of Han during the time he had lived in the territory of the Hsiung-nu. If the second entry is correct, it would indicate that the ceremony was repeated on Chinese soil in order to strengthen his claim to the realm.

In the following years, Lu Fang, aided by Hsiung-nu warriors, preserved his independence in the north-west. The imperial armies achieved few victories, while some of Kuang-wu's best

generals were defeated. The emperor even went so far as to evacuate some of the population of northern Shen-si and Shan-si. Major evacuations are recorded for A.D. 33 and 34. In addition, one of the north-western provinces was abolished altogether in 35 since, *de facto*, it was outside the control of the imperial government. In 36, Kuang-wu met with a minor success. One of Lu Fang's powerful officials revolted and joined the imperial side. The pretender was forced into a headlong flight and again went beyond the Chinese border. However, he was back again in A.D. 40. Lu Fang then, unexpectedly, made his submission to the emperor, but this did not last, and fighting was resumed a few months later. Finally, in A.D. 42, Lu Fang left China for the last time, never to return. In spite of this, the Chinese troops were quite unable to reconquer the Ordos land and northern Shen-si and Shan-si. The Hsiung-nu remained the masters of the situation and continued to roam freely within this area. New evacuations of people had to be carried out in 39 and 44, while the Hsiung-nu looted Chinese territory year after year. The largest and most disastrous raids took place in 37, 44 and 45. These conditions could have continued for a long time, had not events occurred among the Hsiung-nu that drastically changed the picture. History repeated itself, and a new schism broke out among the Hsiung-nu.

The succession of the Hsiung-nu rulers followed at this time a distinctive pattern. It went from elder to younger brother or cousin, provided each was the son of a former Shan-yü. If no eligible man was left in one generation, the dignity was transmitted to the eldest male of the following generation. In this way, all legitimate sons of the Hsiung-nu rulers had a chance to become Shan-yü, provided their elder brothers or cousins died in time. However, Yü, the ruling Shan-yü who had given so much trouble to China, wanted a son of his to inherit the dignity. Such a step was against the rules, since Yü's younger brother was still alive. In addition, the eldest male in the following generation was a certain Pi and not any son of the Shan-yü. The latter solved part of the problem by summarily executing his brother. He himself died in A.D. 46, and, as he had planned, was succeeded by his son, Wu-ta-ti-hou. However, this Shan-yü also died in 46, and consequently his younger brother, P'u-nu, was

proclaimed ruler of the Hsiung-nu. All this very much embittered Pi, who felt keenly that he should have been the next Shan-yü.

The year A.D. 46 was a bad one for the Hsiung-nu. No rain fell, and the grass wilted. The drought killed great numbers of animals, and consequently the people starved and died too. Another nomadic group hastened to take advantage of this opportunity. They were the Wu-huan, who lived to the east of their old enemies, the Hsiung-nu. In preceding years, they often had looted China, and an attempt to crush them in 45 had been utterly unsuccessful. Now, they turned against the Hsiung-nu, who had been weakened through the famine, and defeated them. The latter fled north, evacuating great parts of southern Mongolia. Emperor Kuang-wu was, of course, greatly pleased, and presented silk to the Wu-huan.

The Shan-yü feared that the Chinese would exploit this situation and attack him. He therefore hurriedly dispatched messengers to ask for peace. At this stage, however, his rival Pi began to act independently. He sent secretly to the court a Chinese by the name of Kuo Heng to surrender a map of the Hsiung-nu territory. This implied that he placed himself into the hands of the Chinese emperor.

The events of the two following years were dramatic. In the beginning of A.D. 47, Pi himself arrived in north-western China and offered his submission. Two Hsiung-nu nobles, who on behalf of Shan-yü P'u-nu kept him under surveillance, were well aware of this. At this time, the fifth month was close at hand, during which a special dragon sacrifice was performed. This gave the nobles a pretext to return to the residence of the Shan-yü and to report the treason of Pi. It so happened, however, that a younger brother of Pi was at the court of the Shan-yü. He heard about this and hurriedly informed his brother. Pi then mobilized warriors and awaited the return of the nobles in order to kill them, but they learned about the trap in time to save their lives. They escaped, and again joined the Shan-yü P'u-nu, who sent horsemen against Pi. They fought no battle, however, since they found themselves outnumbered.

In 48, Pi and his followers once more offered to submit and henceforth to protect the Chinese borders against attacks from

the north. Emperor Kuang-wu summoned all advisers to a court conference in order to discuss this important issue. The consensus of opinion was that, as it was not clear how far Pi could be trusted, his request should be refused. Only Keng Kuo thought differently. He drew attention to the clear parallel between this occasion and the event of 51 B.C., when Emperor Hsüan had permitted the surrender of one Shan-yü. He urged that this precedent should be followed. Kuang-wu accepted the counsel of Keng Kuo and granted Pi's submission. As a result, the latter proclaimed himself 'Southern Shan-yü' on 25 January 49. Henceforth, his rival P'u-nu was referred to as the 'Northern Shan-yü'.

In the spring of 49, the Southern Shan-yü dispatched his younger brother Mo against the Northern Hsiung-nu. He was very successful, capturing one of their nobles and great numbers of men. In addition, he is recorded to have taken 7000 horses and 10,000 head of cattle and sheep. Simultaneously, the Northern Hsiung-nu were attacked by another tribe, the Hsien-pi. These were a Tungus people who lived close to the Wu-huan in the north-east. P'u-nu was forced to withdraw, evacuating still greater parts of his territory. Some of his nobles deserted him and with their followers joined the Southern Shan-yü, who again confirmed his submission to the emperor and sent one son as hostage to the court.

In the following year, A.D. 50, Kuang-wu dispatched the General of the Gentlemen-of-the-Household Tuan Ch'en and the Lieutenant-Colonel Wang Yü to receive formally the surrender of the Southern Shan-yü Pi. They met him at the Chinese border, north of the Ordos bend of the Yellow River. During the ceremony, Pi was informed that he had to prostrate himself. This had not been requested when one of the Hsiung-nu rulers had submitted in 51 B.C., and was a great blow to the pride of the Southern Shan-yü. He hesitated for a while, but finally threw himself on the ground and declared himself a subject of China. In the autumn of this year, the emperor bestowed upon him an imperial seal in gold, various garments, a chariot, six horses, a double-edged sword, a bow and arrows, 10,000 bolts of silk, musical instruments, utensils for eating and drinking, and other gifts. Furthermore, an amount of grain corresponding to

more than 14,000 (U.S.) bushels and 36,000 head of cattle and sheep were transported to his camp.

The Northern Shan-yü realized that he had been outmanoeuvred, and tried to improve his position by releasing the Chinese he previously had kidnapped. After this prelude, he sent messengers in A.D. 51 to ask the emperor for peace and an alliance. Kuang-wu called his ministers to a conference, but they were unable to agree on the way to proceed. At this stage, the Heir-apparent intervened and pointed out that the Southern Shan-yü had submitted only recently. If the emperor now communicated with the Northern Hsiung-nu, it could easily provoke suspicion and trouble. Kuang-wu followed this advice, and the messengers were not received.

In 52, the Northern Hsiung-nu sent another delegation which presented horses and furs and, for the second time, asked for peace. Anew, the emperor called a conference. This time, the Division Head of the Minister over the Masses, Pan Piao, submitted his opinion. He remarked that, since the Southern Shan-yü had submitted, the Northern Hsiung-nu were afraid and therefore conveyed valuable gifts. Although one should not give them full support, it would be wise to grant presents in turn, to keep in contact, and to take advantage of the situation as far as possible. Kuang-wu agreed. When in 55 new messengers arrived from the north, he sent by them an imperial letter and silk to the Northern Shan-yü, but he did not dispatch any envoys of his own.

The surrender of the Hsiung-nu and the meek behaviour of their northern brothers had a profound influence on other tribes. In 49, the same year in which Pi submitted, the Wu-huan also sent a delegation to the imperial capital, where they were received in audience. They presented male and female slaves, cattle, horses, bows, and furs of tigers, leopards, and sable. Some of the Wu-huan remained in the imperial guards. Others were granted Chinese noble rank. Pan Piao again handed in a memorial suggesting that a 'Colonel Protecting the Wu-huan' be appointed, in order to keep them under control. Kuang-wu followed his advice.

The Hsien-pi as well discontinued their raids on Chinese territory. In the eventful year of 49, they began to make peaceful

overtures, but at first only to provincial authorities. In 54, some of their nobles came to the capital and were received in audience.

Considering all the developments since A.D. 46, Kuang-wu had been extremely lucky. The Southern Shan-yü had surrendered. The Northern Hsiung-nu were temporarily weakened and docile. The Wu-huan and Hsien-pi had come to the court. However, the emperor could take little credit for this himself. Furthermore, he committed a very serious mistake. One should remember that the temporary pacification of the northern barbarians was not the result of a purposeful Chinese policy. It had been brought about by a schism among the Hsiung-nu themselves which became acute only because of a severe famine. The surrender of the Southern Hsiung-nu was in turn influential in quietening other neighbouring tribes. At no stage of these events had Emperor Kuang-wu energetically interfered on behalf of Chinese interests; he had been merely coasting along in a policy of *laissez-faire*. When, through the surrender of the Southern Shan-yü, he was forced at last to take a clear stand, the measures he chose were not only unwise but, in the final reckoning, utterly disastrous for future generations. He permitted the Hsiung-nu to live inside the Chinese border. This is a fact which, I believe, hitherto has not received sufficient emphasis.

Prior to the submission of the Southern Shan-yü Pi, the Ordos land and considerable parts of northern Shen-si and Shan-si had, *de facto*, been outside the control of the central government. Some of the people had been evacuated, the officials had been withdrawn, and the Hsiung-nu had moved freely within this area. When Pi offered to surrender, a possibility must have existed to rectify this situation. The submission had been brought about through famine and internal strife among the barbarians, and the Southern Shan-yü was in no position to dictate his terms. This is proved by the fact that he went to the unprecedented length of prostrating himself in front of the Chinese envoy. However, this opportunity was lost through the Chinese ruler's lack of perception. Formerly, when the Hsiung-nu had surrendered, towards the end of Former Han, Emperor Hsüan had wisely decided to let them stay in Southern Mon-

golia, outside the Chinese border fortifications. Kuang-wu, on the other hand, does not at all seem to have realized the possible dangers. The preserved records mention no single instance of any future problems even being discussed. Since otherwise the surrender of the Hsiung-nu is described in considerable detail, this probably indicates that Emperor Kuang-wu never grasped the full importance of the issues involved. The Chinese civil war had at this time been over for many years. The empire was recovering. The weakened Hsiung-nu could hardly have refused any conditions Kuang-wu might have wanted to make, as these would have been backed up by imperial armies, led by veteran generals. Yet nothing of this sort happened. Instead, the emperor permitted the Southern Shan-yü in A.D. 50 to take up his permanent residence on Chinese soil, in the very north of present Shen-si.

From this time onwards, the Southern Hsiung-nu formed a state within the state. They kept their old organization and tribal customs. The dignity of Shan-yü was transmitted among them from generation to generation. High dignitaries of the Hsiung-nu and horsemen camped north of the great bend of the Yellow River, within the Ordos land itself, and in northern Shen-si and Shan-si. Although these warriors helped to protect the borders, they constituted a foreign element in North-western China and continued their nomadic or half-nomadic life. Each year, on the occasion of the three dragon sacrifices in the first, fifth and ninth months, the Southern Shan-yü assembled his dignitaries and discussed the affairs of his state. The nobles kept order among their subordinates and held their own trials.

The relations between the Southern Shan-yü and the emperor were regulated in detail. A Chinese General of the Gentlemen-of-the-Household was stationed at the residence of the Southern Shan-yü, ostensibly to protect him but in reality to keep him under surveillance. He had an independent yamen and subordinate officials as well as a certain number of troops. One son of the Southern Shan-yü remained always as a hostage in the imperial capital and was replaced once a year. Towards the end of each year, the Southern Shan-yü sent another son to the court, together with messengers who carried a memorial. They were

escorted by one attendant official of the Chinese General of the Gentlemen-of-the-Household. At the same time, internuncios left the imperial capital in order to accompany to his father's residence the son who had been a hostage during the past year. The two delegations met *en route*. On the New Year's Day, the Hsiung-nu messengers offered congratulations at the court. When the ceremonies had been concluded, the messengers returned, escorted by internuncios. The latter carried the imperial New Year gifts for the Southern Shan-yü, consisting of 1000 bolts of silk, embroideries, and 161 pounds of gold. The high dignitaries of the Hsiung-nu were presented with various delicacies of food. The legitimate wife of the Shan-yü, his sons, and the Hsiung-nu dignitaries received in all 10,000 bolts of silk. Each time a Southern Shan-yü died, the General of the Gentlemen-of-the-Household expressed his sympathy and performed a sacrifice. The emperor dispatched messengers with a personal letter of condolence and a new imperial seal for the successor. He also granted gifts to the new Shan-yü, consisting of various garments, a sword, and 4000 bolts of silk.

It was obviously the hope of the emperor that once the relations between the Chinese and Hsiung-nu had been regularized, the two nationalities would continue to live peacefully together. Suspensions were, however, too deeply rooted on both sides. The sedentary Chinese farmers had good reason to dislike the nomadic Hsiung-nu, while the latter too often came in contact with high-handed Chinese officials who looked down on them as barbarians. As a result, the friction remained. Thus, when Emperor Kuang-wu in A.D. 50 ordered that the formerly evacuated people should now go back to their old homes and promised assistance for their return, few seem to have taken advantage of this opportunity. Worse yet, the north-west became gradually more and more depopulated, since increasing numbers of peasants preferred to migrate to other parts of the empire. This affected not only the areas that had been opened up to the Hsiung-nu but also the westernmost parts of the state, where the Ch'iang (i.e. Tibetans) exerted increasingly greater pressure.

As pointed out before, great numbers of Ch'iang lived among the Chinese in the region of present Kan-su. During the civil war their power increased, new Ch'iang tribes entered the border,

and at least one commandery was for a while completely dominated by them. The warlord Tou Jung, who controlled the parts of Kan-su west of the Yellow River, was able to keep the Ch'iang in check. Wei Ao, on the other hand, who until his death in A.D. 33 was in possession of the remaining section of the same province, recognized the *de facto* position of the Ch'iang by forming an alliance with their nobles. Later, when the civil war was over, Emperor Kuang-wu had to face unending trouble in Kan-su, and the Ch'iang continued to loot the Chinese settlements in spite of some imperial victories. Pan Piao, who already had given intelligent advice concerning the Northern Hsiung-nu and the Wu-huan, again showed his profound insight into the conditions of the north and north-west. In a memorial of A.D. 33 he pointed out that the Ch'iang lived mingled with the Chinese. Their customs and language were different, and hence they could not make themselves understood. Under these circumstances, they often were mistreated and cheated by minor officials and cunning people. This made them upset and angry, but they had no recourse and nowhere to go to lodge a complaint. The revolts and raids of the Ch'iang could all be traced to these causes. Pan Piao suggested that, as in previous times, a 'Colonel Protecting the Ch'iang' should be appointed. This man should have extraordinary authority and be responsible for the surveillance as well as the welfare of the Ch'iang. During each of the seasons of the year he ought to make trips of inspection and question the Ch'iang about their complaints. In addition, interpreters should study the local conditions and seek information about hostile movements outside the borders. The emperor followed Pan Piao's advice.

A brief parenthesis might be permitted in this connection. Pan Piao (A.D. 3-54) is best known as one of the great historians of China. He began the compilation of the second of the dynastic histories which covers the Former Han period and exerted an enormous influence on later scholars. His son, Pan Ku (d. 92) rewrote and completed the main part of the work. Pan Piao's daughter, the gifted Pan Chao, might have been connected with the final redaction of the history. Another son, Pan Ch'ao (31-101), spent the last thirty-one years of his life in Chinese Turkestan. By great courage, tact, and patience, he succeeded in

reconquering this area for the empire, and in many adventures proved his deep knowledge of central Asiatic affairs. The renown of Pan Ku and Pan Ch'ao has subsequently and perhaps unjustly overshadowed the reputation of their father. So much is clear, however: Pan Piao united in his own person the two major interests and talents that, divided between his sons, secured them immortal fame.

In spite of men like Pan Piao, Emperor Kuang-wu and his successors never reached a satisfactory solution of the problems in the north-west, nor were they able to rectify the past mistakes. The Ch'iang continued to give trouble, and the friction between the Southern Hsiung-nu and the sedentary Chinese did not cease. Pressed from all sides, the settlers yielded in increasing numbers and abandoned their fields. The majority of them migrated southwards, crossed the Ch'in-ling mountain range, and became colonists in Ssu-ch'uan and Yün-nan. On the basis of two censuses, taken in A.D. 2 and 140, it is fortunately possible to form an idea of the extent of the depopulation during at least this period. The one hundred and thirty-eight years involved saw a loss of more than six million inhabitants in north-western China, which amounts to a decrease of no less than 70%.¹

Later rulers continued the policy that had originated with Kuang-wu. During the following centuries, great numbers of Hsiung-nu were permitted again and again to enter Chinese territory and to remain there. Eventually, the government would hardly have been able to prevent this, even if it had intended to do so. The relations between the Chinese and the barbarians grew steadily worse and worse until a catastrophe was unavoidable. Finally, in A.D. 308, the great Hsiung-nu wars began. In 311, even the Son of Heaven of the then ruling Chin dynasty was captured, and his successor became a prisoner of the Hsiung-nu in 316. This was the end of Chinese rule over Northern China. In 317, the Chin dynasty evacuated the north and took refuge south of the Yang-tzu. The Hsiung-nu, Tibetans, Tungus, and other tribes took their place. For centuries the empire was split in two, the northern half of which was governed by a

¹ Some of the decrease can, however, be traced back to the transfer of the capital from Ch'ang-an to Lo-yang and the loss of political and economic importance of the former capital area.

A
DS
1264
no. 17
2c

102923 2196554

bewildering number of shifting foreign dynasties. Only in A.D 589 was the realm reunited under the Chinese house of Sui.

The evacuation of Northern China is the last link in the chain reaction that began when Kuang-wu permitted the Southern Hsiung-nu to stay on Chinese soil. In spite of the fact that this tribe for a long time remained a faithful defender of the Chinese border, the seed had then and there been planted that grew into eventual disaster. The blame for this cannot exclusively be placed on Kuang-wu himself but is shared by the later rulers and politicians who proceeded on the same path. It is also possible that eventually a major clash between the sedentary Chinese and the nomads of the north was unavoidable, irrespective of whether the latter were permitted to live inside the borders or not. So much seems clear, however, that the celebrated restorer of the Han dynasty lacked the vision to realize the possible results of his own policy. As a short-range solution his measures were successful, but in the long run they prepared the ground for the victory of the northern barbarians.

THE AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL UNIVERSITY

THE LIBRARY

This book is due on:

15 APR 1967

210 MAY 78 8

16 SEP 88 -25

16 OCT 1992
CANCELLED

16 JUN 1992
CANCELLED

Ir
Se
Th
Fo
Fift
Ch
Ab
Sixth:
Chin
cation
Seventh:
Shangh
China',
Eighth: Prof. S. H. Roberts (Vice-Chancellor of The University of
Sydney), 'The Gifts of the Old China to the New', 5 June 1939.

1868272



A.N.U. LIBRARY

The George Ernest Morrison Lectures on Ethnology—continued.

- Ninth: His Grace the Archbishop of Sydney, Howard Mowll, 'West China as Seen through the Eyes of the Westerner', 29 May 1940.
- Tenth: Dr W. G. Goddard (President of the China Society of Australia), 'The Ming Sheng. A Study in Chinese Democracy', 5 June 1941.
- Eleventh: Prof. D. B. Copland (Vice-Chancellor, The Australian National University), 'The Chinese Social Structure', 27 September 1948.
- Twelfth: Prof. J. K. Rideout (Dept. of Oriental Languages, Univ. of Sydney), 'Politics in Medieval China', 28 October 1949.
- Thirteenth: C. P. FitzGerald (Visiting Reader in Oriental Studies, The Australian National University), 'The Revolutionary Tradition in China', 19 March 1951.
- Fourteenth: The Rt. Hon. H. V. Evatt (Leader of the Opposition in the Commonwealth Parliament), 'Some Aspects of Morrison's Life and Work', 4 December 1952.
- Fifteenth: Lord Lindsay of Birker (Dept. of International Affairs, The Australian National University), 'China and the West', 20 October 1953.
- Sixteenth: M. Titiev (Professor of Anthropology, University of Michigan), 'Chinese Elements in Japanese Culture', 27 July 1954.