

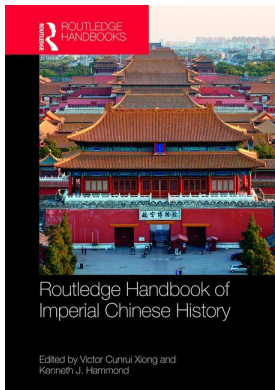
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5

THE JIN AND THE SIXTEEN STATES

*KAWAMOTO Yoshiaki**Translated by Yoon-rim KIM*

In the last years of the Eastern Han dynasty, two enormous problems arose. The first problem was the stratification of the populace. At the top was the bureaucracy dominated by hereditary aristocrats, followed by magnate lineages (*haozu* 豪族) and then by village commoners. In consequence, the Han imperial system, where a single sovereign reigned over the entire population, was weakened while economic inequality became increasingly evident.

The second problem, related to the first one, was that the neighboring ethnic groups, who were subjected to the enormous cultural, political, and economic impact of the Han (thanks to the long duration of the dynasty) had migrated to and invaded China proper.

After the fall of the Han dynasty and the division of the realm, in the ensuing Wei-Jin period, these problems loomed large. Meanwhile, to unify China became the goal for the sovereign. The hope of achieving that goal was realized after the establishment of the Jin dynasty (early 266), which went on to unify the realm (280). But at the beginning of the fourth century, turmoil broke out as China was plunged again with greater intensity into a prolonged period of confusion and division, reminiscent of the era of the Three Kingdoms.

Unification continued to be an elusive goal until the end of this chaotic period, almost 300 years later, when the Sui-Tang period arrived. In this chapter, I deal with the first half of the period, in which the Western Jin first achieved unification, which soon dissolved, replaced by chaos brought about by self-destruction and by invasions by the various ethnic groups, until the trend toward unification emerged.

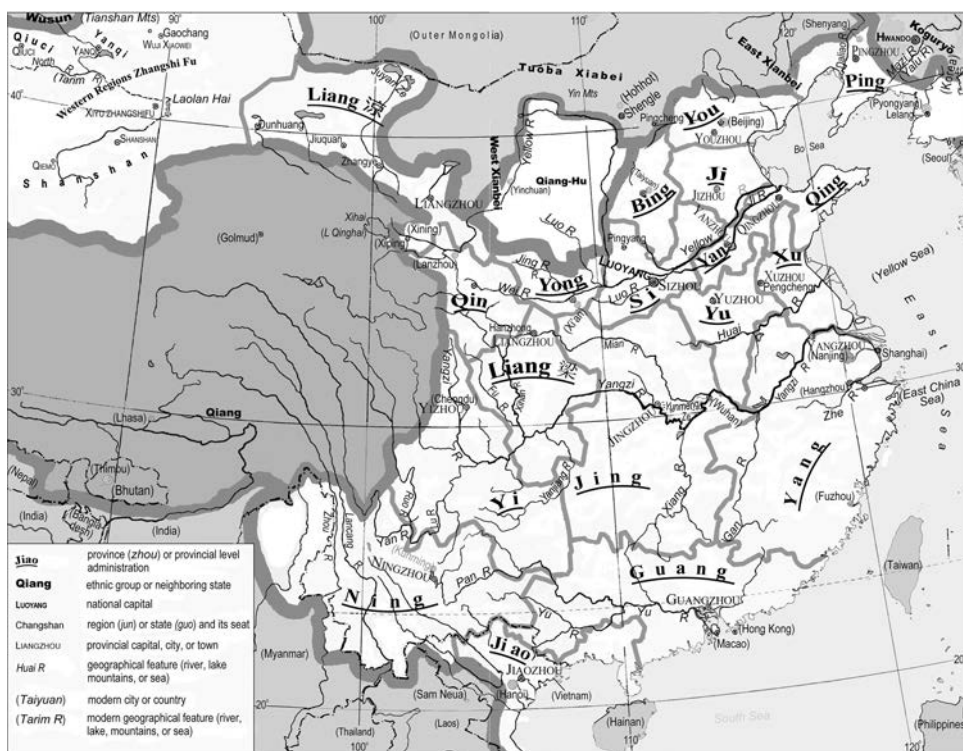
The Western Jin*Sima Yan and his time*

Since 249, the Cao-Wei dynasty had been dominated by the Simas. After the death of the power-holder Sima Zhao 司馬昭 in the eighth month of 265, his son Sima Yan 司馬炎 took over power. On the 17th day of the 12th month (February 6, 266), he accepted the abdication of the last Cao-Wei sovereign, and ascended the throne as the founder of the (Western) Jin dynasty. He is known in history as Emperor Wu.

In the realm of politics, a most noticeable phenomenon in the early reign of Emperor Wu was that many important officials were prominent men of learning and well-versed in ritual. That was greatly different from Cao Cao's policy of focusing more on ability than on virtue. Immediately after his enthronement, Emperor Wu revived the practice of granting honorific ranks (*minjue* 民爵, commoner ranks) to commoners, which had been interrupted during the chaotic period of the Three Kingdoms. On these occasions, at village shrines (*she* 社), sacrificial rites would be conducted. And a sense of commonality and order would be forged, it was expected, between the commoners below and the emperor above.

Around the founding of the Jin dynasty, this generous gift given by Emperor Wu in the form of commoner ranks seems to have achieved the goal of winning the hearts of the people. As a new form of government that valued ritual took shape, memories of the cruelty of the late Eastern Han and the Cao-Wei faded away (Map 5.1).

In the month immediately following his enthronement in early 266, Emperor Wu enfeoffed 27 members of the royal Sima lineage as commandery princes (*junwang* 郡王) with a tremendous amount of administrative and military power. The royals were not only allowed to assume government office, including high office, they were also highly favored in officialdom. These policies set the Jin apart from the previous Cao-Wei dynasty. The Cao-Wei founder Emperor Wen (Cao Pi 曹丕) forbade members of the Cao royal lineage, who were constantly placed under the surveillance of the central government, from assuming government office (the situation somewhat mitigated under Emperor Ming 明).



Map 5.1 The Western Jin. (See Tan Qixiang, vol. 3, 33–34.)

The Southern State of Wu

In 241, when Sun Quan 孫權, head of the state of Wu based in the lower Yangzi valley, was in the last phase of his reign, his Crown Prince Sun Deng 孫登 died. Sun He 孫和 was then appointed crown prince. However, Sun Quan's favorite son was Sun Ba 孫霸. Supporters of Sun He and Sun Ba formed rival factions and fought bitterly against one another. In 250, Crown Prince Sun He was deposed and Sun Ba was ordered to kill himself. In 252, Sun Quan himself died. The feud between the Sun He faction, now led by Zhuge Ke 諸葛恪, and the Sun Ba faction, now led by Sun Jun 孫峻, Sun Lin 孫琳, and others, intensified, while the Wu dynasty began to move toward autocracy and self-destruction.

Under these circumstances, in 264, Sun Hao 孫皓, grandson of Sun Quan, became emperor. Ignoring the imminent danger of collapse his state of Wu faced, Sun Hao indulged in a building spree of palatial structures and displayed cruel behavior toward his people. Eventually, Sun Hao would become the first of a slew of tyrannical “bad last” emperors of the Southern Dynasties.

The age of Sun Hao coincided with that of Emperor Wu of the Jin. For the latter, a golden opportunity to unify China had arrived. His confidants such as Yang Hu 羊祜 and Du Yu 杜預 (whom Yang Hu had asked to carry out his behest) urged him to launch an expedition against Wu.

In the 11th month of 279, Emperor Wu issued the edict to attack Wu. An army of 200,000 strong marched south from Huainan (the area in the lower Huai valley) and Hubei, while a naval force was dispatched from Shu—which had been under Jin occupation for quite some time—to sail down the Yangzi River. By the second month of the following year (280), the Jin troops had sacked Jiangling of Wu. Soon they began to assault Jianye 建業 (Nanjing, Jiangsu), the capital of Wu. Following the ritual for someone whose state had fallen, Sun Hao, with his arms bare and his hands tied behind his back, surrendered to the Jin army. By then, the state of Wu, which had existed for four generations in a total of 52 years, was no more, and China was once again unified, under the Jin.

Sima Yan's policies

Upon unification, Emperor Wu decisively implemented two key policies. The first one was disarmament. With a few exceptions, soldiers under the control of provinces (*zhou*) and regions (*jun*) were demobilized, and returned to farm life. This helped the Jin transition from war to peace. In future times of war, the central forces in Luoyang and other key points would be deployed. This policy aimed at eventually reducing the military power held by the provinces.

The second policy was the introduction of the land-owning system (*zhantian zhi* 占田制) and the land-based taxation system (*ketian zhi* 課田制) as well as other taxation measures. Under the land-owning system, an adult male owned up to 70 *mu* (1 *mu* is about 5 ares) of arable land and an adult female up to 30 *mu*. Every household declared its land under cultivation to the state. Officials owned much larger shares of land, ranging from 50 *qing* (1 *qing* = 100 *mu*) for those in the first rank, to 10 *qing* for those in the ninth rank. It set the upper limit for the rank-based land ownership, which actually restricted unlimited land ownership by individuals.

As a parallel system, the land-based taxation system levied taxes on 50 *mu* of land per adult male and 20 *mu* per adult female.

As early as 196, Cao Cao introduced the civilian state farm (*tuntian* 屯田) system at Xu (near Xuchang, Henan) where he was based. State farmers were obliged to give up 60% of their

harvest as tax if they were provided with an ox by the government, or 50% of their harvest if they used their own oxen.

Military state farms (*juntun* 軍屯) were also set up near border areas in Wu and Shu. They were abolished in the Wei-Jin transition period. Civilian state farms were abolished after the Jin conquest of the Wu (280).

The succession problem and the War of the Eight Princes

In the last years of Emperor Wu's reign, Yang Jun 楊駿, a member of the powerful Yang lineage, took control of power at court. After Emperor Wu died in 290, he became *de facto* head of the court. This was reminiscent of the last phase of the Eastern Han when the court was dominated by the consort relatives (*waiqi* 外戚; male relatives of the imperial consorts).

The prince who succeeded to the throne was Sima Zhong 司馬衷 (Emperor Hui 惠). He was a most fatuous sovereign. Once he was told that people were starving (because war had caused a severe food shortage). Surprised, he asked, "Why didn't they eat meat porridge?" That is comparable to Marie Antoinette's "Let them eat cake."

The emperor's wife, Empress Jia (Jia Nanfeng 賈南風), was a strong-willed woman, who loathed to live under the dominance of Yang Jun. Through the hands of Sima Liang, prince of Runan 汝南王司馬亮, and Sima Wei, prince of Chu 楚王司馬瑋, she had Yang Jun executed, only to have Sima Liang and Sima Wei themselves killed and seize power for herself. For close to 10 years, when Empress Jia held power, the political situation was relatively stable while famous personages such as Zhang Hua 張華 and Pei Wei 裴頠 served as top leaders.

In the 12th month of 299, Empress Jia had Crown Prince Sima Yu 司馬遹 deposed and killed. That caused widespread outrage at court and beyond. The situation began to get out of control. In the fourth month of 300, Sima Lun, prince of Zhao 趙王司馬倫, killed Empress Jia and pushed out her faction, and in the first month of the following year, incarcerated Emperor Hui and ascended the throne himself. This move incurred the opposition of all the princes. Sima Lun was attacked and killed, but the internecine struggle among the princes dragged on as the Central Plains was thrown into complete chaos.

Known in history as the War of the Eight Princes, this mayhem continued until the 12th month of 306, when Sima Yue, prince of Donghai 東海王司馬越, set up Sima Chi 司馬熾 (Emperor Huai 懷) as the new emperor. In the meantime, forces defying central authority had begun to carve out their turfs, as the Western Jin declined and fell.

Then, Sima Yue, prince of Donghai, who had tried very hard to prop up the Western Jin, died in 311. With that, the second phase of the mayhem in North China began. At that time, Liu Yuan 劉淵, head of the Xiongnu in Shanxi, employed Shi Le 石勒 of Jie 羯 descent and Wang Mi 王弥, leader of Han refugees, to seize control of the Henan and Shandong areas. Shi Le attacked the Jin army, capturing and killing over 100,000 of its officers and men.

By then, Liu Yuan already died, and his son Liu Cong 劉聰 succeeded. He took the opportunity to dispatch his subordinate generals Liu Yao 劉曜 and Wang Mi to launch a large-scale assault on the Jin capital Luoyang (east of Luoyang, Henan). Having sacked the city, they went out of their way to plunder and destroy it in the sixth month of 311. As a consequence of this tragic event, known in history as the "Troubles of Yongjia" (named after the reign title), the city of Luoyang was burned to the ground, while tens of thousands of people lost their lives. Emperor Huai himself was taken to Pingyang 平陽 (Linfen, Shanxi), the capital of Xiongnu. Emperor Hui's consort Empress Yang 羊 was taken as the wife of Liu Yao.

By then the Western Jin had in fact fallen. When Emperor Huai was killed in Pingyang one year later, Sima Ye 司馬鄴 (Emperor Min 愍), the grandson of Emperor Wu, ascended

the throne in Chang'an. When the city eventually fell to attacks by the Xiongnu in 316, Emperor Min, just like his predecessor, was taken to Pingyang, where he met the same tragic fate in early 318.

The Five Barbarian Groups and the Sixteen States

The Five Barbarian Groups and the states they founded

In 304, the Xiongnu, who played a main part in the Troubles of Yongjia, founded the state of Han (Former Zhao later). In the same year, the Ba-Cong 巴竇 (Ba-Di 巴氏) people entered the Sichuan area, founded another state of Han (renamed Cheng later). One hundred and thirty-five years later, in 439, the Northern Liang, another state founded by the Xiongnu, was destroyed by the Northern Wei of the Xianbei, and North China was once again united.

This period is known as the age of the Five Barbarian Groups and the Sixteen States. These Five Barbarian Groups refer to five non-Han ethnic groups. They are the Xiongnu, Jie, Xianbei, Di, and Qiang. Strictly speaking, during this period, there were a total of 19 states. Of these, the Dai (later renamed [Northern] Wei), the short-lived Western Yan, and the even more ephemeral Ran-Wei are generally excluded. The remaining Sixteen States are: the Former Zhao, Later Zhao, Former Yan, Former Qin, Later Yan, Later Qin, Southern Yan, Northern Yan, Western Qin, Former Liang, Later Liang, Southern Liang, Northern Liang, Western Liang, Cheng-Han, and Xia.

Those Five Barbarian Groups did not intrude into North China all at once during the chaotic late Western Jin period. They had already come into close contact with China through in-migration and invasion in the late Eastern Han to the Three Kingdoms period.

The Xiongnu were the earliest. Those who had submitted themselves in the early Eastern Han lived in an area extending from north Shaanxi to central Shanxi during the Cao-Wei period. During the Western Jin, many of them settled in the Fen River valley in Shanxi. They worked for the Han people and engaged in farm work.

The so-called Jie were a branch of the Xiongnu. They too lived in Shanxi, and their situation was similar to that of the Xiongnu.

The Xianbei were divided into several sub-groups such as the Murong, Yuwen, Duan, and Tuoba. They inhabited an area from the upper valley of the Liao River to north Hebei and north Shanxi.

Starting in the late Eastern Han, the proto-Tibetan Di and Qiang had been living in Shaanxi and Gansu.

North China found itself in this kind of chaotic situation when the War of the Eight Princes was still unfolding. In 304, Liu Yuan 劉淵 assumed the title *da chanyu* 大單于 for the supreme leader of the Xiongnu, and adopted "Han" as the title of his state. He enfeoffed his kinsmen and meritorious officers such as Shi Le 石勒 of the Jie in regions and counties. In 309, he set up his capital at Pingyang, which showed his intention to move south. In the following year, Liu Yuan died, and his son, Liu Cong 劉聰, ascended his throne. Liu Cong sent Shi Le and Liu Yao 劉曜, one of his kinsmen, to attack Luoyang. After they sacked the city and captured Emperor Huai 懷 of the Western Jin, Liu Cong ordered Liu Yao to attack Chang'an (Xi'an, Shaanxi). When Liu Yao took the city and captured Emperor Min 愍, the Western Jin fell (316).

In 318, Liu Cong died, and his son Liu Can 劉粲, who succeeded, was killed in a revolt that threatened to throw the Lius out of power. Both Liu Yao and Shi Le played a part in suppressing the revolt. Liu Yao then seized power, set up his capital at Chang'an, and renamed

his state as Zhao (Former Zhao). Shi Le, however, went independent, set up his capital at Xiangguo 襄國 (Xingtai, Hebei), and founded another Zhao (known as “Later Zhao” in history) state, as a rival power to the Former Zhao.

In Chang’an, Liu Yao set up the Ancestral Temple and built palace structures; he settled a large number of people from the outside to strengthen the city. He promoted education, lending support to the Grand Academy (*taixue* 太學) and elementary schools (*xiaoxue* 小學). These policies show that he had a profound understanding of Chinese culture. According to the sources, he was a reader of Chinese books (including the Confucian Classics, histories such as *Mr. Zuo’s Commentary to the Chunqiu*, and books in the Masters’ category such as the *Art of War* by Master Sun), a good prose writer in Chinese, and a skillful calligrapher good at cursive and clerical scripts. The perception that as the sovereign of a non-Han state, he was almost completely ignorant of Chinese culture, as evidenced by his barbaric behavior, shows a lack of understanding and is contrary to the fact.

Liu Yao’s son Liu Cong was known for his intelligence and was well versed in the classics, history, and books in the masters’ category when he was a child. He was a skillful calligrapher and an excellent writer of poetry and rhapsodies.

This tradition in which a non-Han sovereign was familiar with Chinese scholarship passed on to later rulers such as Fu Jian 苻堅 of the Former Qin and Tuoba Hong 拓跋宏 of the Northern Wei (Emperor Xiaowen 孝文).

The powerful Later Zhao that took over Guandong (the Central Plains, Hebei, and Shandong) destroyed the Former Zhao based in Guanzhong (Xi’an and surrounding areas in south Shaanxi) in 329. Its founder Shi Le was born to a Jie tribal chieftain living in Wuxiang 武鄉 (in Shanxi). His people, the Jie, derived from the Qiangqu 羌渠 branch of the Xiongnu. When Shi Le was 20 (19) years old, Shanxi was hit by a famine, and he was abducted and sold into bondage in Shandong.

His experience reminds us of what Liu Xuan 劉宣, one of Liu Yuan’s kinsmen, once said, “The Jin are immoral and treat us like slaves.” But here he used the expression “slaves” more as a trope in describing what the Xiongnu felt like under the Han. However, Shi Le actually fell victim to slavery. When he and a large number of non-Han people were being transported through Shandong, they had to wear cangues on their necks. This gives us a glimpse into the miserable condition some of the non-Han people found themselves in.

Later, Shi Le formed a bandit group with other slaves and became their leader. When Liu Yuan rebelled against the Western Jin and established the Han, the Central Plains was thrown into mayhem. After an analysis of the situation, Shi Le led his followers to join Liu Yuan. Soon he won the trust of Liu Yuan and was entrusted with a plan to conquer Guandong (the Central Plains, Shandong, and Hebei). This, however, led to his rapid rise in power, as he drifted away from the control of the Han.

As the Han (Former Zhao) remained focused on Guanzhong in the west, Shi Le, following the advice of his strategist Zhang Bin 張賓, adopted a gradual approach while based in Xiangguo to build his power base in Guandong in the east.

In 319, Liu Yao had moved his capital to Chang’an in Guanzhong and renamed his state from “Han” to [Former] “Zhao.” It was then that Shi Le declared his independence and, with 24 commanderies under his control, established the state of Zhao, and assumed the titles of “king of Zhao” and *da chanyu*. The state is known as “Later Zhao” in history. Thereafter, Shi Le began to advance steadily westward until 329 when he vanquished the Former Zhao. In the following year, he ascended the imperial throne.

As ruler of the Later Zhao, he extended some protection to the Han people and severely punished those non-Han people who maltreated them. In addition, he showed much respect

for Chinese culture and strictly banned certain non-Han customs abhorred by the Han, for instance, levirate and holding weddings while still in mourning.

At that time, the non-Han and Han distrusted each other. This kind of mentality often led to severe confrontation between them. Murder and pillage were widespread. The policies Shi Le adopted aimed to resolve conflicts between the non-Han and the Han. Viewed in the context of later development, these were of profound significance, because they were attempts to move from conflict to harmonization and integration.

The spread of Buddhism

The harmonization policy of Shi Le was strongly influenced by Buddhism. Of special importance was monk Fotucheng 佛圖澄, who converted him. Fotucheng came from Qiuci 龜茲 (Kucha) in the Western Regions. He received ordination in Oḍḍiyāna 烏菴 (in north India) and studied Buddhism in Jibin 罽賓 (Kashmir). At that time, Hīnayāna Buddhism was in vogue in north India and Qiuci. It seems that Fotucheng also brought Hīnayāna Buddhism into China. In 310, he arrived in Luoyang and was horrified by the massacre committed by Shi Le's army. He criticized it as unjust, taught enlightenment, and convinced Shi Le to become a believer.

In this period of endless war, traditional values had fallen by the wayside. People fervently embraced Buddhism, which promises salvation in the next life. The presence of Fotucheng and later monks (for example, Kumārajīva in the Later Qin, famous for translating the *Lotus Sutra*), equipped with magic and fresh knowledge, in the North was nothing short of extraordinary. The fact that Shi Le protected Buddhism was not only a result of his own faith in the religion, but also of his realization that Buddhism was a powerful way to win the hearts of the people.

The rise of Xianbei

In 337, Murong Huang of the Xianbei, one of the Five Barbarian Groups, set up his capital at Longcheng 龍城 (Chaoyang, Liaoning) in Liaoxi, and assumed the title of king of the [Former] Yan, poised for an advance south.

The term Xianbei appeared in history for the first time at the end of the Western Han. The *Book of the Later Han* (Hou Han shu 後漢書), the standard history of the Eastern Han, says that the Xianbei were descendants of the Donghu 東胡, who had thrived in the Warring States period in Mongolia. The state of Donghu was destroyed by the Xiongnu ca. 206 BCE. The Xianbei came under the control of the Xiongnu in the Xar Moron River valley, where they led a nomadic life.

With the decline of the Xiongnu in the early first century CE, the Xianbei began to gradually assert their independence. Around the middle of the second century, Tanshihuai 檀石槐 assumed power (166 CE), uniting all Xianbei tribes and taking control of entire Mongolia. When the Xianbei were strong enough, Tanshihuai led them in invading the Eastern Han.

Subsequently, in the early third century, the Xianbei tribes, consisting mainly of the Murong 慕容, Yuwen 宇文, Tuoba 拓跋, and Qifu 乞伏 branches, became the dominant power across Inner Mongolia. As the Western Jin went into decline, they began to migrate into North China.

During the reign of Tanshihuai, the name of Murong appeared as one of the Xianbei tribes. The Murong led a nomadic life in the area between Youbeiping 右北平 and

Shanggu 上谷 (north and northeast of Beijing). By the early third century, they had migrated from the Daling River valley to Liaoxi and their lifestyle had become pastro-agrarian.

In 337, Murong Huang 慕容皝, son of Murong Hui 慕容廆 (head of the Murong branch of the Xianbei), founded the [Former] Yan, one of the Sixteen States, which was to become the dominant power in Northeast Asia. In 342, he defeated Koguryō and sacked its capital Wandu 丸都 (Hwando; Ji'an, Jilin). In 344, he trounced the Yuwen.

In 348, Murong Huang died and his son and successor Murong Jun 慕容儁 continued the expansion. Taking advantage of the disorder in the Later Zhao, he seized hold of Hebei. Having vanquished the Ran-Wei in 352, he moved his capital to Ye in 357, where the Later Zhao had been based. By then, the Former Yan had become a great power of the Central Plains.

About the same time, to the west, there was another power center in North China: Guanzhong, dominated by the proto-Tibetan Di 氐 and Qiang 羌. At a time when the Later Zhao was sinking into chaos, the Di chieftain Fu Hong 苻洪 and the Qiang chieftain Yao Yizhong 姚弋仲 were engaged in a power struggle. Eventually, Fu Hong's son Fu Jiàn 苻健 arose to establish the Former Qin in Chang'an in 351, ushering in a new era in which two great powers—the Former Qin of the Di in the west and the Former Yan of the Xianbei in the east—rivaled each other in North China.

Not long afterward, Fu Jian 苻堅, nephew of Fu Jiàn and one of the great rulers of the Sixteen States period, ascended the throne of the Former Qin, vanquished the Former Yan (370), and forcefully implemented the non-Han-Han integration policy attempted by Shi Le. That marked a great turning point in the annals of Sixteen States history.

After the demise of the Former Yan, four Murong states would emerge: the Later Yan (384), Western Yan (384), Shandong-based Southern Yan (398), and Hebei-based Northern Yan (407; founded by a Han with a Murong figurehead).

Confrontation between the non-Han and the Han

In the aforementioned War of the Eight Princes, Sima Ying 司馬穎, prince of Chengdu, having been trounced by Wang Jun 王浚, governor of You Province 幽州, turned to Liu Yuan of the Xiongnu for help. Liu Yuan's top adviser Liu Xuan remonstrated strongly against it. On the other hand, many of the Han at that time opposed it as well, arguing, "They are not like us, and thus must be at odds with us at heart," showing a strong sense of hostility.

Thus, during the Western Jin and the Sixteen States, both the non-Han and Han maintained a sharp distinction between what they considered "us" and "them." Each had a strong notion of belonging to a unique, exclusive group.

As the non-Han and the Han, guided by this notion, fought a sanguinary struggle, some meaningful, contrasting opinions on what kind of person would be suitable to rule over the Chinese world emerged.

Once, Liu Kun 劉琨, a Western Jin loyalist of Han descent, sent a letter to Shi Le of the Jie, requesting a rescue army, which said, "Since antiquity, there has not been a single non-Han who became emperor. But there were non-Han who were famous court officials with great accomplishment... With your military talent, General, wherever you turn, you will be invincible."

In other words, although Liu Kun of Han descent asked Shi Le for help, he sounded rather superior, making clear that as a non-Han he would have no chance of ascending the throne.

During the Troubles of Yongjia, a multitude of heroes came to the fore. One of them was Wang Jun 王浚, who coveted the imperial throne. Shi Le even attempted to persuade him

to ascend the throne. But Wang was suspicious of Shi Le's personal ambitions. Shi Le's envoy answered, using the same language Liu Kun used in his letter to Shi Le,

Since antiquity, indeed there have been famous court officials of non-Han descent, but never has there been a non-Han emperor. Not that General Shi (Shi Le) hates to be emperor so much that he yields his chance on purpose to the brilliant lord (Wang Jun), but that he is concerned that if he takes the throne, it will not be sanctioned by Heaven and man.

The cases of Liu Kun and Wang Jun show that, although the Han acknowledged the military prowess of the non-Han when their own survival was at stake, there was a widely accepted prejudice among them against a non-Han becoming emperor.

At the opposite end of the spectrum, there was Liu Yuan of the Xiongnu, who said, "Emperors and kings—do they always come from the same source? Great Yu of Xia came from the Western Barbarians (Rong); King Wen of Zhou was born among the Eastern Barbarians (Yi). What they had was given by virtue."

Murong Hui, father of the Former Yan founder Murong Huang, once said, "Great Yu of Xia came from the Western Barbarians (Qiang); King Wen of Zhou was born among the Eastern Barbarians (Yi). What is most important is will and vision."

As non-Han sovereigns, Liu Yuan and Murong Hui argued against the assertion that "under no circumstances would a non-Han become emperor."

However, not all non-Han leaders wanted to be emperor. In the Former Zhao-Later Zhao transition period, Yao Yizhong 姚弋仲, of the Qiang in Guanzhong, father of Yao Chang (the founder of the Later Qin), regarded the Eastern Jin as the legitimate regime. Viewed from a broad historical perspective, Yao's view may well have been a result of his inferiority complex toward Han culture. The high level of accomplishment of Han culture in comparison with non-Han culture, which was being abandoned, was probably the root cause (conscious or unconscious) of such a mentality.

It would seem that Yao Yizhong and Shi Le shared the same view. Shi Le once acknowledged his own inferiority by referring himself as "a small-time non-Han (*xiaohu* 小胡) and a descendant of the Western Barbarians (Rongyi 戎裔)." In reality, however, Shi Le coveted the throne, and eventually went it alone and declared himself emperor.

Ran Min and his time

Upon ascension to the throne, Shi Le's nephew Shi Hu moved his capital to Ye 鄴 (southwest of Linzhang, Hebei). Although he was a talented military commander, Shi Hu was notorious for his excessive use of corvée labor, extreme extravagance, and tyrannical rule. Consequently, many of his people were driven to rebellion. As soon as he died, a palace coup took place, in which Ran Min 冉閔, Shi Hu's adopted grandson and a Han, came to power.

Under Ran Min, the kind of interethnic hatred that was common during the Sixteen States period reached its peak. Ran Min was born to a Han warrior family. After his father became an adopted son of Shi Hu, the Jie founder of the Later Zhao, Ran Min himself adopted the Jie family name Shi. Known for his bravery and tactical skills, Ran Min became a favorite with Shi Hu and a top general. Upon Shi Hu's death, he helped Shi Zun 石遵, one of Shi Hu's sons, to gain the throne. However, since Shi Zun failed to keep the promise that he would make Ran Min heir apparent, Ran Min had him killed, and placed Shi Jian 石鑒, Shi Zun's brother, on the throne.

After Shi Jian made a failed attempt on his life, Ran Min carried out a genocide of the non-Han. It was reported that more than 200,000 of their corpses were scattered outside the city and devoured by wolves. As it happened, those with tall noses and barbarian-style mustaches were killed indiscriminately. Millions of non-Han refugees fled west and most died of hunger, disease, and slaughter. In the Central Plains, farming came to a standstill, while robbery and famine ran rampant.

When Ran Min seized the throne in 350, he adopted “Great Wei” as the state name and continued to use Ye as his capital. This was one of the rare cases in which a Han regime was born in the North in the Sixteen States period.

Soon, Ran Min’s army was thoroughly defeated by the Yao Xiang’s Qiang army, with over 100,000 dead. In 352, having being worsted by the Former Yan, Ran Min was captured and killed and his regime collapsed.

After the fall of the Ran-Wei, the intense ethnic hatred-induced misery that had been experienced in North China began to fade. Chaos gradually gave way to a trend toward unification. A new age emerged in which there was a move toward non-Han–Han integration. The Former Yan founded by the Murong replaced the Wei as the dominant power in the east. It was rivaled by the Former Qin of the proto-Tibetan Di entrenched in Guanzhong.

Fu Jian and his time

The Di, as one of the Five Barbarian Groups, were a proto-Tibetan people living in present-day Shaanxi and Gansu. Based in Wudu 武都 (seat: south of Xihe, Gansu) and Lueyang 略陽 (east of Tianshui), they were led by such magnate lineages as the Yangs, Fus 苻, and Lüs. The Di tribal chieftain Fu Hong 苻洪 founded the Di state in 350 when he declared himself king. But he was soon killed. His son and successor Fu Jiàn 苻健 led his father’s followers into Guanzhong. In 351, he declared himself Heavenly King and adopted “[Former] Qin” as the state name and made Chang’an his capital. After the collapse of the Later Zhao, the Former Qin in the west and the Former Yan in the east became the two dominant powers in North China.

The truly influential leader of the Former Qin was Fu Jian 苻堅 (b. 338) (nephew of Fu Jiàn and grandson of Fu Hong), who came to power in 357. He set up a legal system, restrained trade and handicraft, and promoted agriculture. He strengthened state power and built a road system that connected Chang’an with the provinces. He promoted culture, encouraging and protecting learning. Fu Jian was an accomplished student of Han learning. During his reign, he adopted the traditional Han way of government.

Fu Jian made significant territorial gains. He crushed the dominant eastern power, the Former Yan, in 370, destroyed the Former Liang in 376, and subdued the state of Dai founded by the Tuoba branch of the Xianbei, who had grown increasingly powerful in the North. Thus, North China was unified.

In the process of conquering the North, Fu Jian was aided by a talented Han literatus, Wang Meng 王猛, who was a most formidable general and the top court official. But Fu Jian did not always follow Wang’s advice. When the Former Qin was engaged in a decisive war for supremacy in the Central Plains against its old enemy the Former Yan, the Yan royal Murong Cui 慕容垂 came over to seek refuge (369). Wang Meng advised Fu thus, “Murong Chui and his son are like dragons and tigers, not tamable. If they rise again, they can’t be controlled. They should be eliminated as soon as possible.” To that Fu Jian answered, “I am now in the process of recruiting heroes to pacify the Four Seas, why should I kill them?” So the Murongs were taken in. With their help, Fu Jian defeated and annexed the Former Yan. He then made a great effort to tear down the barrier between the Qin and Yan peoples.

Fu Jian's vision

After Fu Jian assumed power, traditional Chinese rites were introduced and performed. He set up a Hall of Brilliance (*mingtang* 明堂) (a sacred ritual structure with roots in antiquity), carried out the most sacred sacrificial rite in honor of Heaven in the south suburb of the capital, and conducted in person the sacred field (*jitian* 籍田) rite while his empress took part in the sericulture rite.

After the Former Qin became the hegemonic power of the North following the conquest of the Former Yan, Fu Jian began to develop his state based on the Confucian ideal and reform customs at a feverish pace. In an effort to win the hearts of the educated elite, the court registered the households of those belonging to the literati class during Wei-Jin times.

People of the dominant Di ethnic group were settled in recently conquered territories, often in the outlying areas, while the conquered peoples, such as Xianbei, Qiang, and Jie, were moved to areas surrounding the capital; some of them came into favor with the court. Buddhism became highly respected at court. One of Fu Jian's most trusted advisers was Dao'an 道安, an influential Buddhist monk, a pupil of Fotucheng, and mentor of Huiyuan 慧遠, who would be revered as the first patriarch of Pure Land Buddhism.

The implementation of these policies, however, tended to weaken support from the Di, on which the Former Qin regime relied, giving rise to the danger of decline and fall. On several occasions, key court officials of Di descent remonstrated with Fu Jian about the issue.

Fu Jian's youngest brother Fu Rong 苻融 once said to his brother,

Your Majesty favor the Xianbei, Qiang, and Jie. They live in the capital's suburbs while our own Di people are banished to faraway places.... The Xianbei, Qiang, and Jie, who gather in large numbers, are the enemies of the state.

This kind of criticism Fu Jian simply brushed aside.

The difference in opinion between Fu Jian and his senior officials came into focus at a time when the Southern Expedition was being discussed. The court officials were opposed to the idea. They argued that the Eastern Jin was well run and full of talents like Xie An 謝安; the Yangzi River, which was then controlled by the Jin, as a natural barrier was easy to defend and hard to attack; the Qin troops, who had recently conquered the Central Plains, had yet to recover from fatigue; and the fact that the Xianbei and other ethnic groups were favored while the Di were neglected made the country vulnerable. Even his most trusted top official, Wang Meng, of Han descent, advised against the attack on the Eastern Jin.

All this was to no avail. Fu Jian rejected the opinion of his officials and raised an expeditionary army, allegedly one million strong, consisting of a hodgepodge of people of different ethnicities. The expedition that followed ended at the battle of the Fei River in 383, which was a disastrous defeat for the Former Qin. The various ethnic groups seized this opportunity to rebel, as the Former Qin itself, a country of many ethnicities, disintegrated. In the midst of the mayhem, Fu Jian himself was killed by the Qiang chieftain Yao Chang 姚萇.

Among the factors that led to the disaster at the Fei River, apart from chance and bad luck, the most important was the fact that the people Fu Jian favored were not the Di, but the Han and Xianbei. By adopting this policy, Fu Jian risked losing support from his own people who had helped him to power. While his empire was a paragon of diversity, the people of various

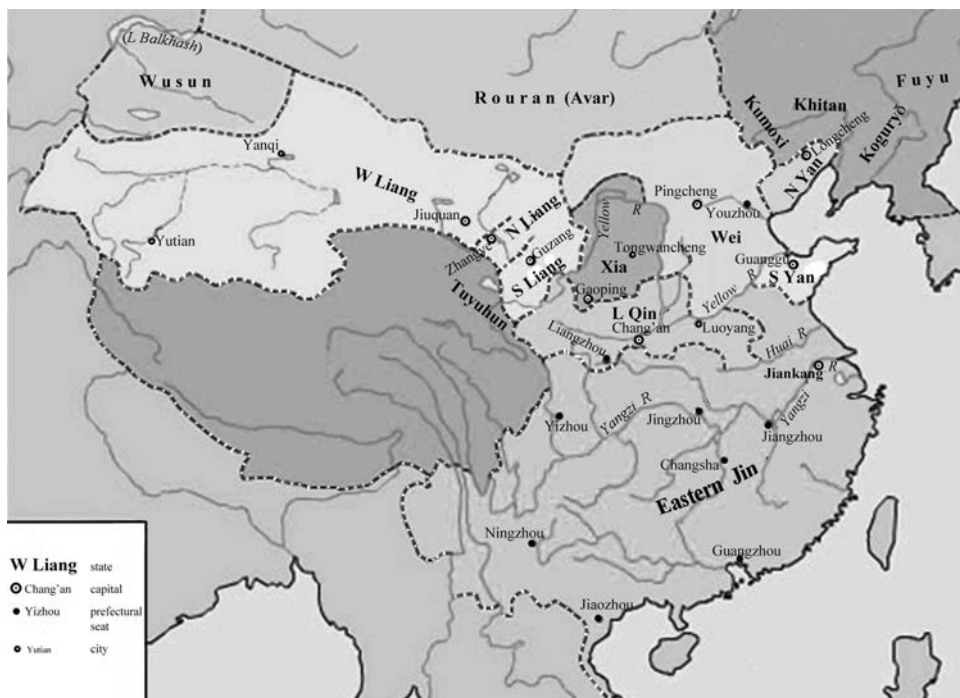
ethnicities had yet to integrate into the society. It was impossible for the Qin army, composed of these people, to achieve a significant degree of cohesiveness, a necessity for victory.

In the wake of the battle of the Fei River, North China was again plunged into a chaotic period of division. Different ethnic groups vied against one another in setting up their own states. One of them was the Northern Wei, which was the revived state of Dai, under a different name. Founded by the Tuoba branch of the Xianbei in 386, the Northern Wei would strive for territorial expansion and vanquish the eastern power of Later Yan (436), and achieve unification in the North in 439, more than a century after the outbreak of chaos since the Troubles of Yongjia, when its third sovereign Emperor Taiwu 太武 annexed the northwestern power of Northern Liang,

The Eastern Jin

South China and the founding of the Eastern Jin

As the turmoil in North China that accompanied the War of the Eight Princes and the invasion by the Five Barbarian Groups intensified, refugees continued to pour into the South. The arrival of these northerners challenged the dominant position of the magnate lineages of the South. But there was not much they could do without royal power. It was then that Sima Rui, a middle-aged man with impeccable royal pedigree, was appointed as area commander in charge of the military affairs of the entire South. After Chang'an was lost, he ascended the throne (Emperor Yuan 元) in 317. On the advice of Wang Dao 王導, a powerful adviser from the North, he came to rely on the power of the magnate lineages of the South (Map 5.2).



Map 5.2 The Eastern Jin and Sixteen States. (See Tan Qixiang, vol. 4, 3–4.)

For their part, the magnate lineages lent support to the emperor. Their leader Gu Rong 顧榮 did his utmost to raise the authority of the regime. All this happened as refugees continued to arrive in the South in large numbers as they attempted to escape war and chaos in the North.

As the northerners were being absorbed into Emperor Yuan's government, Wang Dao came to play an extraordinary role in raising the morale of the northerners, and urged them to take part in the great cause of reconquering the Central Plains.

Among the southern magnate lineages themselves, there was a major distinction between those famous lineages that had produced intellectuals generation after generation, and those newly rising magnate lineages. Many of the growing number of northerners were Jin aristocrats whose status was above that of the southern magnate lineages.

Before the founding of the Eastern Jin, a southern magnate named Zhou Qi 周圯 (son of the famous Western Jin general Zhou Chu 周處) had emerged as an active supporter of the Jin government, suppressing local rebellions led by Shi Bing 石冰 and Chen Min 陳敏. However, eventually, he loathed the fact that people from the Central Plains dominated the court. Before his death, he said to his son Zhou Xie 周緄, "It is those northerners who kill me!" The son then started a rebellion. If the southern magnate lineages then became united, they would have a great impact on the Jin government. However, in reality, they were not; even the Zhous, the top-rated great magnate lineage, could not achieve unity among themselves, so the rebellion was easily crushed by Wang Dao.

Whereas the advanced culture the northern aristocrats brought with them had a strong impact on the "countrified" folks of the southern magnate lineages, the most powerful northern official Wang Dao treated those of famous southern lineages in Wu and Kuaiji very well. He appointed them commandery impartial judges (*jun zhongzheng* 郡中正; top judges of the Nine Ranks system) and used them to push the values of the Central Plains.

A main holder of military power under Emperor Yuan then was Wang Dao's ambitious cousin Wang Dun 王敦. Under Wang Dun were southern generals Tao Kan 陶侃 and Zhou Fang 周訪. It was through their help that Wang Dun was kept in check. However, gradually, Wang Dun became too powerful to be ignored by the court, which gave rise to the saying "The Wangs and Simas jointly rule the world."

Emperor Yuan also put much power in the hands of Liu Wei 劉隗 and Diao Xie 刁協, both from the North, using them to strengthen the throne and check the power of the Wangs. In the name of purging Liu Wei and Diao Xie, Wang Dun, then based in Wuchang (in Hubei), moved down the Yangzi River to attack Shitoucheng, the defensive outpost of Jiankang. Emperor Yuan sent him a letter to sue for peace. Eventually, the court had to give away much military power. Liu Wei escaped, but Diao Xie was caught and killed. The emperor, broken by the incident, passed away in 322.

The Eastern Jin after Emperor Yuan

Coming to power after Emperor Yuan was Emperor Ming 明 (Sima Shao 司馬紹), who was known for his courage and decisiveness and was hated by Wang Dun and company. Inevitably, tensions between the court and Wang Dun rose again. There was strong objection to the reprehensible behavior of Wang's generals. In the course of the war that followed, Wang Dun died of disease. Overcoming difficulties, the court gained the upper hand and eliminated Wang Dun's followers (324).

In 325, Emperor Ming died. Wang Dao, Yu Liang 庾亮, and Wen Jiao 溫嶠 were named as bulwark ministers (regents) to assist the young Emperor Cheng 成 (Sima Yan 司馬衍).

Of these, Yu Liang had been lecturer-in-waiting (*shijiang* 侍講) when Emperor Ming was crown prince; his sister was Emperor Ming's empress. As Yu was gaining ascendancy, consort relatives came to dominate court politics. In contrast with Wang Dao's easygoing way of government, Yu Liang's hardline approach was very unpopular. Su Jun 蘇峻, a top general instrumental in suppressing the Wang Dun rebellion, voiced his resentment and was deprived of military power, which was given to Yu's brother. This prompted the Su Jun rebellion of 327.

Before long, Su Jun took over the capital Jiankang. Yu Liang was able to break through Sun's defense line, and joined forces with Wen Jiao in Jiangzhou 江州 and Tao Kan in Jingzhou 荊州. Prefect of Xuzhou 徐州 Xi Jian 郗鑒, who had been the leader of refugees, also joined the fray. In the battle that followed, Tao Kan advanced into the west suburb of Jiankang, and Su Jun himself perished (328). The rebellion in his name was crushed in 329.

Surviving this chaotic age, the Eastern Jin regime came to rely on the support of two powerful military forces—the Northern Command (Beifu 北府) and the Western Command (Xifu 西府). The former was based in Yanzhou 兗州, north of the lower Yangzi River, and Jingkou 京口 (Zhenjiang, Zhejiang), east of Jiankang. The latter was based in Jingzhou 荊州 in the middle Yangzi valley.

However, from the late Eastern Jin to the end of the Southern Dynasties, the Western Command with its base in Jingzhou (Hunan and Hubei) came to challenge the court based in Jiankang and backed by the Northern Command.

The rise of Huan Wen 桓溫

In 345, General Huan Wen was appointed prefect of Jingzhou (head of the Western Command). His father Huan Yi 桓彝 had been awarded for merit in the war against Wang Dun and died defending a city in the war against Su Jun. Huan Wen would soon become the most powerful commander of the Eastern Jin.

Among his many accomplishments were the conquest of the Cheng-Han (one of the Sixteen States) and the recovering of Shu (347). With both Jingzhou and Shu under his control, Huan Wen dominated the upper and middle Yangzi. The court became concerned about the Huan Wen's power and ordered Jin Hao 殷浩, Huan's childhood friend, to keep him in check.

In North China, in the bedlam after the death of Shi Le and Shi Hu, many of the non-Han and the Han under the Later Zhao wanted to submit to the Eastern Jin. Under these circumstances, Huan Wen submitted a request for a northern invasion. When the court decided to launch the invasion, it gave the command of the operation to Yin Hao, much to the chagrin of Huan Wen. When the invasion ended in total defeat, Huan Wen impeached the commander Yin Hao, who was subsequently sent into exile. Huan took over his military power in the Yangzi River valley, and went on to launch three Northern Expeditions. In the first one, he went as far as the suburbs of Chang'an (354). In the second one he moved into the Central Plains and captured Luoyang, where he had the Jin imperial tombs repaired.

As Huan Wen amassed real power on the strength of military merit, he carried out domestic reforms such as "naturalization" of northerners. In 369, he launched his third Northern Expedition (after Luoyang was lost again in 365), which ended disastrously. Both the Former Yan of the Xianbei and the Former Qin of the Di now pushed south.

Against this background, Xie An 謝安 rose to the occasion. Xian An was from a famous lineage in Yangxia 陽夏 (Taikang, Henan) in Chenjun 陳郡. He was appointed adjutant of Huan Wen, when he was already 40.

Huan Wen appreciated Xie An's talent and tried to promote him. But Xi An was against Huan's imperial ambitions. When Emperor Jianwen 簡文, who had been placed on the throne as a puppet, died (372), his testamentary edict was issued. On Xi An's advice, it named the emperor's son Sima Yao 司馬曜 (Emperor Xiaowu 孝武) as successor instead of Huan Wen, as had been expected. In 373, Huan Wen died without realizing his ambitions.

The battle of the Fei River

After Huan Wen's death, Xie An dominated the Eastern Jin court. His style of government was reminiscent of Wang Dao. He strove to keep a balance among various forces and rule benevolently. After he promoted his nephew Xie Xuan 謝玄 to head the Northern Command, Xie Xuan wasted no time in planning for the defense of the capital. This appointment was not only a counterweight against the Western Command, but also, importantly, aimed at addressing the increasingly urgent situation north of the Yangzi River.

Previously, when Huan Wen was launching his Northern Expeditions, he came into conflict with the Former Qin of the Di. In Xie An's time, the Former Qin came into its prime. Under the brilliant leadership of Fu Jian, it began to encroach into the territory of the South.

Faced with this threat, Xie Xuan recruited brave generals Liu Laozhi 劉牢之, He Qian 何謙, and others, strengthening the Northern Command. Times and again, the Northern Command army worsted the Former Qin invaders. That eventually prompted Fu Jian to launch a massive invasion in 383 with an army allegedly one million strong.

After its main force sacked Shouyang 壽陽 in Anhui, the Former Qin army seemed unstoppable. However, at the next major engagement, along the Fei River, something unexpected happened. The invading army of the Former Qin, comprised of diverse ethnic groups, was thrown into total confusion. Fu Jian himself, wounded by arrows, narrowly escaped on horse. The Eastern Jin army had scored a stunning victory.

However, in spite of this great merit, Xie An, after the battle, was marginalized by the aristocrat Sima Daozi 司馬道子, whose star was rising. Two years later, Xie An died, and the Eastern Jin was entering into a period of decline and dictatorship under Sima Daozi. Because of the disinterest of Emperor Xiaowu in politics, Sima Daozi, as member of the royal family, came to be entrusted with court affairs. Both Sima Daozi and the emperor indulged in wine and used power for their own benefit. As disillusion with court politics grew, society started descending into instability.

The Sun En rebellion and the rise of Liu Yu

Toward the end of the fourth century, the Way of Five Pecks of Rice Religion (Tianshi dao 天師道 or the Way of the Celestial Masters), a native Daoist religion dating back the Eastern Han, was thriving in the lower Yangzi valley. It was led by Sun Tai 孫泰. Trained by his mentor Du Zigong 杜子恭, Sun Tai used magic to attract people and asked believers to give up their property and sons and daughters to the religion. As the ranks of the believers grew markedly, even Sima Yuanxian 司馬元顯 (son of the power-holder Sima Daozi), a top Jin leader, became one of them.

In 398, Sun Tai started a rebellion. Sima Daozi got wind of it and had Sun killed. But the incident did not end there. Treading in Sun Tai's footsteps, his nephew and follower Sun En took up arms.

In 399, Sun En gathered an army of hundreds of thousands of believers. Death-defying, they believed that after death they would rise up to heaven as transcendents. The rebels

invaded the Sanwu 三吳 area in the lower Yangzi. Some of his female believers brought babies with them. The babies were put in sacks or baskets and thrown into water while Sun En said, “Congratulations! You will enter the hall of transcendents first. We will soon follow.”

When the capital Jiankang was threatened, a Jin officer called Liu Yu 劉裕 (a subordinate to the Northern Command general Liu Laozhi) played an active role in defending it and repelling the attackers. This afforded the Jingzhou-based Huan Xuan 桓玄, who inherited his father Huan Wen’s ambitions, an opportunity to send his army along the Yangzi toward Jiankang.

On the surface, Huan Xuan’s move aimed to protect Jiankang from Sun En’s threat. In reality, by then, the main force of Sun En had been scattered by Liu Yu, and Huan Xuan’s true intention was to usurp power. But Sima Daozi and his associates did not have the power to repulse Huan Xuan’s forces and had to rely on Liu Laozhi and his Western Command forces. However, despite Liu Yu’s opposition, Liu Laozhi went over to Huan Xuan’s camp.

Huan Xuan then eliminated Sima Daozi and Sima Yuanxian and their followers and went on to declare himself emperor, with “Chu” as the name of his state. He then deprived Liu Laozhi of his military power. Abandoned by his generals, Liu committed suicide.

Eventually, Liu Laozhi’s former general Liu Yu rose against Huan Xuan and killed him in 404 before seizing power as the founder of the Song dynasty in 420, the first of the Southern Dynasties.