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Edwin G. Pulleyblank*University of British Columbia**edwin@unixg.ubc.ca*

THE PEOPLES OF THE STEPPE FRONTIER IN EARLY CHINESE SOURCES*

SUMMARY

Nascent Chinese civilization once shared the north China plain and the surrounding uplands with various non-Chinese “barbarians”. The Chinese language itself is related to the Tibeto-Burman language family. Some of the “barbarians” to the west belonged to this group, especially the Qiang 羌. Of the major non-Chinese groups, the Yi 夷, along the eastern seaboard, probably spoke an Austro-asiatic language. They can be identified with a series of coastal Neolithic cultures, elements of which contributed much to the formation of Chinese civilization in the Central Plain. It has often been assumed that the non-Chinese in the north uplands, the Di 狄 and Xionggnu 匈奴 – in Han times nomadic rulers of the steppes of Mongolia – spoke Altaic languages. Although there is good reason to think that the Hu did speak Altaic (i.e. Mongolic), the Xionggnu, first seen in the Ordos and linked to the earlier Yiqu 義渠, were linguistically quite different. Their language may have been Yeniseian or an aberrant form of Tibeto-Burman, or without living relatives. In Han times, when *hu* 胡 had become a general term for horse-riding nomads, applied especially to the Xionggnu, the original Hu 胡 became known as the Eastern Hu 東胡. They were differentiated in Han sources into the Xianbei 鮮卑 (*Sārbi), ancestors of the historical Mongols, and the Wuhuan 烏桓 (*Awar), a name recognizable as that of the Avars who invaded Europe in the sixth century. The earliest Turkic-speaking peoples that can be identified in Chinese sources are the Dingling 丁靈, Gekun 隔昆 or Jiankun 堅昆, and Xinli 薪犁, located in South Siberia. The nomadic power immediately to the west of the Xionggnu in Han times were the Yuezhi 月氏. When the Xionggnu defeated them, their main body moved west, eventually to the Amu Darya, extinguishing the Greek kingdom in Bactria and later establishing the Kushan empire. It is argued that they were Indo-Europeans, speaking a Tocharian language of the type attested in later documents from the oasis states of the Tarim basin. Recent finds of Caucasoid mummies in Xinjiang dating from the early second millennium BCE onward suggest that this was the time when Tocharian speakers first reached the borderlands of China, bringing with them important cultural elements from the west – metallurgy and the horse-drawn chariot – that played an essential role in the formation of Chinese civilization. The beginning of the Chinese bronze age around 2000 BCE, coinciding with the traditional date of the founding of first dynasty, the Xia 夏, was probably indirectly stimulated by this event.

KEY WORDS: ancient Chinese civilization, Chinese language, “barbarians”, Tibeto-Burman, Austro-asiatic, Altaic, Yeniseian, Tocharian, Qiang, Yi, Di, Yuezhi, Xionggnu, Hu, Huns, Dingling, Kirghiz, Xianbei

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Introduction

The last millennium before the present era was the time when Chinese civilization as we know it took definite shape and emerged into the full light of history. It is true that since the discovery of the Shang 商 oracle bones we have written documents that push the historical record back into the last two or three centuries of the second millennium but they are of a limited and special kind and their interpretation is still full of problems. The world that they reveal, eked out by the material remains that have also been discovered by archaeology and the traditions, no doubt much distorted in the transmission, that have been handed down in later Chinese sources, presents at best a misty, half-lit sequence of images in which some see already the clear lineaments of the China that we know and others see a very different kind of society. With the Zhou 周 conquest, now dated with some degree of consensus to the latter half of the eleventh century, written documents begin to multiply and by the second half of the first millennium we are in the clear light of day. It is much longer, however, before the same can be said of the non-Chinese peoples on the periphery, none of whom developed writing systems of their own before the sixth century CE. Before then we have to rely, apart from archaeology, on what was recorded by the Chinese, whose horizons only gradually widened even to reach the traditional frontier with the steppe marked by the Great Wall.

Uninscribed material remains dug out of the ground by archaeologists are notoriously unable to reveal any direct information about the language of the people to whom they once belonged. Early Chinese records are also not at all informative about the languages of the peoples they came in contact with on their borders. How then can we possibly arrive at satisfying answers as to the ethnic affinities of the northern and western neighbours of the Chinese in the formative years of Chinese civilization? It is certainly not easy and I do not pretend that the picture I shall try to present will be anything but tentative. Nevertheless, by a combination of projecting backward from what we know about the linguistic situation in the region in later times down to the present and the indirect hints and clues that we can find in Chinese historical records we can attempt some answers that have a good chance of being on the right lines.

At the present time the immediate neighbours to the northwest and north of the Chinese are speakers of Altaic languages, the Turkic speaking Uighurs of Xinjiang, the Mongols of Inner Mongolia and the Mongolian People's Republic, and a few surviving speakers of Tungusic languages in Heilongjiang. In the northeast we also find Koreans, some living within the boundaries of the People's Republic of China but the great majority in North and South Korea. Their language, too, is typologically similar to Altaic and is thought by some to be genetically related, though the exact nature of the connection has not yet been clearly established. If we relied on this, we might easily assume that the northern neighbours of the Chinese had always been Altaic, and indeed this has often been assumed in the past and is still tacitly or explicitly taken for granted by many. There are, however, serious reasons for calling this easy assumption into question. In the first place, as a re-

sult of the archaeological explorations in Xinjiang carried out around the beginning of the present century we now know that the Turkic occupation of the Tarim basin did not take place until after the fall of the Uighur steppe empire in the middle of the ninth century of the present era. Before that time its inhabitants were speakers of Indo-European languages, Iranians in Kashgar and Khotan to the southwest and Tocharians to the north and east. In the second place, the old idea, still widely believed, that the first steppe nomads to create an empire in Mongolia, the Xiongnu 匈奴, were Turkic or Mongolian or at least some kind of Altaic is highly questionable and in my opinion certainly false.

It will be argued below on the basis of Chinese historical records that, although there were probably already Mongolian speakers in Mongolia when the Chinese first reached the steppe frontier, namely the people known as (Eastern) Hu (東) 胡, the Xiongnu were quite distinct from them. The Xiongnu first appear as nomads in the Ordos who were driven north across the Yellow River in 214 BCE in the time of the First Emperor of Qin 秦. They were akin to people known earlier as Rong 戎 or Di 狄 who lived as sedentary inhabitants of the upland regions of Shaanxi and Shanxi between the Wei and Fen valleys and the steppe and their conversion to pastoral nomadism was a consequence of the spread of this new military technique across the Eurasian steppes from west to east from around 800 BCE onward. The actual linguistic affinities of the Xiongnu are difficult to determine. Their language may have been unrelated to any known language or it may have belonged to the isolated Yeniseian family of languages, of which Ket is now the sole survivor, as first suggested by Louis Ligeti (1950) and explored further in Pulleyblank (1962).

A further question that has been much debated is the relation between the Xiongnu and the Huns who invaded Europe in the fourth century CE. This will not be discussed here. Suffice it to say that, in my view, the name is certainly the same and that there is almost certainly a lineal connection between the Northern Xiongnu who moved westward out of contact with the Chinese in the second century and the Huns who later appeared in Eastern Europe. Apart from the ruling group that bore the name Hun, however, the European Huns undoubtedly included other tribes with different ethnic affinities, just as their successors, the Mongols, incorporated Turkic and other tribes in their conquering horde. The empire of the Hephthalites in Afghanistan who invaded Persia and India in the fifth and sixth centuries were also known as Huns – Hūṇa in Sanskrit and White Huns, λευκοί Οὐννοί, in Greek. They too inherited the Xiongnu name, though, as we shall see, their ethnic origins were mixed, including proto-Mongol Avar elements as well.

The genetic affinities of Chinese

Let us first consider what Chinese records have to tell us about the ethnic situation in East Asia at the dawn of history. On the oracle bones we find the Shang kings centred on Anyang having relations, frequently hostile, with other surround-

ing polities in the North China plain. One of these polities, Zhou, which had sometimes been a dependency of Shang and sometimes an enemy, eventually overthrew Shang and established a new state power with its main capital near present Xi'an in Shaanxi and a newly built subsidiary capital at Luoyang in Henan. Since they both used the same Chinese written language, Shang and Zhou have to be regarded as both "Chinese" in this sense. In later times the Zhou states also used the term Xia 夏 to identify themselves in distinction from other surrounding peoples and preserved the tradition of a Xia dynasty which had preceded the Shang. Some bronze age remains in western Henan earlier than those of Shang at Anyang have been plausibly identified with Xia but positive proof is still lacking. Nevertheless the most probable hypothesis at present seems to be that a people who called themselves Xia were the first to develop a written form of the Chinese language and a state organization based on it and that this happened some time around the beginning of the second millennium. Another name that is sometimes used for "Chinese" in Zhou times, either alone or in combination with Xia, is Hua 華.¹ Hua is still used today in the sense of "Chinese" in the official name of the both the Chinese People's Republic, Zhonghua Renmin Gongheguo, and the Republic of China on Taiwan, Zhonghua minguo.

By general agreement Chinese is genetically related to Tibetan and Burmese and the large family of lesser known Tibeto-Burman languages, mostly spoken by relatively small groups without literary traditions in the mountainous regions separating China from Tibet, the Himalayas, and upland regions of Burma. The cognate roots and patterns of regular sound change that link together the Sino-Tibetan languages have not yet been worked out in the same degree of detail as those of the Indo-European family and it is perhaps doubtful that they ever will be on the basis of available evidence. Yet despite the disappointingly small number of clearly recognizable cognates between Chinese and Tibetan or Chinese and Burmese the reality of a Sino-Tibetan language family is now accepted by most specialists in the field.² Part of the problem is undoubtedly the extreme erosion that sound change has effected on Chinese monosyllables combined with the non-phonetic nature of the Chinese script which makes it difficult to reconstruct the system of prefixes and suffixes that Chinese undoubtedly once shared with Tibetan and Burmese. Another problem that has sometimes led to doubts as to the reality of a connection between Chinese and the more western branches of the family is the fact that from a syntactic point of view Chinese shows a radically different typology from that of the rest. From the time of the earliest written records Chinese has had a basically SVO (subject-verb-object) word order in contrast to most Tibeto-Burman languages in which the verb comes at the end of the sentence. Since "genetic" relationship between languages by definition refers to the sound system rather than the rules of syntax, this

¹ Hua 華 EMC ɣwaj, which also means "flower", and Xia 夏 MC ɣai', which read in the departing tone as EMC ɣai^h means "summer", the season of flowering, are quite likely etymologically related words. The graph 華 is also found as a phonetic indicator in yè 曄 EMC wip ~ wiap "brilliant, shining". A full linguistic discussion must be left for another occasion.

² See Benedict 1972; Bodman 1980; Norman 1988: 12–16.

is not a decisive issue. There is at least as much variation in syntactic typology among Indo-European as among Sino-Tibetan languages. Nevertheless the contrast between Chinese and Tibeto-Burman in this respect does call for explanation if we are interested, not just in remote genetic origins in the accepted sense but in the actual history of the various branches of the family. The most likely answer seems to be that Proto-Chinese underwent a radical restructuring through contact with other languages in the process of the formation of Chinese civilization in late prehistoric times.

What these other languages were or what they were like cannot be ascertained with certainty but there is a good deal of evidence that an Austroasiatic language, that is, a member of the family that includes Khmer and Mon, as well as many tribal languages of Southeast Asia and, more remotely, the Munda languages of India, may have played a major role (Pulleyblank 1966: 10; 1983; Mei and Norman 1976). It seems likely that the Yi 夷, who lived in Shandong and the Huai River region, were culturally and linguistically related to the people of Wu 吳 and Yue 越 on the lower Yangtze and that these in turn spoke a language related to that of Vietnam, i.e. Yuenan 越南, "Southern Yue", which though heavily influenced by its long contacts with Chinese, is now recognized as belonging genetically to the Austroasiatic family (Pulleyblank 1983: 440-442). It has even been argued that the Shang dynasty originally came from the Yi. If so, they must have first adopted Chinese from their Xia predecessors and so separated themselves from their Yi neighbours to the east and south, but this is not impossible as we can see from the way in which the non-Chinese peoples in the Huai and Yangtze valleys were sinicized and absorbed into the expanding sphere of Chinese civilization during the first millennium.

The study of the interrelationships of the many Tibeto-Burman languages and their detailed history is still in its infancy. In particular, the question of their common homeland has scarcely been broached. As will be noted below, J. P. Mallory has suggested the Tocharians may have moved south into the Tarim Basin from the Minusinsk region in the latter part of the third millennium BCE. He notes that before that time, as far as one can tell from the surface finds of painted pottery so far discovered, the Neolithic of the Tarim Basin seems to have been an extension of the Chinese Yangshao culture. This suggests that Proto-Tibeto-Burmans may have preceded the Tocharians and been pushed south into Tibet and the Himalayas by the Indo-European advance.

A further question is whether the Sino-Tibetan language family has more remote relationships with other language families. I have suggested in the past that there are structural similarities of a morphological kind at a very deep level between Sino-Tibetan and Indo-European that imply a genetic relationship (Pulleyblank 1966a; 1966b; 1993). The presence of Proto-Sino-Tibetans in the Tarim Basin in the fourth and third millennia and perhaps earlier would lend plausibility to this theory. Gimbutas (1985: 191) has suggested that the Srednij Stog II culture in the Dnieper-Donets region which she identifies as her Kurgan I and II cultures (ca. 4500-3500 BCE) was not the result of local evolution in that region but had its source in an intrusion from an earlier culture farther east with connections to the earliest Neoli-

thic in the Middle Urals and Soviet Central Asia. The archaeological record of the regions still farther east before that time is unfortunately still largely blank.

Chinese and 'barbarians' in the pre-Qin period

There is both contemporary evidence from bronze inscriptions and ample testimony in later literature, from the *Shijing* (Book of Songs) onwards, that in early Zhou times conflicts continued with non-Xia peoples who shared the north China plain and its surrounding uplands with the Chinese. Eventually it was such conflicts that forced the Zhou kings to abandon their original capital in Shaanxi in 770 and move to Luoyang, inaugurating the period known as Eastern Zhou. In the following centuries, while the power of the Zhou kings declined, the leadership of the Chinese (Xia) states that acknowledged Zhou suzerainty was taken over by a succession of hegemons (*ba* 霸), rulers of the larger and more powerful states who took on themselves the task of defending the Xia states against the barbarians. This so-called Spring and Autumn period which extended into the first half of the fifth century was, however, also a time when former "barbarians" were being rapidly sinicized and brought into the Chinese interstate system that had grown up after the Zhou conquest. By the time of the succeeding Warring States period (5th to 3rd centuries) the barbarian menace had receded completely within the North China plain and even Chu 楚, the powerful state on the middle Yangtze that had formerly been one of the most serious enemies of Zhou, and the new states of Wu and Yue south of the lower Yangtze had adopted the Chinese language at least in their elite strata and contended with the original Zhou states, such as Jin 晉 and Qi 齊, for hegemony of the Xia confederacy.

The non-Chinese peoples are referred to in Zhou times by a variety of names, some already found on the Shang oracle bones and some new. They cannot be interpreted as native Chinese words for outsiders, like Greek βάρβαροι "babblers", and must have originally been proper names referring to specific ethnic groups. By the Warring States period, when many of these peoples had been absorbed into the dominant Chinese majority, four names had become generalized and associated with the four cardinal compass points: Yi in the east, Man 蠻 in the south, Rong in the west and Di in the north. From Han times onward, for example, Koreans were classified as Yi, a classification that seems to be taken seriously in Korea itself even today, though there is no reason to think that the prehistoric inhabitants of Korea had anything to do with the original Yi in Shandong and the Huai River region, with their Southeast Asian linguistic affinities. Similarly, the assumption that we still find in some modern Chinese historical writings that the Di who lived in the uplands of Shaanxi and Shanxi in the Spring and Autumn period were the ancestors of the Turks is based on nothing more than that both peoples were to the north of the Chinese and on a chance graphic coincidence in Chinese between Di and the first syllable of Dili 狄歷, EMC *dɛjk lɛjk*, one of the variant forms of the name Dingling 丁靈. EMC *tɛjŋ lɛjŋ* ~ Tiele 鐵勒. EMC *tʰɛt lək* out of whom the

Uighurs eventually emerged. About the language of the Di themselves we know virtually nothing. They were culturally different from the Chinese but they were certainly not horse-riding nomads. They fought on foot and did not use chariots suggesting that they were even less acquainted with horse culture than the Chinese.

Chinese historical sources have very little to tell us about the actual steppe frontier to the north and northwest before the end of the 4th century BCE. It has often been assumed that the Xianyun 獯鬻, whose battles with Western Zhou are recorded in the *Shijing* and on bronze inscriptions, were ‘nomads’ and that they came from the steppe. Their name, EMC xiam’-jwin’, has been identified not only with the Xiongnu but also with the Cimmerians of western sources but the resemblances are vague and unconvincing. These battles, like those between the Chinese states in the Spring and Autumn period, were fought with chariots and there is no reason to think the new technique of mounted archery had yet made an appearance. It is, of course, possible that the Xianyun came from farther away than the various Rong tribes who also fought against the Zhou in Shaanxi around this time and who were ultimately responsible for the withdrawal of the Zhou capital East of the Passes but there does not seem to be any real evidence even for that. As for the name Rong, though it eventually came to be associated with the west, in Zhou times it was applied to tribes in the northeast as well as the northwest and it may have simply been another, more general, designation for the same kind of people who were called Di. The Di, sometimes differentiated into White Di and Red Di, were close neighbours of the powerful state of Jin in the Spring and Autumn period and there are many accounts in the *Zuozhuan* of relations, sometimes friendly and sometimes hostile, between them and Jin. More will be said below about the probable relationship of the Rong and Di to both the Xiongnu and to a people known as Buluoji 步落稽 or Ji Hu 稽胡 who were still living in the uplands of Shaanbei and Shanxi in the sixth and seventh centuries CE.

In an earlier study I suggested that the Rong were related to the predynastic Zhou people and probably spoke a Sino-Tibetan language or languages (Pulleyblank 1983). This conclusion needs re-examining in the light of the story of the Yiqu 義渠 people and their connection with the Xiongnu and the Ji Hu which will be discussed below. The “barbarians” most likely to have been Sino-Tibetans are the Qiang 羌 who appear already on the oracle bones as enemies of the Shang but are seldom mentioned in later historical sources until Han times, when the name reappears referring to non-Chinese tribes in the Nanshan mountains south of the upper Wei valley and the Gansu corridor and as a general term for the inhabitants of the upland regions to the south of the southern branch of the Silk Road through the Tarim Basin from Dunhuang to Khotan and Kashgar. A minority people of that name is still to be found in northern Sichuan.

Another northern ethnic name that is mentioned in early Zhou sources is Mo 貊. The Mo are mentioned in the *Shijing* and can be located in the northeast. In Han sources Mo is associated with another ethnic name, Wei 濊. The Wei and Mo are referred to as having founded the states of Fuyu 夫餘 (Korean Puyō) and Gaogouli 高句麗 (Korean Koguryō) in southeastern Manchuria. After the with-

drawal of Han from its colony of Luolang in northern Korea Koguryō pushed down into the Korean peninsula and invaders from Puyō are also said to have founded the state of Paekche 百濟 in the southwest of the peninsula. Though the name Korea comes ultimately from Koguryō, the Korean language of today derives primarily from the language of the southeastern peninsular kingdom of Silla 新羅, which united the peninsula for the first time in the 7th century BCE. The languages of Koguryō and Paekche are known only from a few place names and other glosses in early historical works. From this evidence it seems that the Koguryō and Paekche languages were distinct from Korean but probably related to it (Lewin 1976). From their general location one might expect that they would also be related to Manchu and other Tungusic languages farther north. Since Korean is thought to be distantly related to the Altaic language family, both propositions may well be correct.

The coming of horse-rider nomadism to the Chinese frontier

As is well-known, the first clear and explicit Chinese reference to a people for whom horse-riding was a way of life comes in the famous debate over the adoption of Hu clothing, that is, the trousers, belted jacket and cap of the northern horse-riders, said to have taken place at the court of the state of Zhao 趙 in northern Shanxi in 307 BCE. Chauncey Goodrich (1984) has assembled a few earlier fourth century references to riding astride within China which suggest that the practice had already become known before this but it is only from the third century onward that it begins to figure at all prominently in texts. In any case it was not horseback riding as such that made the nomads of the steppe such formidable adversaries of the settled peoples to the south but mounted archery. This new military technique made its appearance in the western steppes around 800 BCE and must have spread from west to east across steppe-lands of Eurasia during this interval. The culture of the Scythians described by Herodotus and that of the Xiongnu described by Chinese historians of the Han dynasty show such striking similarities that they can hardly have originated in complete independence.

This does not mean that the first mounted archers to appear on the borders of China must have been invaders from far away in the west. The new technique and its associated way of life probably spread from tribe to tribe across Eurasia because of its military effectiveness in much the same way as the use of cavalry transformed the economy of the Great Plains of North America after the Indians acquired horses from the Spaniards in Mexico in the late 17th century (Secoy 1953). The first horse-rider nomads on the Chinese frontier were quite likely local inhabitants newly converted to the new ecological adaptation by contact with tribes living farther out on the steppe. This is, in a sense, a variant on Lattimore's old hypothesis of the local origin of steppe nomadism on the Chinese frontier (1940) though it also differs in that it derives the new way of life from borrowing from outside rather than from pressure on the border people from the Chinese. As we shall see, how-

ever, the formation of the Xiongnu empire was the direct result of pressure on the nomads from the Qin empire so in this respect also Lattimore's conception has justification.

The linguistic affinities of the (Eastern) Hu

By Han times Hu had become a general term for horse-rider nomads. It was applied especially to the Xiongnu, who were then the dominant power on the steppe but it was also to the Eastern Hu, who were certainly ethnically quite different. In fourth century CE it was applied indiscriminately to the many non-Chinese warrior bands that formed shifting alliances and contended for power in the so-called period of the Five Hu and Sixteen Kingdoms including not only Xiongnu and other close neighbours of the Chinese but also former subject peoples of the Xiongnu, some of whom were Indo-European speakers from Inner Asia. Later it was transferred especially to people of that kind, probably because of their racial distinctiveness, so that in Tang times the expression *shang hu* 商胡, "merchant Hu", meant specifically Sogdian merchants. But that is a separate story and has nothing to do with the original application of the term in the fourth century BCE. There were Indo-European speaking nomads on the borders of China at that time, namely the Yuezhi, about whom more will be said below, but these were almost certainly speakers of the Tocharian branch of Indo-European which is very different from the Iranian branch to which Sogdian belongs.

Yet, it is very likely that Hu, a word that was unknown in any related sense in earlier times, was originally a specific ethnic name. The graph does not appear on the oracle bones or on bronze inscriptions but is found in the *Shijing* in three senses: (a) "dewlap", presumably the primary meaning of the graph, which consists of *gǔ* 古 EMC "kɔ" "old (noun.), olden times" as phonetic + *ròu* 肉 "meat" as semantic determinant, (b) a question particle, "how, why", (c) "long-during, far-reaching", part of the word family that includes *gǔ* 古 EMC "kɔ" "olden times", 故 EMC kɔ^h "former, old friend, precedent", *jiǔ* 久 EMC kuw' "to last a long time" and *jiù* 舊 EMC guw^h "old (adj.)" (Pulleyblank 1989). None of these meanings suggests anything that could have given rise to an ethnic designation. It has been suggested that the name could have been borrowed from *huzi* 鬍子 "beard" and refer to the physical appearance of the Hu but this is a modern colloquial word that is not attested from such early times.

In the debate on the adoption of Hu clothing reference was made to the "three Hu" who, besides the Hu proper, included Loufan 樓煩, whose territory was just east of the southward bend of the Yellow River on the steppe frontier of Zhao in northern Shanxi, and the Lin Hu or Forest Hu 林胡, who were also to the west of Zhao (*Shiji* 110: 2883; Watson 1961/II: 158). The Hu proper were to the east of these other two groups which seems to place them in the territory of the later Eastern Hu. There is at least one text that makes such an explicit identification. Qin Kai 秦開, a general of the state of Yan in northern Hebei, is said to have spent time as a

hostage among the Hu and gained their confidence, after which he returned to Yan and led a surprise attack on the Eastern Hu, making them withdraw over 1,000 *li* (*Shiji* 110: 2885-6, Watson 1961/II: 159). Clearly Hu and Eastern Hu are here equivalent terms. The adjective Eastern was probably added to distinguish them from the Xiongnu after the Xiongnu had established their domination.

During Han times the Eastern Hu were differentiated in Chinese sources into two groups, the Wuhuan 烏桓, or Wuwan 烏丸 to the south and the Xianbei 鮮卑 farther north. In spite of the difference in modern pronunciation, Wuhuan and Wuwan are both reconstructed as EMC ʔə ɾwan, going back to *ʔá-wán in the Han period. Chinese -n is the normal equivalent of foreign -r at that period which allows us to reconstruct this name as *Awar. The name reappears in Chinese as War or Awar among the Hephthalites or White Huns in Afghanistan in the 5th and 6th centuries, who were also known as Ouarchonites, that is, (A)war and Huns, in Byzantine sources. It must surely also be the same as the name of the Avars who soon after that invaded Eastern Europe. The Rouran, the steppe power that contended with the Northern Wei dynasty in China in the fifth and first half of the sixth century have also been thought to be Avars. The Rouran and Hephthalite empires were overthrown one after the other by the rise of the Türk, said to have earlier been a slave tribe under the Rouran, in the middle of the sixth century. The confusion in western sources between Avars and so-called Pseudo-Avars, may have arisen from the fact that there were thus two separate groups of steppe nomads claiming this name, both driven westward by the Türks (Chavannes 1903: 229–233). Though a connection with the Wuhuan is not made explicitly in Chinese sources, there is no doubt that the Rouran were of Eastern Hu origin and spoke a Mongolian type language (Pelliot 1932).

Before this, the other branch of the Eastern Hu, the Xianbei, had had a brief period of dominance in Mongolia after the collapse of the Northern Xiongnu in the 2nd century C.E. but they did not succeed in establishing a long lasting steppe empire like that of the Xiongnu. In the 4th century, a number of border states dominated by Xianbei fractions emerged, including the Murong 慕容 in Southern Manchuria and Hebei, the Tuoba 拓跋 in Northern Shanxi and the Tuyuhun 吐谷渾 in Qinghai. The name Xianbei itself reappeared, still in the original homeland in northwestern Manchuria, in the sixth century in the form Shiwei 室韋 EMC ʃit wuj. In Tang times they included a tribe called Mengwu 蒙兀 EMC məwŋ ɲwət whose name must be that of the Mongols of history. For evidence that the Eastern Hu as a whole were proto-Mongol in language see Ligeti (1970), Pulleyblank (1983: 452–454).

A further question is whether the Proto-Mongol (Eastern) Hu were long-term residents of steppe lands north of the Chinese border who learned the technique of mounted archery and adopted the fully nomadic way of life that went with it from westerly (probably Indo-European) neighbours or whether they were themselves newcomers from farther afield. Though there is no solid evidence in Chinese historical sources to throw light on this point, local origin seems to be the simplest hypothesis. This would seem to fit in with the ethnographic descriptions of the Xianbei and Wuhuan found in the *Hou Hanshu* and the commentary to the *San-*

guozhi, based on the third century *Weishu*, which indicate that even at that time they were partly agricultural in their way of life.

The Xiongnu

The connected history of the Xiongnu begins in the year 215 BCE when the Qin general, Meng Tian 蒙恬 drove the “Hu” north out of the Ordos and established the Qin frontier beyond the loop of the Yellow River. Since we are told in the next paragraph that Touman 頭曼, the first Xiongnu ruler whom we know by name, had been forced to move north because of pressure from Qin, it is clear that these “Hu” were Xiongnu. This was followed by the murder of Touman by his son Modun 冒頓 (or Maodun³) and successful wars against the Eastern Hu and the Yuezhi 月氏, another powerful nomadic people to the west which established the Xiongnu as the first steppe empire in Mongolia known to history (*Shiji* 110: 2886 ff., Watson 1961/II: 160 ff.; *Hanshu* 94A: 3749 ff.).

There are a few apparently earlier references to the Xiongnu in Chinese sources but all are suspect because they come from Han dynasty sources when the names Hu and Xiongnu had become interchangeable. The earliest is a passage in the Basic Annals of Qin (*Shiji* 5: 207) which states that in 318 the five Chinese states of Han 韓, Zhao, Wei 魏, Yan 燕 and Qi “led the Xiongnu and together attacked Qin”. Since the Qin Basic Annals are known to have been based directly on the annals of the state of Qin, this record may deserve some respect. Accounts of the same expedition in the Hereditary Houses of Yan, Chu, Zhao and Wei (*Shiji* 34: 1555; 40: 1722; 43: 1804; 44: 1850), do not mention the participation of the Xiongnu. If it is an interpolation in the Qin annals, however, the motivation for it is

³ The first character in this transcription is most commonly read *mào* EMC *məw^h* and means “to cover; to risk; to claim falsely, etc.” but it also has a less common reading *mò* EMC *mək* meaning “covetous”. A Tang dynasty commentary to the *Shiji*, the *Shiji suoyin*, says that in this proper name it should be read EMC *mək*, i.e. *mò* in Modern Mandarin, adding, however, “also like” [the usual reading of] the character 又如字 which shows that there was uncertainty in the tradition already at that period. In the 2nd century when the transcription was invented the two readings were probably closer to each other than they were in Tang times. EMC *məw^h* probably ended in a velar fricative, **məwx*. In the interests of scholarly precision it is probably best to read *mò* rather than *mào*. We know too little about the Xiongnu language to judge the significance of the different readings at present but there is always the possibility that new information or new hypotheses may emerge. The second character in the name has only one Middle Chinese reading and none of the early commentators to the *Shiji* or *Hanshu* suggest that it should be read in any special way in this Xiongnu name. The eleventh century historian Song Qi 宋祁, one of the authors of the New Tang History, is, however, quoted as saying that it should be read like *dú* 毒 EMC *dawk* (*Hanshu buzhu* 94A: 5307; I have not yet found the original source of this comment) and on his authority the reading *dú* is included in the *Kangxi* dictionary (17th century) and is met with in writings in English by some modern Chinese scholars. Such a reading, with a final -k, for the character 頓 does not make sense, however, nor is it easy to see why, if the second syllable of the Xiongnu name had such a pronunciation, the character 頓, rather than 毒 (used, for instance in Shendu 身毒 = *Hinduka, India), was used for it. Where did Song Qi get his information? No one knows. I am glad to find that not all modern Chinese scholars feel compelled to adopt this reading. See for instance Yü Ying-shih in Volume 1 of the *Cambridge History of China*. See also footnote 5 below.

not clear. The Biography of Xi Shou (*Shiji* 70: 2303), following *Zhanguo ce* (4: 144; Crump 1970: 65–66), says that, at the suggestion of a minister of Wei, the ruler of Yiqu 義渠, a Rong principality north of Qin, took advantage of the combined assault of the five countries on Qin to attack Qin in the rear and inflict a defeat on Qin. Haloun supposed that in the Qin Basic Annals Xiongnu has replaced Yiqu (1937: 306 n.1)⁴. The role of Yiqu in the *Zhanguo ce* story does not exactly correspond to the role of the Xiongnu in the Qin Annals but, as we shall see below, there were intimate connections between Yiqu and Xiongnu in early Han times.

An anecdote in the *Shuoyuan* (1:16), a collection of anecdotes from about the end of the first century BCE, has King Zhao of Yan during the first year of his reign (311 BCE) speak about the Xiongnu and Loufan as enemies endangering his northern frontier. The location north of Yan makes it likely that Xiongnu is here a substitution for (Eastern) Hu.

An authentic-seeming reference of the name Xiongnu is found in the Biography of General Li Mu 李牧, who is said to have conducted an effective frontier defence against the ‘Xiongnu’ on the northern borders of Zhao during the third century (*Shiji* 81: 2449–50; Kierman 1962: 35–36). The scene of his operations was north of walls constructed by Zhao that appear to have stretched along the line of the Yinshan mountains right across the loop of the Yellow River. This implies that at that time the Xiongnu were located north of the line of the Yinshan and had not yet penetrated south of the northern bend of the Yellow River into the Ordos. Taken at face value, it would mean that the Xiongnu were already playing much the same kind of role on the northern frontier of Zhao in the middle of the third century that they did a century later on the northern borders of the Han empire. One can hardly doubt that Li Mu was defending the northern borders of Zhao against nomad raids but were they actually Xiongnu? One circumstance that suggests the possibility of anachronism is that in the time of Emperor Wen (179–157) we find the story of Li Mu being cited as an exemplary parable of how a ruler ought to treat his frontier generals and how the frontier generals ought to deal with the contemporary Xiongnu problem (*Shiji* 102: 2449–50; Biography of Feng Tang 馮唐; Watson 1961/I: 540). The story of how Li Mu for years successfully frustrated all nomad raids by steadfastly defending a fixed line of frontier fortifications and refusing to be drawn into battle and then at last mounted an expedition with 1300 chariots, 13,000 horsemen and 100,000 (or 150,000) crack troops (infantrymen?) that succeeded in killing over 100,000 Xiongnu horsemen and driving the *chanyu* away from the frontier for over ten years must be based on some kind of reality but seems obviously exaggerated for effect and does not ring true as it stands. It seems likely that the name Xiongnu in place of Hu is also an interpolation designed to enhance the current relevance of the story when it was told a hundred years later.

There is another reference to the “Xiongnu” from around the year 228 which

⁴ The correspondence between Xiongnu in the Qin annals and Yiqu in the *Zhanguo ce* was noted, presumably independently, by Meng Wentong (1936/7: 13 ff., see also 1958) and Huang Wenbi (1943), who both took it as evidence for identifying the Xiongnu with the Yiqu (Li Gan 1983: 2, 24).

also places them in the Mongolian steppe, north of the Great Wall. In an anecdote from the *Zhanguo ce* Crown Prince Dan of Yan is advised by his counsellor to send a Qin general who has defected to Yan north to the 'Xiongnu' so as to avoid the wrath of Qin (*Shiji* 86: 2529 Biography of Jing Ke 荆軻; Watson 1969: 57, based on *Zhanguo ce* 31:1129; Crump 1970: 553; see also *Zizhi Tongjian* 6: 224). The *Zhanguo ce* account is undoubtedly fictionalized even if based on historical fact and the reference to the Xiongnu is probably again an anachronism.

All these pre-Han references to the Xiongnu except that of 318, in which there may be confusion with Yiqu, imply that the Xiongnu were already a power in the Mongolian steppe before the Qin conquest. When the connected history of their rise to power begins, however, they were not living out on the Mongolian steppe but in the Ordos south of the Yellow River. It is likely, therefore, that pre-Han references to Xiongnu in the outer steppe are anachronistic substitutions for Hu. The question is of some importance for our conception of the formation of Xiongnu state organization as well as for our ideas about their linguistic affinities.

It is clear from the *Shiji* that when Touman was driven north out of the Ordos by Meng Tian, the Xiongnu were forced to fight for living space against the Eastern Hu on the east side and the Yuezhi on the west and that it was the momentum of victories in these wars that enabled them to extend their conquests even farther. This makes sense if the Xiongnu had previously been confined to the Ordos but is hard to understand if they were already the main power in the north in pre-Qin times.

The Yiqu connection

The Yiqu, mentioned above in connection with the allied attack on Qin in 318, provide a clear example of a settled border people who adapted at least partly to the new way of life of the mounted nomad. We first hear of them as Rong barbarians living in the uplands to the northeast of the Qin capital, Xianyang, between Qin and the Ordos in the Warring States period but they were not mounted nomads at that time. The earliest datable reference seems to be in 444 BCE when Duke Ligong 厲共 of Qin attacked Yiqu and captured their king. In 430 they in turn invaded Qin, reaching the south side of the Wei River.⁵ Hostilities continued in the following century. Yiqu built fortifications to defend itself but Qin kept up its attack and King Huiwen 惠文 (337–311) captured twenty-five of their walled towns.⁶ It is reported in the Qin annals that in 327 Qin annexed Yiqu and converted it into a prefecture but this was not the end and there continue to be references to Yiqu as an independent state, as in the events of 318. More intimate relations between Qin and Yiqu occurred during the reign of King Zhao 昭 of Qin (reg. 306–251). The Dowager Queen, King Zhao's mother (died 265), took the king of Yiqu

⁵ *SJ* 5: 199 (Chavannes 1967/II: 56).

⁶ *SJ* 110: 2885 (Watson 1961/II: 159).

as a lover and bore him two sons, then betrayed and murdered him and sent an army to invade and annex Yiqu territory⁷. It was after this that Qin established its western and northern commanderies of Longxi 隆西, Beidi 北地 and Shang 上 and built a long wall to repel the Hu (who, in this case, must be the ancestors of the Xiongnu) in the Ordos steppe.

Though occupied by Qin, the Yiqu must have retained their non-Chinese identity and re-established their independence in the civil wars between Qin and Han. In a memorial in the year 169 BCE (?)⁸ in the reign of the Emperor Wen of Han, Chao Cuo 晁錯 referred to Yiqu as “surrendered Hu” who had “returned to allegiance”. He said, “their skills and food and drink are the same as the Xiongnu” and recommended that they be supplied with “hard armour and rough clothing, strong bows and sharp arrows” and employed for frontier defence (*Hanshu* 49.11b).

In spite of what Chao Cuo says about their way of life, it is clear from other contemporary references that the elite among the people of Yiqu were already much sinicized. Gongsun He 公孫賀, who has biographies in *Shiji* 111 and *Hanshu* 66, is said to have been from Yiqu and of ‘Hu’ stock. He was an important general and even rose to the position of Chancellor. His father, Gongsun Hunye 渾邪, was not only a general but also the author of a book in 15 chapters classified as belonging to the Yinyang 陰陽 School in the Bibliographical Monograph of the *Hanshu* (*Hanshu* 30: 1734).

Gongsun Hunye’s given name is of great interest. It is clearly non-Chinese and it coincides with the title of a subordinate Hunye King of the Xiongnu who surrendered to Han with his people in 121 BCE. These surrendered “Xiongnu” were settled in Beidi Commandery which included the former territory of Yiqu. The coincidence in the name suggests that the people of the Hunye King may have been related to the people of Yiqu and that in settling in Beidi they may have been returning to the region in which they had lived before the expulsion of the “Hu” north of the Yellow River by Meng Tian. They need not, of course, have been Xiongnu in a narrow sense, merely a related tribe incorporated into the Xiongnu during their expansion at the beginning of Han. At the same time Chinese settlers were also moved into the same region, which was of great strategic importance because of its proximity to the Han capital, in order to dilute the barbarian population and improve the defensive capability of the territory (*Shiji* 110: 2909; Watson 1961/II: 182; *Hanshu* 94A: 3769).

Another tribe of horse-rider nomads mentioned above that are called Rong in the *Shiji* are the Loufan, whose territory was just east of the southward bend of the Yellow River on the steppe frontier of Zhao in northern Shanxi (*Shiji* 110: 2883; Watson 1961/II: 158). They are referred to as one of the “three Hu” in the debate in Zhao on the adoption of Hu clothing in -307, the other two being the Forest Hu,

⁷ *SJ* 110: 2885 (Watson 1961/II: 159)

⁸ The *Hanshu* biography merely places the memorial in the time of Emperor Wen. The specific date -169 is assigned by the eleventh century historian Sima Guang (*Zizhi tongjian* 15.487).

who were also to the west of Zhao, and the Hu proper (that is, the Eastern Hu if my argument is correct), whose territory lay to the east. The Loufan were incorporated by the Xiongnu early in their expansion after the collapse of Qin (*Shiji* 110: 2890; Watson 1961/II: 162) and in the time of the first emperor of Han the Loufan King was occupying part of the Ordos region on behalf of the Xiongnu, within striking distance of Chang'an (*Shiji* 99: 2719; Watson 1961/I: 290). We also hear of a Loufan who was a skilled horseback archer in the army of the founding emperor of Han (*Shiji* 7: 328; Watson 1961/I: 66⁹). The Loufan, like the Yiqu, must have been previous inhabitants of the steppe borderland who had adopted horseback archery, perhaps no earlier than the fourth century.

The language of the Xiongnu

There is little I can add here to the discussion of the language of the Xiongnu in Pulleyblank (1962: 239–265). This had three main conclusions: (1) that for various reasons it was very unlikely that the Xiongnu language was Turkic or Mongolian or any form of Altaic, (2) that there might be validity in the suggestion of Louis Ligeti that the Xiongnu language was related to Ket and other now extinct Yeniseian languages of Siberia, (3) that the Xiongnu language had bequeathed a number of important culture words to the later Turkic and Mongolian steppe empires, including Turkish *tängri*, Mongolian *tenggeri* ‘heaven’ and titles such as *tarqan* and *tegin* and *kaghan*

The evident identity of the Xiongnu word for “heaven”, *chengli* 撐犁 EMC tr^haʒŋ ɬej < *t^háŋ-wrǝj, with Turkish *tängri*, Mongolian *tenggeri*, etc., has been the strongest argument for identifying their language as Altaic, but, as Pelliot showed (1944), the variability of the forms in both Turkic and Mongolian strongly suggests that it is a loanword in both languages, a culture word handed down from their Xiongnu predecessors. Attempts to explain other Xiongnu words transcribed in Chinese in terms of Turkic and/or Mongolian are much less convincing. In my own treatment of the subject (1962), I argued that the number of Xiongnu words transcribed as beginning with l- in Chinese, which would most likely have represented a foreign r- in the Han period, was *prima facie* evidence against their having spoken any kind of Altaic language.

The most controversial point was the argument for a Kettish connection. This was criticized by Gerhard Doerfer (1973), who thought it probable that the Xiongnu language was unrelated to any known language. He may be right. The number of possible cognates that I was able to find was not large. Apart from the word for “boot” that was cited by Ligeti but which could have been a borrowed culture word in the Yenisei languages, the best comparisons were: (1) Xiongnu

⁹ Watson thinks that Loufan here does not actually refer to a member of the Loufan tribe but was simply used metonymically to describe a skilled Bowman but there is nothing in the text to justify such an assumption.

*kwala “son”, cf. Arin *bikjàl* “son”, Ket *qalek* “younger son, grandson”; (2) Jie 羯 EMC *kiat* < *kàt, an ethnic name for a subordinate group of Southern Xiongnu which there is reason to think was equivalent to Chinese *shí* 石 “stone”, cf. Pumpokol'sk *kit*, Arin *khes* “stone”. None of these comparisons is phonetically exact but they involve basic vocabulary and the possibility that they indicate a genuine linguistic connection between Xiongnu and Yeniseian can hardly be excluded.¹⁰

Though I did not explore the possible historical implications of a linguistic connection between the Xiongnu and the Yeniseians known from more recent times, my assumption was that the Xiongnu must have been a southern extension of these northern forest dwellers who occupied the intervening space between the Yenisei and the Chinese frontier and between the Indo-Europeans to the west and the proto-Altaic speakers to the east in the pre-Qin period. If, as I now suspect, the Xiongnu were in fact natives of the Ordos who borrowed their horse-riding culture from farther north at a time when the outer steppe was divided between Indo-Europeans to the west and Proto-Mongols to the east, this explanation of a Kettish connection would be ruled out. The other possibility is that the Yeniseians represent a fragment of the Xiongnu who moved north after the fall of the Xiongnu empire in the second century. At the 34th International Congress of Asian and North African Studies in Hong Kong, August 1993, Professor Valery Jajlenko, of the Institute of Universal History, Moscow, read a paper entitled, ‘The Kets in Ancient Central Asia’, in which on the basis of hydronyms in Western Turkistan he suggested that this was the original home of the Kettish peoples before they were displaced and forced to move north by the coming of the Iranians. An equally plausible explanation for the existence of such river names would be that they are a legacy of the occupation of that region by the Hephthalites or White Huns, who, as we have seen, were a coalition of Huns (Xiongnu) and Avars (Wuhuan). This would strengthen the possibility of a connection between the language of the Xiongnu and Ket.

A related question is the long-standing idea that the Yeniseian languages are related to Sino-Tibetan. This has not been generally accepted and has seemed to me to have little to support it but it is still taken seriously by some linguists, in particular the Russian scholar, S. A. Starostin (1982). If the Xiongnu originated on the northern borders of the Yangshao culture in China, a distant linguistic relationship between their language and proto-Sino-Tibetan could make sense geographically.

It has recently been claimed that Iranian elements can be seen among the Xiongnu words that are preserved in Chinese transcription (Bailey 1981). The Scythians, who are the prototypical steppe nomads in western historical sources of the same period were certainly Iranians. Yet it is doubtful that Iranian speaking nomads could have spread as far east as the Ordos. Bailey's linguistic arguments do not seem to me at all persuasive. The most convincing example is *jìnglù* 徑路 EMC *kejŋ^h lo^h* < *kájŋ^h ráx, the sacred sword which the Xiongnu worshipped as their god

¹⁰ Alexander Vovin informs me (p.c.) that he is now prepared to support idea of a connection between Xiongnu and Yeniseian on other grounds.

of war, cf. Sogdian *xnyr* *xanʾar, Wakhi *xingār*, Yidgha *xugor*, New Persian *xanjar* “dagger”, but this is a culture word that has been borrowed into many languages, cf. Turkic *qingīraq*, English *hanger* (Pulleyblank 1962: 222). Other examples are based on speculative etymologies rather than well attested words.

The Xiongnu social structure and state organization

As Thomas Barfield points out in his recent historical study of the Chinese frontier (1989), the Xiongnu were much more successful in establishing and maintaining a strong, centralized state organization and passing on power from one *chanyu* to the next without serious disruption than their successors as rulers of the steppe down to and including the Turks in the sixth century. The contrast is especially marked with their immediate successors, the Xianbei, who established a brief dominance under a charismatic war-leader, Tanshihuai 檀石槐, in the middle of the second century that immediately collapsed after his death. As described in Later Han sources, the Proto-Mongol Wuhuan and Xianbei had a loose clan organization with no hereditary chiefs (Pulleyblank 1983: 454; Barfield 1989: 88–89). It was only after several generations that border states with rulers of Xianbei origin managed to establish themselves. Since we know so little about the prehistory of the Xiongnu, one can only guess at the reasons for their superiority in this respect but there must have been elements in their social structure that fitted them for state-building better than the proto-Mongol Hu. It seems not unreasonable to assume that, like their neighbors, the Yiqu, they had absorbed considerable Chinese influence in pre-Qin times and that this contributed to their success at state building. Concrete evidence for this influence can be seen in the full title of their ruler, Chengli gutu chanyu 撐犁 孤塗 單于, of which the first four characters are translated into Chinese as Son of Heaven, clearly a borrowing from China. Other features of their organizational structure also suggest imitation or adaptation of Chinese models. Chinese directional colour symbolism appears in the four divisions of their army at the siege of Pingcheng in 201 BCE, with white horses on the west, dappled (bluish) horses on the east, black horses on the north and red horses on the south (*Shiji* 110: 2894; Watson 1961/II: 165–166; *Hanshu* 94A: 3753). This directional colour symbolism was an enduring organizational trait that was passed on to later nomadic empires of the Turks and the Mongols (see Pritsak 1954).

The Ji Hu 稽胡 in the sixth and seventh centuries

Further evidence that strengthens the idea that the Xiongnu were related to the Yiqu and other peoples known as Rong and Di living in the upland regions between the Chinese and the steppe in Spring and Autumn and Warring States times comes from the story of the Ji Hu, a non-Chinese people who were still living as

settled cultivators in those parts in the sixth and seventh centuries of the present era. According to the account of them in the *Zhoushu* 49: 896–899, the Ji Hu were descendants of the Southern Xiongnu who having been allowed to move into the Fen valley in Shanxi Province in the Han period, rose in rebellion and under their leader, Liu Yuan 劉淵, and founded the first of the so-called Sixteen Kingdoms which ruled over various parts of north China through the fourth century. The *Zhoushu* also states that according to another tradition that they were descendants of Rong and Di. While this has been rejected by some modern Chinese scholars, a close study of the description of their sedentary way of life combined with other information in geographical sources of Sui vintage and accounts in Buddhist sources of a certain Liu Sahe 劉薩河 who became a monk and was greatly revered among them in early Tang times strongly suggests that they were in fact mainly a remnant of the Rong and Di of Spring and Autumn times, augmented by Xiongnu who, after leaving the steppe and moving back into China, were in effect returning to their ancestral home (Pulleyblank 1994).

The Northwest

The western neighbors with whom Modun had to contend in his struggle for supremacy on the Mongolian steppe were the Yuezhi 月氏. The story of how, after being defeated by the Xiongnu, their main body, the Great Yuezhi, migrated to the west, established themselves north of the Oxus, then conquered the settled lands to the south in modern Afghanistan and went on in the first century CE to found the Kushan empire which in its heyday extended into northwestern India and Central Asia has often been told. An identification with the Tocharoi and other nomadic tribes who are known in western sources as the conquerors of the Greek kingdom in Bactria was made long ago. It is the first definite synchronism between Chinese and Western historical records.

Unfortunately, the original linguistic affinities of the Yuezhi-Tocharoi are not easy to determine. My own view (Pulleyblank 1966; 1995) is that they, as well as the nomadic Wusun farther west, who became allies of Western Han against the Xiongnu, and the Kangju who established themselves first at Tashkend on the Syr Darya and later moved south to conquer Sogdiana almost certainly spoke Indo-European languages of the Tocharian type. That is, the name Tocharian given to these languages is quite appropriate and not a misnomer as has been claimed. Direct linguistic evidence for this, or any other, identification of the Yuezhi language is admittedly slight. One of the best indications is probably the evidence that Thomas Burrow (1935) brought to light that there was a local Tocharian substratum in the proper names found on wooden documents in Ghandari Prakrit from Loulan, probably dating from the Kushanian occupation of that region in the 2nd century C.E. Loulan was close to the original homeland of the Yuezhi and to the location of the Little Yuezhi, the remnant that according to Chinese sources was left behind when the Great Yuezhi migrated westward.

While it thus seems probable that the far-eastern branch of Indo-European whose surviving remains dating from the Tang period have been discovered in the oasis cities of the northern side of the Tarim basin also included nomadic peoples – Yuezhi, Wusun and Kangju – known to the Chinese in Han times, Chinese historical sources cannot tell us when these peoples first arrived on the western borders of China. Only archaeology can help in trying to answer this question.

We need to know more the way of life that dominated the Eurasian steppes before the rise of full-blown horse-rider nomadism in the first millennium. The importance of the herding of sheep, cattle, and horses did not begin with the appearance of the Scythians and Cimmerians around 800 BCE but was already, along with agriculture, an important part of the culture of the various Indo-European peoples who emerged into history during the second millennium. The bronze age Andronovo culture of Central Asia and Southern Siberia in the second millennium, assumed to be Indo-Iranian or even specifically Iranian (Mallory 1989: 56–63), was such a pre-horse-rider, semi-pastoral culture, and so, presumably, was that of the Proto-Tocharians, wherever they were at the time. In his discussion of the origins of the Tocharians Mallory notes that from the meagre evidence available, in the neolithic period, roughly 4000 to 2000 BCE, the Tarim basin seems to have been a westward extension of the Chinese Yangshao and Longshan, so that the intrusion of the Indo-Europeans must have occurred ‘in the very broad period between 2500 and 200 B.C.’ While he is cautious about committing himself as to where they came from, he favours the idea that they may have moved south from the Minusinsk-Altai region where the aeneolithic Afanasievo culture flourished in the third millennium.

The recent discovery of mummified Europoid corpses clad in woollen garments and with other cultural artefacts with western affinities in various sites in Xinjiang (Eastern Turkestan) dating from the last two millennia BCE provides a vital clue. It seems highly probable that they are remains of the Proto-Tocharians. Their arrival on the western borders of China at the end of the third millennium BCE roughly coincides with the beginning of the Chinese bronze age. While there is no evidence at all to support the suggestion that has sometimes been made that there was an actual Indo-European invasion of China, there seems to be a good likelihood that indirect contacts with these eastern outliers of the Indo-European pastoralists brought the beginnings of metallurgy and horse-and-chariot culture to China, two vital ingredients in the proto-historic states of Xia and Shang that flourished in the second millennium (Pulleyblank 1996).

Proto-Turks

On the question of the origins of the Turkic speaking peoples, there is little I can add to what I said in 1983. I proposed there to identify them, in the first place, with a group of three peoples, Dingling 丁靈, Gekun 隔昆 or Jiankun 堅昆, and Xinli 薪犁, located to the north in Southern Siberia that were conquered by Modun

after he had subdued the Eastern Hu and the Yuezhi on his eastern and western flanks. There is a thread of historical continuity linking the Dingling of Han times with the Tiele 鐵勒 of the fifth and sixth centuries out of whom the Uighurs eventually emerge and I have recently discussed linguistic evidence that shows that they were Turkish speaking when they were known to the Northern Wei dynasty as the High Carts lying on the western flank of the Rouran (Pulleyblank 1990a). The Gekun/Jiankun have long been identified with the Kirghiz. On the name see Pulleyblank (1990b). The name Xinli is probably the same as Xue 薛 EMC siat of seventh century Chinese sources, transcribing the Turkish tribal name Syr found on the Orkhon inscriptions. A fourth ethnic name of Western Han times that might be Turkish, located farther west, is Hujie 呼揭 or Wujie 烏揭. A connection has been proposed with Turkish Ogur/Oguz but is less convincing phonetically. The southward movement of Turkic speaking peoples from Siberia into Zungaria after the fall of the Xiongnu empire and the replacement or assimilation of the Tocharians and Iranians of the city states of Xinjiang by the Uigurs from the ninth century onward may repeat the earlier southward movement of the Tocharians into Xinjiang, replacing earlier Sino-Tibetans, in the third millennium BCE.

Conclusion

The peoples of the Eurasian steppe lands have played a vital role in the history of the settled agricultural civilizations on which they bordered. The Indo-Europeans emerged in western Asia and eastern Europe, presumably from a homeland north of the Black Sea, around the beginning of the second millennium BCE. Their invasion of India must have occurred about the same time and so also the arrival of their eastern branch, the ancestors of the Tocharians, on the borders of China. It seems clear that the domestication of the horse, for which there is evidence in the south Russian steppe lands already in the fourth millennium, was the key to their success. In the second millennium the horse-drawn chariot as a symbol of prestige for rulers and an engine of war became a common feature shared by the emerging bronze age civilization of China, the Aryan conquerors of India, the Hittites in Anatolia and the Myceneans who established themselves in the mainland of Greece and went on to replace Minoan civilization in Crete. The technique of mounted archery, a new and even more effective way using the horse in battle, emerged in the Indo-European heartland sometime after 1000 BCE. It brought new waves of invaders, beginning with the Cimmerians and the Scythians, into the settled lands of western Asia and it also spread to the eastern steppes. There it was adopted not only by Iranian Sakas and Tocharian Yuezhi, Wusun and Kangju, but also by non-Indo-European Xiongnu in the Ordos and proto-Mongol Hu in Mongolia. This impinged on the Warring States in China, which also began to adopt the new military technique. When Qin conquered and united the warring Chinese states at the end of the third century, the Xiongnu were driven out of the Ordos across the Yellow River into the outer steppe. Already much influenced by Chinese political ideas and forced

to contend for living space with the existing inhabitants of Mongolia, the Xiongnu embarked on a campaign of conquest and established a counter-empire in the steppe-lands of the north to that of Qin in the agricultural lands of the south.

From this time onward the eastward movement that had brought Indo-Europeans to China's borders was reversed. Under pressure from the Xiongnu, Tocharian-speaking nomads – Yuezhi, Kangju and Wu-sun – moved westward into Iranian-speaking lands in western Central Asia in the second century BCE. In the second century CE the Northern Xiongnu moved westward into the same territory, emerging in name at least, as the Huns who invaded Europe in the fourth century and the White Huns who formed a part of the Hephthalite empire in Afghanistan a hundred years later. The name of the Avars who followed the Huns as nomad invaders of Europe can similarly be traced back to Wuhuan, one of the branches of the proto-Mongol Eastern Hu from whom the Chinese learned the art of mounted archery, and can also be recognized in Ouar-, the first part of Ouarchonites, i.e. (A)war + Hun, another name by which the Hephthalite empire was known in Greek sources. It is possible (though not proven) that the Rouran who dominated Mongo-

lia at the same time as the Hephthalites were also of Wuhuan origin. The conquest of both the Rouran and the Hephthalites by the Türk in the middle of the sixth century was responsible for pushing the Avars into Europe and also for starting the spread of Turkic speaking nomads into Western Asia. Finally, in the twelfth century the Mongols under Genghis Khan, from small beginnings on the Chinese frontier, created the most successful and extensive nomad empire of all.

Reconstructed forms of Chinese

For reconstructed forms labelled EMC (Early Middle Chinese) see Pulleyblank 1991. Earlier conjectural forms are marked with an asterisk.

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Edwin G. Pulleyblank

NARODI SA STEPSKE GRANICE U RANIM KINESKIM IZVORIMA

SAŽETAK

U osvitu povijesti, tek nastajuća kineska civilizacija (njezini se prvi pisani izvori pojavljuju u završnim stoljećima drugoga tisućljeća prije n.e. na tzv. gataeljskim kostima Shanga) dijelila je sjevernokinesku ravnicu i okolna visočja (u današnjim pokrajinama Shangdong, Shanxi i Shaanxi) s raznim nekineskim »barbarima«. I sam kineski jezik, koji će u pisanom obliku postati sredstvom civilizacije, srodan je jezicima iz rasprostranjene tibetoburmanske jezične porodice. Neki nekineski «barbari» na zapadu zacijelo su pripadali toj skupini, i to osobito narod Qiang (羌), koji se spominje već na gataeljskim kostima a odnosi se na neprijateljske narode na zapadu. Ime tog naroda zadržao je do danas jedan manjinski narod u zapadnom Sichuanu. Od najvažnijih nekineskih skupina, tzv. Yi (夷), zemljoradničko ljudstvo naseljeno uz istočno primorje, vjerojatno je govorilo kakvim austronezijskim jezikom srodnim vijetnamskom. Možemo ga poistovjetiti s nekolicinom primorskih neolitskih kultura, čiji su se sadržaji proširili kulturnom difuzijom na zapad, gdje su uvelike pridonijeli nastanku kineske civilizacije u Središnjoj Ravnici. Obično se drži da su nekineski narodi na visočju sjeverno od Središnje Ravnice – poznati kao Di (狄) i Xiongnu (匈奴), pojavivši se u razdoblju dinastije Han kao vladari mongolskih stepa – govorili nekim altajskim jezikom, turskim ili mongolskim. To pak nije vrlo vjerojatno. Postoje dobri razlozi pretpostaviti da su Hu (胡), prvi strijelci-jahači što su ih Kinezi sreli na mongolskoj stepi, govorili mongolskim jezikom. Međutim, narod Xiongnu, koji se najprije pojavljuje u Ordosu južno od velikoga zavoja Žute Rijeke i koji je u krajnoj liniji povezan sa starijim naseljenim narodom Yiqu (義渠) iz visočja Shaanbeia, između Ordosa i preddinastičke države Qin (秦), bio je jezično prilično drukčiji. Možda je taj narod govorio jezikom iz jenisejske porodice, možda mu je jezik pripadao kakvu udaljenom tibetoburmanskom obliku, ili možda taj jezik uopće nema preživjelih srodnika. Za dinastije Han, kad je izraz *hu* (胡) postao općom oznakom za nomade-jahače, te kad se rabio osobito za Xiongnu, prvobitni narod Hu prozvat će se, razlike radi, «Istočni Hu» (東胡). Izvori iz doba Hana razlikovali su u sklopu Istočnih Hu narod Xianbei (鮮卑, *Sárbi), od kojega su napokon potekli povijesni Mongoli, i narod Wuhuan (烏桓, *Awar), kojih je ime povezano s Avarima koji su prodrli u Evropu u 6. stoljeću. Prvi narodi turskog govora koji se mogu identificirati u kineskim izvorima jesu Dingling (丁靈), Gekun (隔昆) ili Jiankun (堅昆) i Xinli (薪犁). Živjeli su na sjeveru, u južnom Sibiru. Xiongnu su ih pokorili na početku drugoga stoljeća prije n.e. U razdoblju Hana, odmah zapadno od Xiongnu nalazilo se mnoštvo nomadskog naroda Yuezhi (月氏). Kad su Xiongnu pokorili Yuezhije, glavnina potonjih pošla je na zapad i dospjela naposljetku do Amudarje, gdje je dokončila grčko kraljevstvo u Baktriji i zatim uspostavila carstvo Kušana u Afganistanu i sjevernoj Indiji. Tvrdi se da su Yuezhi bili Indoevropljani i da su govorili toharskim jezikom, tj. jezikom one vrste o kojoj svjedoče kasniji izvori iz država u oazama Tarimske kotline. Nedavna otkrića evropoidnih mumija u Xinjiangu, datiranih s početka drugoga tisućljeća prije n.e., sugeriraju da je to bilo vrijeme kad su govornici toharskog jezika najprije stigli do graničnih prostora Kine, donoseći sa sobom važne kulturne tekovine sa zapada – metalurgiju i bojna kola što su ih vukli konji – a te su tekovine imale bitnu ulogu u nastanku kineske civilizacije. Početak kineskoga brončanog doba oko 2000. prije n.e., što se podudara s tradicionalnim datumom osnutka prve dinastije Xia (夏), vjerojatno se zbilo pod neizravnim utjecajem toga događaja.

KLJUČNE RIJEČI: drevnokineska civilizacija, kineski jezik, »barbari«, tibeto-burmanski, austroazijski, altajski, jenisejski, toharski, Qiang, Yi, Di, Yuezhi, Xiongnu, Hu, Huni, Dingling, Kirgizi, Xianbei

蒲立本

早期漢語資料中的草原邊民

提要

遠在有史之前，一如於公元前第二個千年期末葉的若干世紀首次出現的商朝骨文字記載所表明的那樣，新生的華夏文明是在中原地區的北部以及四周山東、山西、陝西的多山地帶與形形色色的非華夏的‘蠻夷之族’所共同享有的。漢語，其書寫形式乃華夏文明之載體，與分布廣泛的藏緬語族是有密切關係的。一些地處西部的非華夏民族的語言無疑正是屬於藏緬語族的。其中特別是羌，羌是作為商王朝以西地區的敵對部族的名稱而出現在甲骨卜辭中的，羌至今仍用做四川西部一少數民族的名稱。在非華夏的若干重要的部族當中有一支是所謂夷人，他們是著土而居的農業民族，住在東部沿海一帶，所使用的語言有可能屬於南亞語系並且與現代越南語相聯繫。他們可以被認為是與沿海地區一系列的新石器文化有關係的，這種文化的一些要素通過文化融合向西擴展，對中原地區華夏文明的形成產生了很大的影響。居住於中原以北多山地帶的非華夏民族有所謂狄，而且還有匈奴，匈奴是作為蒙古草原游牧部族的統治者而出現於漢代的。人們通常假設狄人和匈奴人講阿爾泰語、突厥語，或者蒙古語，然而這種假設是無法成立的。我們有很好的理由斷定胡人纔是講蒙古語的。胡人是最先盤馬彎弓的民族，漢人首次與他們相遇是在蒙古草原，而漢人與匈奴的接觸卻始於鄂爾多斯高原，即位於黃河最大彎道內側的那一地區。匈奴與在較早時期居住於秦地與鄂爾多斯之間的陝北高原上的義渠人有密切的關係。匈奴的語言與胡人的語言是頗為不同的，他們說的可能是葉尼塞語族中的一種語言，也可能是一種不再使用的藏緬語族語言，還有可能是一種於當今之世已找不到親屬語言的語言。到了漢代，胡變成了對所有騎馬游牧民族的通稱，不過時常也用來專指匈奴，於是原來的胡人被稱作東胡以示區別。在漢代文獻中，東胡區別分為鮮卑（*Sārbi）和烏桓（*Awar）。鮮卑最後發展為蒙古族，而烏桓可以認為是於六世紀入侵歐洲的阿瓦爾人的前身。可以確認為最早講突厥語的民族在漢語文獻中被稱作丁靈、隔昆（堅昆）、新犁，他們居在南西伯利亞地區的北部，其屬地在公元前二世紀被匈奴佔領。與匈奴西部接壤的游牧國度在漢朝時候是月氏。後來月氏被匈奴征服，其主體向西遷徙，最後抵達阿姆河一帶。月氏在那裡滅掉了居住大夏之地的一個希臘人的王國，後來在阿富汗及印度北部建立了貴霜帝國。據稱他們講屬於印歐語系的吐火羅語，這種語言已被後世發現於塔里木盆地一些綠洲國度的文獻所證實。近年在新疆發現的白種人干尸被斷定為下葬於公元前第二個千年期之初及其以後時期，這顯示出正是在這一時期，講吐火羅語的人首次到達了中國邊境一帶，他們從西方帶來了重要的冶金術及馬車文化，這在華夏文明的形成中扮演了十分重要的角色。中國的青銅時代大約起始於公元前兩千年，這正是傳統上所說的第一個王朝即夏朝建立的時期。中國青銅時代的到來也許正是由於吐火羅人的東遷而間接印發的。

關鍵辭：華夏文明，漢語，‘蠻夷之族’，藏緬語系，南亞語系，阿爾泰語，葉尼塞語系，吐火羅，羌，夷，狄，月氏，匈奴，胡，丁靈，監昆，鮮卑。

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