

## 12: THE DERIVATIVE EAST ASIAN CIVILIZATIONS: THE PASTORAL NOMADS AND EARLY KOREANS (10/87r; 7/89r; 10/94e, 8/95e, 9/96e)

*a. Where, when and under what circumstances did the pastoral-nomads appear in East Asia? Where, when and with what sort of relationship with China did pastoral-nomads evolve early and then high civilization? How has the pastoral-nomads' relationship to Chinese sedentary life evolved over time?*

*b. In what ways was Korea's transition to early civilization original rather than derivative? In what ways was its later acquisition of high civilization more derivative than original? What role did Zone A play in Korea's evolution? What role did China play?*

### A. Zone A's Evolution Into Pastoral-Nomadism

#### 1. Pastoral-nomadism and Zone A's changing climate

During most of the last ice age, the climate of Zone A (cf. map, "East Asia's Three Zones") was not too bad, particularly in subzone A2. The first part of the subsequent interglacial age, from c. 10,000 to 5,000 BC—the post-glacial pluvial stage—saw Zone A's climate improve considerably. Abundant water flowed north across the high plains as the glaciers melted and retreated up the mountains.

The region was a veritable Garden of Eden then. Some people even think that the western extension of subzone A1 into Persia and Iraq was the location of the Old Testament's Garden of Eden. The beautiful fruits, the many varieties of tasty melons that originated in Zone

A's oases reinforce this impression.

Subzone A2 (and perhaps western B1) were also apparently the easternmost extensions from the Middle East and Eastern Europe of the range of the Caucasoidal ethnic type. These people spoke a language perhaps related to Persian.

Though much of Zone A was highly suitable for agriculture during this pluvial stage, agriculture did not reach it until c. 4,000 BC, after Zone A began to move into the next geological subepoch—the post-pluvial stage of the interglacial—a much drier age.

What had been a broad open plain, highly suited to agriculture, gradually became mere open grassland, too dry much of the time, and with too short a growing season to be reliably farmed. Fewer and smaller oasis areas remained viable for agriculture near the mountains from which water ran off in the spring, and where the climate was more temperate because of the mountains' shielding.

#### 2. Herding and horseback riding

As the land dried and growing seasons shortened, most subzone A2 and A1 farmers eventually had to either move elsewhere or turn to some other way of making a living. A fair number of those who moved out of subzone A1 and its western extensions may have been the speakers of Indo-European languages who invaded Europe, Persia and India after c. 2500 BC.

Those who remained in Zone A, but were not living in oasis areas, eventually had to give up all but occasional scratch agriculture. They took up full-time herding of browsing animals with long legs—sheep, horses, and occasionally cattle. Some of the first pastoralists in Zone A may have been reindeer herders migrating from further north as arctic conditions extended southward.

Since man does not live by meat and milk alone (even if the latter is sometimes fermented), these early pastoral-nomads retained or entered into a symbiotic relationship with the remaining oasis agriculturists. The farmers

provided fruits and melons and grain for the herders. The herders provided meat and hides and bones and horns to the farmers.

Originally farmers and pastoralists likely just exchanged these goods as gifts, but shifted over to economic exchange as contact with marketized civilizations opened.

So long as the balance of power between herders and farmers remained more or less equal, exchange remained symbiotic. Perhaps to avenge Cain's sin, whenever they gained the strength to do so, the herders changed this symbiotic relationship into a parasitic one, with themselves as the parasites. They preferred to raid their sedentary neighbors and take loot rather than trade with them.

Herding on foot evolved into the much more wide-ranging pattern of life we label pastoral-nomadism when some of these herding peoples discovered that if they stopped eating the horses they were herding and started riding them, they could move much larger herds much longer distances between summer and winter pastures. This let them maintain larger herds, since they did not need to slaughter so many animals in autumn so that the survivors could survive on less generous nearby winter pastures.

The many small sublineages came together for these long seasonal movements. A few riders guided the herds while most of the rest galloped off to hunt wild animals in large groups. They soon realized that they could apply these hunting techniques to two-legged game. They could seasonally raid, pillage, rape and generally raise hell with the sedentary agriculturists in nearby small local oases.

It may strike you as odd that chariot-pulling, with its complicated technology of harness-rigging, fancy carpentry and axle-lubrication, should have become important earlier than horse riding. But as nearly as we can tell from both the archeological and early written record, that is what happened at both ends of Eurasia.

Perhaps this was because you do not have to "break" a horse to get it to pull a cart. Riding without stirrups (only in-

vented a millennium after horseback riding became common) supposedly would not permit much direct fighting on horseback.<sup>1</sup>

Perhaps the short stature of the native Zone A variety of horse (sometimes called the Mongol pony) was what eventually encouraged people there to begin riding on its back. At least there was less distance to fall from its back than from the much larger West Eurasian variety (the so-called Arabian steed).

Whatever the reason, the chariot appeared first, in West Asia c. 2,500 BC. It then apparently made its way across Central Asia from the west to Shang Dynasty China by around 1400 BC, but left little direct archeological trace of its passage in Zone A.

Then, about four centuries later, around BC 1000, some of the incipient pastoral-nomads of A2 finally stopped eating their horses and instead started burying some of them along with their chiefs, accompanied by fancy, often gold, ornaments. Clearly these people must have begun riding these horses. They would not have treated mere herding animals that way.

### **3. Local and trans-zonal symbiosis and parasitism**

The same techniques used for herding and hunting from horseback also served as effective techniques for an armed cavalry. So horseback riding almost immediately gave the herders decisive military superiority over the sedentary peoples of the oases. As raids became more regular and systematic, the farmers often became the virtually the slaves of these raiders.

Within a century or two, these mounted herder-raiders noticed what must have struck them as a whopping

big oasis maturing from an early into a high civilization down in Zone B. This was Western Zhou Dynasty China. They launched raids, at first intermittent and then seasonal, against this enormously rich Zone B oasis.

The inhabitants of that big oasis eventually had to learn some of these new cavalry techniques themselves. The chariot became merely a symbol and *numeraire* of military power as soldiers learned how to ride horses. Since Zone B was not good horse-breeding country, North Chinese states bought ever larger numbers of horses from Zone A herders. Through such contacts the herders also got increasingly better organized in imitation of their southerly neighbors.

Such cultural exchanges brought the pastoral-nomad coalitions who participated in them up to the level of early civilization by c. 500 BC, and eventually up to high civilization by c. 300 AD. Because of their ongoing direct contact with the incipient second stage high civilization of Zone B, the pastoral-nomads of subzone A2 reached high civilization sooner than did their more sedentary but also more isolated cousins in subzone A3.

The sedentary folk of Zone B eventually imitated the dress of their Zone A enemies by starting to wear pants. They also slimmed down their hitherto kimono-like robes and cut long slits in them so they could comfortably sit astride their horses. They also improved on the Zone A stirrup, which allowed a cavalryman to securely grip the horse with his legs. That freed both hands to shoot arrows from his bow without his falling off the horse. They also designed light weight armor made of lacquered layers of leather, reinforced at key points with small sheets of steel.

As we have seen, the Chinese also borrowed some foods and cooking techniques, some vocabulary, sitting on chairs, and of course, some gene plasm from these pastoral-nomads. All of these things happened between Han and Tang times.

Beginning during the Han Dynasty and intermittently thereafter, a number of the pastoral-nomads invaded and settled down in north China as leaders of conquest states. Within a few genera-

tions, however, such invaders tended to become Chinese in lifestyle and mentality.

When that happened, Chinese power revived and Chinese states expanded up into Zone A. Some Chinese settled down in places in Zone A where they could farm or at least ranch. What had once been a predominantly Caucasoidal population in Zone A became heavily intermixed with Mongoloidal genes.

Over the long run, the rulers of Zone B realized they had to trade with Zone A to minimize occasions for fighting with its inhabitants. Nevertheless, even such economic exchange normally took on a parasitic flavor as first Zone A's cavalry-wielding peoples and then their imitators from Zone B attempted to (as Owen Lattimore put it) "improve the terms of trade in their own favor" through violence.

The result of these interactions, however nasty they often were, was the diffusion of ever higher stages of high civilization into Zone A both north from Zone B and east from the sedentary Persian cultural region. The Zone A pastoral-nomads then rang creative changes on these imported elements of civilization, invaded the Chinese and Persian sedentary culture areas, and influenced them in turn.

## **B. The First Pastoral-Nomad Early Civilizations**

### **1. The Xianyun coalition**

The capital of the Western Zhou rulers lay just to the south of the objective of the earliest of these pastoralist cavalry raids, as did the fiefs of their nearby northern vassals. The raids began in the 9th century BC. Both lords and vassals were much discommodated by them, as much because of their novelty as their violence.

The contemporary Chinese called the first pastoral-nomad coalition of raiders by a word now pronounced Xianyun in Chinese. No one knows how "Xianyun" was pronounced in ancient Chinese or what it meant in whatever language or

<sup>1</sup>Recently discovered cliff drawings of stick men on stick horses in West Asia dating to the 5th millennium may render such speculation moot. Perhaps, though, even if horse-riding came in before chariots after all, not much that would be profitable could be done with it until the potential rewards of parasitism on sedentary people like the Chinese and Greeks became available during the 1st millennium BC as the two peoples evolved high civilizations and began to generate far more wealth than before.

languages were spoken by the members of this coalition. (In fact, we do not know what languages they spoke.)

If they resembled later pastoral-nomad coalitions, the Xianyun were probably a hodge-podge of peoples, comprising many ethnic types and languages. Some may have spoken Indo-European languages. Others may have been speaking one of the Altaic languages beginning to drift into Zone A then, perhaps from the frozen north.

We simply do not know anything about the members of this coalition except that they all but scared the wits out of the Zone B1 vassals of late Western Zhou's feudal empire. A few generations after these raids began, they helped precipitate the move of the Zhou overlord's capital from the west to the east in 771-69.

As suddenly as they had appeared, the Xianyun raids ceased and the Xianyun disappeared, at least from the Chinese records, which are our only evidence for their existence. Apparently these ad hoc temporary coalitions faded away, or shifted their targets to other (to us unknown) more interesting or vulnerable targets. Perhaps the crude towns of the marcher lords of Qin who took over the Xi'an region were a less attractive target than the abandoned Western Zhou capital.

Did the Xianyun head west to become the Scythians? The Scythians life style resembled that of the Xianyun and soon thereafter began coming down from the northern shores of the Black Sea to have as traumatic effect on the late archaic Greeks as the Xianyun had earlier had on Western Zhou China. Perhaps, but the Scythians may have been a separate group of pastoral-nomads operating well to the west of subzone A1.

## 2. The Xiongnu coalition

Eastern Zhou China only remained free from pastoral-nomad raids for another couple of centuries. A new coalition soon took form. The Chinese called this coalition the Xiongnu.

We do not know the Xiongnu's eth-

nic or linguistic background either.<sup>2</sup>

We do know that these Xiongnu were much better organized than the Xianyun. Their seasonal raids were not just ad hoc operations followed by re-atomization back into small families. They eventually even managed to use their loot to support a permanent ruling class and to organize something resembling a local state, albeit a moving local state on horseback.

The earliest Xiongnu state stretched only as far as their leader, who bore the title *Shanyu* or *Chanyu*, could see from atop his low-slung horse as he led his cavalry on a raid against some nearby oasis. The later Xiongnu state was at least incipiently territorial, since habits of deference to the Xiongnu rulers were induced over the wide area regularly raided by them.

In other words, the Xiongnu seem to have evolved into a pastoral-nomadic version of early civilization roughly analogous to the early civilization of Bronze Age China that had begun 1,500 years previously. However, by the time the Xiongnu state formed, sedentary China had advanced into the iron age and was a first stage high civilization.

Perhaps the germ of the pastoral-nomad version of early civilization had been created by or at least carried back from Zhou China onto the grasslands by the Xianyun as the non-material part of the booty from their violent encounters with the sedentary agriculturists in Zone B. Back in Zone A, these ideas took less than five centuries to evolve into the Xiongnu's more mature version of early civilization. Perhaps, though, the pastoral-nomads had merely enjoyed a separate but parallel evolution of early civilization.

The Xiongnu king, to whom the title *shanyu* was applied, ruled from a movable city of *gur*, the disassembleable houses of the pastoral-nomads, often

mistakenly called yurts.<sup>3</sup> The Xiongnu still did not settle down in the south, but merely raided it at more regular, seasonal intervals. Perhaps unlike the Xianyun, they retained their political organization between raids.

## 3. China's evolving response

### a. the not-so Great Wall(s)

During the Warring States era the several northern states of B1 and B2 (Qin, Jin and Yan) tried to wall off the Xiongnu. The first universal state, Qin, supposedly tried to link these walls together and standardize their design after 221 BC. However, all these walls always had many gaps. They may never have been intended to do more than block off a few main invasion routes.

You should not think of this first version of the Great Wall as resembling the tourist site that you see in contemporary Chinese travel posters. The Wall you now see was built of brick facing covering a rammed earth and rubble core by the Ming Dynasty during the 15th through 17th centuries.

Part of the much different Qin wall still exists a few miles to the south of the present Wall. It is not much of a tourist attraction, since it is now just a bump on the landscape. (Cf. illustration in chapter 8.)

For much of its length, especially in its western extension built during Han, the Wall functioned like a pre-electronic equivalent of our DEW (Distant Early Warning) line radar that is strung across Canada and Greenland. Watchtowers, with resident garrisons, were built at line-of-sight distances from each other along the outer perimeter. Other manned watchtowers within this line led toward major garrison encampments.

The Wall proper was merely a raised earth embankment stretched between some of the outer perimeter towers, with a strip of raked sand forming its interior slope. Patrols would go back and forth from one outer perimeter tower to the next looking for massed hoofprints on the raked sand. When they spotted something significant, the patrol would

<sup>2</sup> If you happen to be visiting one of the Mongolian-speaking areas of subzone A2, you can get a bloody nose (or at least a dirty look) if you assert that the Xiongnu were Turks. A similar reaction will be evoked if you call them Mongols while visiting one of the Turkish speaking areas of A1. Since there is no way to tell what the Xiongnu were anyway, I will be discreet and not even attempt the hopeless task of identifying the ethnic or linguistic characteristics members of the Xiongnu coalition.

<sup>3</sup>The yurt is a lighter, still more portable structure.

hightail it back to the closest watch-tower.

By day they would signal the interior towers by smoke, and by night light by a torch. The major regional garrison center would then send a larger force out in the direction of the place where the intrusion had taken place.

The raked sand was analogous to non-electronic radar, the patrols were the radar sets, the towers the radio antennas, and the large interior garrisons the F-15s scrambled to make the interception along this non-electronic DEW line.

The Qin wall was not tested until well after Qin's fall. When it eventually was tested it proved all too easy to cross.

Luckily for the Chinese, the Xiongnu fell into internecine quarrels during the last generation of the 3rd century BC. The timing of these quarrels may, however, have been no coincidence.

Qin's successful world war against the other warring states was soon followed by its own disintegration, and the chaotic post-Qin civil war. These events made Xiongnu raids too dangerous for the Xiongnu themselves. None of the frontier states could afford to bribe them and had become too impoverished by civil war to have much to loot. Without the loot and bribes from China, the Xiongnu ruling class became impoverished, and its members began fighting among themselves for the scraps of loot that remained. However, once China calmed down under the early Han rulers, it prospered enough to once again become an attractive Xiongnu target.

Early Western Han inherited the first incarnation of the Great Wall, but soon found how inadequate it was even as an early warning system once the Xiongnu regained political unity. Fortunately, Han also inherited the much cheaper technique of offering bribes to the Xiongnu.

### **b. from appeasement to forward policy**

By early Han times, the Chinese decided that it was cheaper to buy off these leaders with regular payments of Chinese products, and even Chinese

princesses than to fight them. Though, like dishonest New York politicians under Tammany Hall's definition, the Xiongnu would not "stay bought," they could (in Daniel Webster's euphemism) be "put on retainer."

As a rich universal state with access to the luxury goods of all of Zone B rather than just the more limited resources of one of the territorial states of Warring States times occupying a fragment of one of Zone B's subzones, Han could at least offer bigger and better bribes and (politically speaking, at least) more attractive princesses. It could use these to buy peace. We owe one of the most poignant stories in Chinese literature, later to become a Peking Opera libretto, to the adventures of one of these Han princesses among the Xiongnu.

Such bribes worked very well during and for some time after Emperor Wen's time, and allowed the new Han universal state several generations of external peace during which it could stabilize itself and prosper. It did not, therefore, matter too much that the Xiongnu were dishonest politicians, who when bought, did not stay bought. China could for a time afford to keep them on ever higher retainers. However, the price of peace grew as the Xiongnu ruling class became more numerous.

Bribes eventually also seemed less dignified to the maturing universal state of Han than more militant responses. After Emperor Wu came to the throne in 140 BC, he decided that a universal state should not humble itself by paying bribes to barbarous pastoral-nomads.

Emperor Wu sent his brave and intelligent courtier, Zhang Qian, way out into the west of Zone A and beyond to look for a people called the Yuezhi, a Caucasoidal Indo-European speaking people. The Yuezhi had until century earlier lived just west of the Xiongnu in subzone A2, but had been driven off further to the west by them.

Zhang Qian went off to find out where the Yuezhi had settled and negotiate a treaty of alliance with them. He did not find them at first. Instead the Xiongnu took him hostage. He married a Xiongnu woman and fathered a child by her, but eventually escaped. After

more adventures, he found the Yuezhi living all the way to the west in Afghanistan. He offered them an alliance with Han, but they declined. They preferred to stay in Afghanistan, which was then safely out of the way of the heaviest military traffic, but near lucrative east-west and north-south trade routes.

The Yuezhi possessed what Zhang described as large, high endurance and fast "blood sweating" or "heavenly" horses of Fergana, the name of their new kingdom. Apparently some equine fungus gave the horses' sweat a pinkish color. Eventually, Zhang arranged to send some of these Arabian horses to China.

The heavenly horse inspired a vivid new style in Chinese heroic sculpture, one that symbolized Emperor Wu's reaching out for empire. Han subsequently produced some of the most beautiful horse sculpture in the history of art. In one Eastern Han general's tomb, a line of bronze chariots led by a bronze heavenly horse taking wing without wings (one hoof rests lightly on a swallow in flight) carries the general's soul up to Heaven.

The Chinese interbred these tall Arabian steeds with the little Shetland pony-sized animals with heavy muscles, long coats and mean looks in their eyes hitherto used as the standard horse of Zones A and B. This produced a new, somewhat larger, but still sturdy riding horse which served as an improved new weapon of war for both the pastoral-nomad horsemen and the sedentary region cavalry who opposed them.

Emperor Wu used the intelligence Zhang Qian and other travelers brought back to launch ruinously expensive but initially successful campaigns against the Xiongnu from the 120s BC on. The Chinese could never under Emperor Wu and his successors do more than keep the Xiongnu at bay, but Han retained the long string of cavalry forts stretching across the southern reaches of A2 the Emperor's generals had conquered.

Han tried to protect its northwestern flank with a westward extension of the Great Wall toward A1. To protect the universal state's eastern flank, Han conquered and maintained control of a broad band of territory in southern A3,

extending into northern and central Korea.

The Xiongnu coalition finally went to pieces under this sustained pressure by the 2nd century AD. Their westernmost branch broke out to the far west, perhaps to become (or join up with, or push to the west) the empire of the Huns who so bedeviled the Roman Empire in its declining years.

Some of the rest settled down in north China and became the ancestors of many of the inhabitants of modern Shanxi Province. As a consequence, North Chinese still have longer heads, somewhat beakier profiles and a greater tendency to five o'clock shadow than southern Chinese. (Do not, however, tell a Shanxi man you think his ancestors might have been barbarians, lest he punch you in the nose, or at least give you a dirty look.)

## C. The Pastoral-Nomad Transition Into High Civilization

### 1. During the Northern and Southern Dynasties period China

The states formed by high civilizations are larger than those of early civilizations. Their ruling classes are more complex, and eventually composed at least in part of men of "merit" as defined by some set of elaborate religious and philosophical ideas, and of plutocrats—rich men with wealth gained more or less independently of the state by trading in a true market.

As nearly as we can tell, the Xiongnu did not consistently fit these requirements. They remained, therefore, at the level of early civilization, only fitfully approaching the boundaries of the next stage of development, but never crossing over into it, much like late period Shang China.

Pastoral-nomad states did not cross the threshold of high civilization until they permanently conquered a significant portion of northern Zone B, the homeland of East Asia's first civi-

lization. It was, however, the earlier relationship of the Xiongnu with Han that set the stage for this next evolutionary step.

Among its other accomplishments (or sins), the Han Dynasty carried the "infection" of high civilization into Central Asia via its bribes of goods and princesses. Han's withdrawal from Zone A and the northern borderlands of Zone B after the disintegration of the Xiongnu created a vacuum that drew in some of the most actively culture-climbing of Zone A peoples.

Soon, new pastoral-nomad coalitions formed to raid and even to settle as conquerors in the northern part of subzones B1 and B2. The "Sixteen Kingdoms," which jostled each other for control of part of northern Zone B at the beginning of the Northern Dynasties period, were mostly short-lived or miniature pastoral-nomad coalition conquest states.

The most successful of these, the Xianbei coalition, created a large conquest state at the end of the 4th and beginning of the 5th century. Thereafter, in the course of establishing a series of Wei Dynasties, the Mongolian-speaking ruling clans of the Xianbei took over significant chunks of subzone B2.

The Xianbei also brought Buddhism from Zone A2 into China for the first time as the religion of a ruling class. Buddhism soon exerted great influence over the Chinese as well as barbarian ruling classes. The pious Xianbei rulers inaugurated the great age of Buddhist "cathedral building" with their creation of the noble structures that we so awkwardly call "cave temples." The earliest of these was at their first Zone B capital, near the Yungang cave temple complex just below the Great Wall near the modern city of Datong. Most of the artisans who created this cathedral complex were Chinese. (Cf. chapter 9.)

The Xianbei also brought in with them the relationship they had worked out earlier back home with the agriculturists of the oases of Zone A. They called it the "equal fields" system in China. The Xianbei rulers guaranteed equal access to agricultural land to all their sedentary subjects. In exchange, the latter did not wiggle too much while the former stood upon their necks and

extracted substantial but equitably levied tax payments from them.

The Confucians amongst the remaining Chinese elite in the north also thought this equal fields system was defensible in Chinese ethical terms. It reminded them of the ancient "well-field" system.<sup>4</sup> The barbarian institution, if only accidentally, seemed to be congruent with this ancient and sacred native Chinese institution for assuring equitable distribution and periodic redistribution of land. This happy coincidence helped reconcile the Chinese elite of subzone B2 to being ruled by people they considered barbarians.

The Xianbei, like their predecessors of the Sixteen Kingdoms, became the ruling class of a Chinese high civilization rather than of a pastoral-nomad early civilization, but only at the price of becoming ever more sedentary themselves.

Within a century, the Xianbei rulers ordered that Chinese become the language of the court. Eventually, the invaders virtually became Chinese themselves. To be sure, they also "barbarized" Chinese political forms, military tactics, foodways, dress, and even pronunciation of Chinese words in the process of being absorbed by Chinese culture.

Within another few centuries, the Chinese outproduced and hence swamped the Xianbei within China, and then once more pushed out into Zone A led by the partly Xianbei ruling houses of the Sui and Tang dynasties of reunification.

### 2. In subzone A3

Similar processes were going on in the Korean peninsula, in southern Manchuria and even in Japan during the first half of the first millennium AD. Pastoral-nomad peoples had long since been drifting into and then settling down in these areas because A3 was better watered and had a longer growing sea-

<sup>4</sup> A utopianized vision of how the Western Zhou supposedly distributed land equally among the common people, the first mention of which appeared in Mencius's book in the 4th century BC. Cf. chapter 7.

son than A2.

Han China conquered some of the earliest arriving of these sedentarized pastoral-nomads in northernmost Korea and infected them with the virus of high civilization. These peoples eventually became strong enough as a consequence to break loose from China and start going into business as high civilizations on their own.

The Xianbei caught high civilization through conquering parts of Zone B, where the ancient Chinese version of a first stage high civilization was already present. The Xianbei's more remote "cousins" in A3 caught rudimentary versions of high civilization by conquering various places on the Korean peninsula. These areas had earlier caught it themselves as Chinese colonies, or as neighbors of these colonies.

Eventually, whether through conquest or neighborly influence, some of these Korean states spread the germs of this high civilization to Japan. This set the stage for the Japanese to reach out directly to China after Japan's Late Tumulus period had indigenized some aspects of high civilization on their islands. (Cf. chapters 13 and 14.)

### **3. In western Zone A**

Far to the west, in the southerly reaches of subzone A1, were several branches of the Turkic language speaking peoples. We do not know how long these people had been there, but references to "Turks," some of whom were oasis-dwelling sedentary people, begin appearing in Chinese sources written during the 5th century AD. Many of these people were sent flying in all directions by Tang China's conquest of their first large territorial state, the Turkish Khanate, in the 7th century. Some of them, however, remained in the area.

One of the more easterly branches of the Turks who remained in A1 founded the Uighur state. The Uighurs were a town-dwelling commercial people. They were in touch with both China and Persia. Eventually they became a second stage high civilization through cultural and economic intercourse with the sec-

ond stage high civilizations of both Persia and Sui-Tang China.

A second stage high civilization, you will recall, either develops or borrows from another culture a more elaborate religious and philosophical tradition. Such a tradition can simultaneously account in both metaphysical and literal terms for a new kind of Heaven and Earth. Both have become far more complicated than during the preceding first stage of high civilization.

This new "doubleminded" mentality allows the second stage high civilized state or states and their markets to become larger and more complex. The states often become more bureaucratic. The moneys used in their markets become more abstract and un-commodity-like.

The Uighurs appear to have been the first of the Zone A peoples of whose civilization such statements might plausibly be made. (The Xianbei eventually made such a transition too, but in Zone B, not in Zone A.) For the better part of a century, the Uighurs exerted substantial influence over Tang Dynasty China (cf. chapter 10, pp. 2-3), but they never permanently occupied or directly ruled Chinese territory before their state was overthrown by the Tanguts during the second quarter of the 9th century.

It was mostly economic energy that pushed the Uighurs not only into high civilization, but across the threshold into its second stage. Much of this energy was derived from the maturing of the trade links across the Silk Road linking Western to East Asia, using camels as the main beasts of burden.

New devices for exploiting the camel were the main technological novelties in Zone A during Han and post-Han times. It was more difficult to design a proper saddle for a camel than for a horse. Not until Han times was this problem solved, and this was done in the Middle East or possibly East Africa, not China. By Tang times a large-scale camel caravan trade regularly moved high-value goods from Western Asia across subzones A1 and A2 to the Chinese core of East Asia.

This camel trade was not yet heavily challenged during the Age of Disunion by the primitive coastal sailing vessels

available then. Effective new designs of ships eventually allowed the seaborne trade around the southern perimeter of Eurasia to supplement and then throw completely into the shade this land trade, but not until well after Tang times.

## **4. The Chinese-Influenced Pastoral-Nomads During the 2nd Stage of High Civilization**

### **a. during Tang**

To the east and south of the Uighurs were the Tanguts, related to one branch of the Tibetans, and the Khitan (pronounced Qidan in modern Chinese), probably related, at least linguistically, to the Xianbei coalition earlier, and to the Mongols who only appeared late in the 11th century.

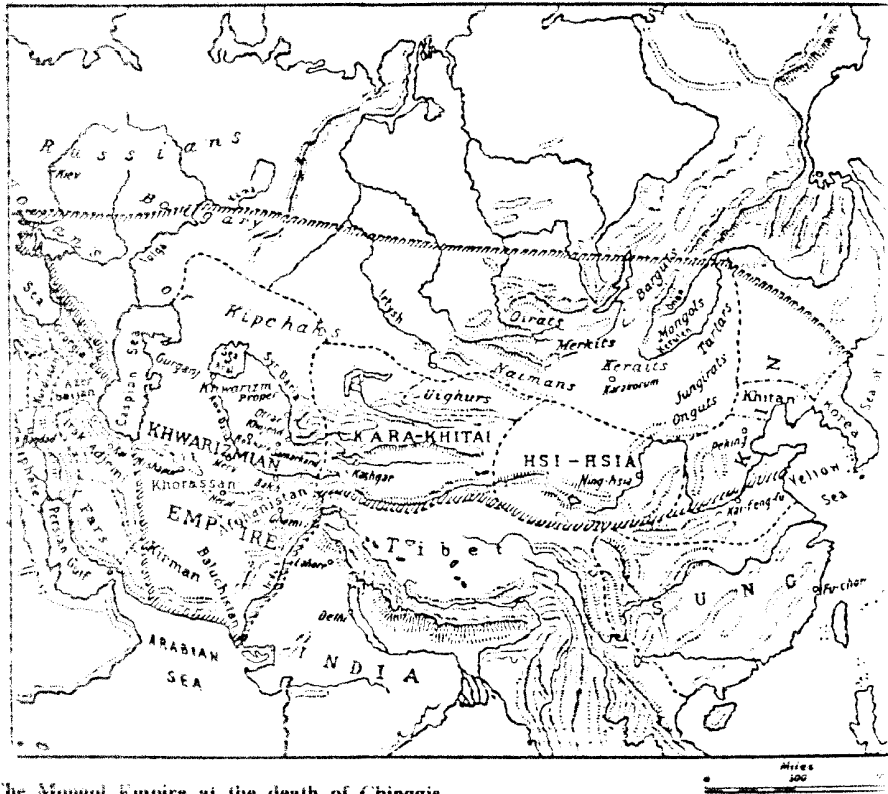
Unlike the Uighurs, these peoples had tighter links to Tang China than to Persia. Perhaps because of this lesser degree of cultural autonomy, they were a bit slower in crossing the line to second stage high civilization. But by the end of Tang or the beginning of Song, even they had crossed that threshold. Thereafter they took over substantial amounts of hitherto Chinese-controlled territory and played a considerable role in Chinese politics.

### **b. Western Xia and Liao**

By the end of the Tang and the beginning of the Song, the subzone A3 peoples nearest the borders of B2 had crossed fully into the second stage of high civilization. The Tanguts' Western Xia and the Khitans' Liao Dynasty soon became as civilized as the Chinese themselves, though the Chinese could never quite bring themselves to admit this.

The Chinese still tended to think of them and describe them as though they were still only first stage high civilizations or even just early civilizations. Yet in terms of their defacto power they were the equals of the Chinese, and indeed in many respects their superiors. It was more likely in any given military encounter that they would win and that

inat:



The Mongol Empire at the death of Chinggis the Chinese would lose. Nor were they inferior culturally.

Western Xia and Liao paid, however, a very severe price for this progress. Even more rapidly and thoroughly than the Xianbei before them, they became sedentarized. The Liao rulers, at least, lost virtually all of their pastoral-nomad traits. For a “huntin’ shootin’ horse-ridin’” pastoral-nomad aristocracy, this was dangerous and ultimately fatal.

Both tried to compromise with sedentary culture: to keep for their aristocracy, at least, a “huntin’ shootin’” style of culture. The monarchs understood they had to keep these aristocrats separate from and hence socially superior to an ethnically Chinese meritocracy which no longer hunted large animals from horseback. The Chinese meritocracy would in turn administer for them the ever larger areas of Zone B that this militarized barbarian aristocracy could conquer.

This ploy tended to work for a time, but eventually even the aristocracy could not resist the allure of a more fully Chinese style of culture: They succumbed to the temptation to get off their

The Mongol Empire at the death of Chinggis Khan. (Michael Prawdin, *The Mongol Empire*.)

horses and let their fingernails grow; to sleep in a pleasant Chinese house rather than in a pastoral-nomad *gur*.

Once that happened, these conquerors were subject to conquest themselves by some other set of pastoral-nomads who had not yet gone through this sedentarizing process, and ultimately by the Chinese themselves.

One contemporary Chinese metaphor has the barbarians start out as “raw” (*shēng* 生) and, as they turn into Chinese, become progressively more “cooked” (*shú* 熟).

Liao was very nearly well done when, early in the 12th century, the Ruzhen (Jurched/Jurchen) peoples came down from central A3. Their Jin Dynasty allied with Song, and destroyed the Liao state that the heavily sinicized Khitan had created in southern A3 and northern B2 during their “raw” stage several centuries previously.

The Jin not only took over Liao’s territory, they soon extended their control over all of B1 and B2. They drove Song down into southern Zone B. An

uncooked remnant of the Khitan fled west into A2. Their rump state finally succumbed to the Mongols early in the 13th century.

### c. The Ruzhen’s Jin

Within just a century, the Jin underwent the same kind of sedentarizing process as Liao had earlier. Their ruling class became little more than a sinicized but still privileged conquest aristocracy sitting uneasily atop a down at heels Chinese meritocracy.

Like Liao earlier, Jin quickly became dependent on the tribute they wrung from the Southern Song state. Their market economy became a satellite of the massive early industrial markets of Southern Song.

The Jin rulers not only copied Song Chinese metal money, they were soon using paper money almost exclusively. This was to insulate their domestic money supply from their chronically unfavorable balance of trade with Southern Song. That is

why they went over to a purely paper money system even before Southern Song itself did. These precocious Keynesians used medium-boiled ancient monetary tricks inspired by the *Guan Zi*. What could be more Chinese-meritocratic than that?

Partly as a consequence of their monetary policy folly, the Jin became vulnerable to an alliance between Song and the Mongols, the newly rising force in central and southern A2. The Mongols grew stronger through trade with the Jin, then swallowed them in several gulps by 1234. For dessert, they consumed all the rest of Central and West Asia, and then polished off Southern Song as well by 1276.

### d. the Mongols in China and Mongolia

The Mongols were determined not to go through this sort of sedentarizing process. The founder of their coalition, Temuchin (Chinggis Khan), despised the sedentary life. The Mongols were only recently removed from a purely pastoral-nomad style of life in northern A2.

Part of Chinggis’s genius as an ad-

ministrator was his ability to devise techniques for assuring dominance for his fellow Mongols even in a coalition including mercantile and even agricultural peoples as well as other pastoral-nomad ethnic groups. Ethnic Mongols constituted little more than 10 percent of the military force within this coalition. Chinggis's grandson, Kublai Khan, maintained this balance between administrative control and pastoral-nomad culture even after he conquered all of China.

It turned out that once the Mongols left China they could not and did not need to return. The evolution of technology was running against their return to China. Firearms, which the Mongols may have helped develop in China, eventually gave a decisive advantage to infantry from the sedentary agricultural world.

It is ironic that the world's oldest known actual cannon (a small caliber weapon made of bronze) bears the date 1320 in the Chinese language. That would put it mid way through the Mongols' Yuan Dynasty. The Chinese themselves did not do much with firearms during Ming, but picked up the more advanced cannon from the Europeans in the 17th century, and again in the 19th century.

After only 75 years in control of all China, the Mongols decided (like E.T.) that they wanted to go home and remain pastoral-nomads after all. Thanks to their founding fathers' rules, they had retained both their autonomy and their ancestral pastoral-nomadic lifestyle, and so they were able to do just that. They fully intended to come back to rape and loot the Chinese sedentary agriculturists whenever they pleased.

Firearms gave a decisive advantage to the sedentary peoples, at first in defending their own territory, and increasingly even on the high plains of Zone A. For the first time since the riding of horses began, the military advantage shifted decisively against the region where horse-riding had begun in East Asia.



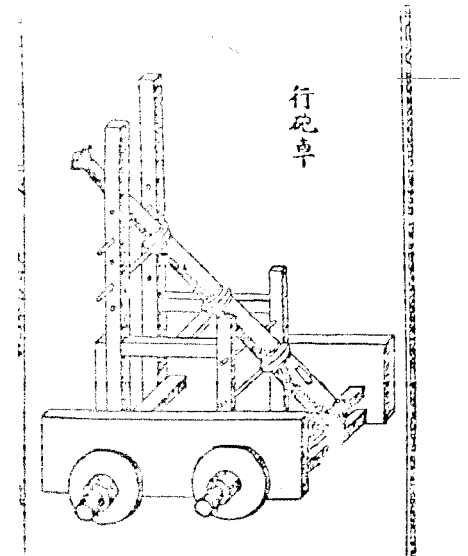
Chinggis Khan (National Palace Museum)



Kublai Khan (National Palace Museum)

Finally, in the 19th century came the railroad, and in the 20th century, the Land-rover type automobile, and it was all up with the Central Asian-Arabian hybridized steed as well.

The Mongols were destined thereafter to stay home in Greater Mongolia. This Mongolian homeland now comprises three parts: 1) what until recently was called the Mongolian People's Republic (now the Mongolian Republic) in the middle, 2) the Chinese Inner Mongolian Autonomous Region in the South, and 3) the Buriat S.S.R. east of Lake Baikal in the north, which remain a part of the Russian Republic.



A *xingpaoche* early cannon on wheels, from an 11th century work. The illustration may only date to the 15th-17th century. (Goodrich & Feng, 1945)

Within a few centuries after leaving China in the 14th century, the Mongols discovered they could mature back home in subzone A2 as a fully "double-minded" second stage high civilization. They soon (with Chinese encouragement) borrowed Lamaist Buddhism from the Tibetans, and hybridized it with their own native shamanistic faith to provide a spacious enough vision of Heaven for double-mindedness to evolve.

They could support a state of modest proportions so long as they made their new and more expensive religious order do double duty, with some of the monks also serving as local officials and merchants.

Most Mongols could even retain their pastoral-nomad style of life, though this meant they would be much poorer than they had been as members of the armies occupying China, Persia and southern Russia.

State and church could support themselves by levying toll on the camel caravan trade that went through Mongol territory. The sedentary peoples to the south of them allowed the burden of this toll to be passed forward onto them for two reasons: 1) The most lucrative trade was by this time coming via the sea route anyway. 2.) Eventually, Chinese merchants also came to dominate the overland trade across Zone A. The Chinese shared the profits from it with the

Mongol religious establishment and the heads of a few important Mongol lineages.

### e. the Manchus

The Manchus, the last Zone A people to conquer the Chinese universal state, were “cousins” of the Ruzhen. Their Qing Dynasty’s 267 year tenure as ruler of China after the 1640s showed just how long the process of sedentarizing a conquest aristocracy might be stretched out. The Manchu conquest aristocracy managed to remain at the huntin’ and shootin’ and horse ridin’ stage for the better part of 150 years.

By the 19th century, however, the Manchu aristocracy finally became more Chinese than the Chinese themselves. When their power was overthrown in 1911, no one could tell the difference between a civilized Manchu and a Chinese. There remained only a small number of pre-civilized Manchus in central A3 to be kept as the Chinese equivalent of tame “Red Indians” by the several Chinese successor states to the Manchu empire.

\*\*\*\*\*

There are still some 2.5 million pastoral-nomads left in China’s portions of Zone A. They are a small minority even within the 60 odd million people in China officially labeled as belonging to “minorities.” Even all the minorities taken together do not seem like many (though there are over twice as many of them as there are of Canadians) when we remember that there are now 1.2 billion Chinese.

As a consequence, the pastoral-nomads are now as hemmed in as were the Sioux Indians after the U.S. cavalry finally caught up with them after they had done their worst to Custer.

Still, the Chinese (between their bouts of persecution of minorities, at least) seem to feel obliged to defer to some of the sensibilities of pastoral-nomads, if only to keep them from going over to their ethnic cousins on the Russian side of the international border that now cuts laterally across Zone A. For similar reasons, the Russians have

also behaved somewhat decently toward their pastoral-nomads in recent decades.

The appetite of full industrial age sedentary peoples for red meat, especially now when they are tapering off from practicing socialism to go to market again, would seem to provide the occasion for at least a small core of pastoral-nomads to continue to earn a half-way decent living while leading a pastoral-nomadic way of life.

The presence of various useful minerals in the soil of Mongolia might even allow some additional increase in the incomes of urbanized ex-pastoral-nomads. This might ultimately raise their real incomes significantly beyond the low level to which pastoral incomes sank after their ancestors could no longer raid or conquer the great sedentary states to their south.

## D. Korea’s Transition To Early Civilization

Korea is a small country compared to China, but it is larger and much better developed than most UN members. It is within convenient commuting distance of our main Asian trading partner, Japan, and even of our own West Coast. Now that South Korea is fully industrialized, the Pusan Iron Works can deliver steel pipe to Bellingham cheaper than a Gary, Indiana mill can.

Far beyond economic reasons for taking Korea seriously is the tragic fact that some four dozen thousand Americans died defending South Korea just four and a half decades ago. These casualties might have been reduced in number or eliminated if our leaders had understood more about Korea’s history, including even its early history.

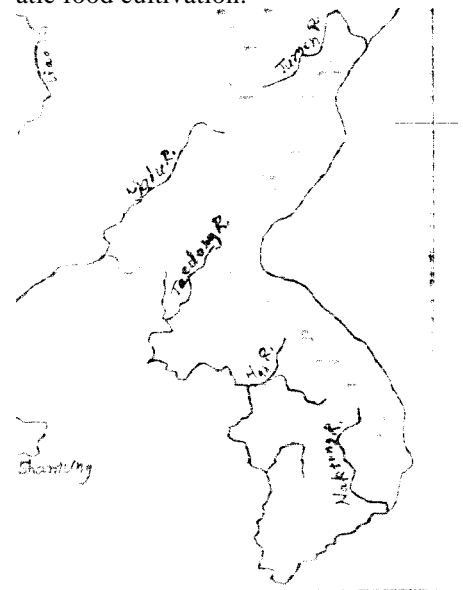
### 1. Before civilization

You may have noticed that the line on the frontmatter map, “The Regions of East Asia,” separating the Southern and Eastern Periphery from the Northern Periphery runs right through the Korean peninsula and southwestern Japan. There are good reasons, based on archeology and historical linguistics for

my having assigned the western third of Korea as well as southwestern Japan to Zone C.

In fact, for the next few pages, at least, I would prefer that you forget the words “Japan” and “Korea,” and replace them with “insular northeast Asia” and “peninsular Northeast Asia.” Before the transition into high civilization, there really were not yet any people whom we could reasonably label “Japanese” or “Koreans.” There was merely a congeries of Zone A and Zone C peoples whose communities had not yet mixed. Only from the 6th century AD on did they crystallize out as the Korean and Japanese territorial states and make the physical differentiation of the peninsula from the islands meaningful in cultural terms.

As the waters from the melting glaciers rose over most of Zone C, people fell back to the edge of the highlands that formed the new coastline. There they lived increasingly sedentary lives at first near and then inland from tide-water, as they evolved from systematic food gathering to more or less systematic food cultivation.



Peninsular Northeast Asia (AKA Korea)

The people living along the west coast of Korea reached the food cultivation stage (i.e. the Full Neolithic) by about 3,000 BC—some 3,000 years after this transition occurred in China. Even that early, these peninsular people were already displaying some Korean traits.

Archeologists investigating sites on the west coast of Korea near the outlet of the Han River find buried in habitation sites ceramic pots filled with fermented chopped cabbage and spices. After all this time this stuff is overripe even for *kimchi*, but *kimchi* it seems to be.

These early Neolithic people must, therefore, be ancestral, in culture if not necessarily altogether in gene pool, to the later Koreans, who still eat *kimchi*.

Gradually during the next 2,000 years, this Zone C first stage Full Neolithic spread inland and gradually turned into a Late Neolithic. As it did so, its bearers seem to have picked up a number of Northern Periphery cultural traits, presumably from migrating Zone A peoples.

As Zone A dried out, scratch agriculturists from further west and north in Zone A slowly began drifting east and south. Some of them had already started evolving toward pastoral-nomadism. This made it easier for them to undertake such a migration.

When they hit the western reaches of the peninsula, they finally found someplace sufficiently comfortable for them to “sit down” in again and turn back into sedentary agriculturists. They probably sat upon the heads of local Zone C sedentary early farmers and food gatherers and soon began to rule over them with the beginnings of early civilized local states.

These first stages of subzone A3’s transition into early civilization occurred without, as nearly as we can tell, any significant contact with the nearby more advanced Bronze Age early civilization of Xia, Shang or early Western Zhou China in Zone B. Some influences from other parts of Zone A to the west were no doubt felt, as well as contributions from subzone C1 peoples already long resident on the west side of the peninsula. Mainly, though, this was an essentially autonomous transition into early civilization.

## 2. Early civilization

By about 1,000 BC, the Late Neolithic parts of this mixture of peoples and cultures began an equally auton-

omous from China transition into the Bronze Age in the region north of the Taedong and east of the Liao rivers. This is the region we now label southern Manchuria and northern Korea. The Bronze Age finally appeared here about 1,000 years later than in China.

This peninsular subzone A3 early civilization continued to have a different cultural-technological base from China for another 500 years. The local bronze was not Chinese either in style or technology. If anything, it resembled ways of handling the metal archeologists find much further west in Zone A. Peninsular Northeast Asia’s bronze culture must have spread east all the way from Western Asia where it had first appeared c. 4,000 BC. This meant the peninsula was continuing its transition into early civilization on Zone A rather than Zone B (Chinese) terms.

The statelets (local states) forming after 1,000 BC between the Taedong and Liao Rivers have left some archeological and even literary evidence behind them.

Surviving myths (collected by later Chinese conquerors) allude to an ancient state called “Choson,” said to have flourished then. As myths are wont to do, it treats Choson as one big state.

However, the archeological evidence, eked out by anthropologists’ parallels to other cultures at a similar stage of development, suggests that this early Choson Period from 1,000 BC to 100 BC actually involved a collection of local states, one of which may well have been called Choson. For some reason this state lent its name in the myths to the whole collection of similar local states.

From around 500 BC, an Iron Age slowly took shape in the Choson region. Unlike the preceding Bronze Age, however, this Iron Age’s material culture, at least, reflected Chinese influence. Iron apparently spread from China to Korea within a century or two of the beginnings of its extensive use in China.

Because Chinese styles of iron manufacture, and actual Chinese iron implements show up in the trans-Liao archeological record from about 500 BC on, we may surmise that trading (or gift exchange) and raiding were by then go-

ing on in both directions across the border between the Chinese states of Zhao and Yan in subzone B2 and the proto-Korean peoples of subzone A3.

You may recall that the knife-coins of Yan and Qi seem to have originated as real knives traded or gifted across this boundary with the Choson culture’s collection of statelets. Later, the knife-coins that evolved from these knives within Warring States Chinese territory continued to be traded across the border with A3, but still as commodities rather than money.

Knife coins are excavated from Choson region chieftains’ graves where they served as decorative grave goods. Of course you would not expect an early civilization to be using them as money. Even when they got hold of money, one would expect these Choson chieftains to have used it as a high prestige imported Chinese commodity for its decorative and symbolic value, rather than as a medium of economic exchange.

We might wish to have more mythic evidence of this early period than is still extant. Our problem is that Choson was eventually conquered by China. China preserved at least some of the natives’ myths, as imperialists are wont to do, if only as trophies of their victory. China eventually withdrew, and lost interest in the myths of its former colony.

The rulers of the post-colonial territorial states of the north (Koguryo and Puyo), eventually lost out to a state from the far southeastern corner of the peninsula, Silla. Silla had a quite different mythic tradition, and was too antagonistic to the people it conquered to be much interested in preserving their myths.

Nevertheless, some Choson myths survive. One set of pictures comes from the grave of a Chinese general of the 1st century BC, who had played a role in China’s conquest and early administration of the Choson region. A wall mural in his tomb (excavated earlier in this century) depicts the great ancestor of Choson, Tan’gun, as being half bear and half man. Apparently the bear was the totem animal of this statelet’s ruling clan.

Fragmentary evidence elsewhere suggests that the Choson ruling class

was still only partly patrilineal. Even though Choson culture was already using iron, which you might associate with the onset of high civilization, its totemism and imperfect patrilinearity are clearly the stigmata of an early civilization. Such lags in certain sectors of a culture are common in derivative civilizations like Korea's, as compared to original civilizations, like China's.

## E. Korea's Transition Into High Civilization

### 1. *The transition's beginnings*

Additional signs of incipient high civilization only begin to show up some three centuries after the 6th-5th century BC beginnings of contact with China. Between 206 and 196 BC there was, you may recall, a great civil war in China among candidates for succession to the fallen Qin Dynasty. This civil war culminated in a series of campaigns by the winner, Liu Bang, the founder of the Han Dynasty, against the last potential rivals to his power, his own generals. Liu took on and defeated each of these men in turn. One of them was Wei Man, a general working for the King of Yan in northern B2.

Rather than surrender and be executed, after Liu Bang started purging his former allies, Wei led the remnants of his army across the northern border and conquered what he called the Kingdom of Choson. The Han Dynasty accounts of this event contain the earliest written use of the name Choson. Wei Man and his descendants ruled over Choson as quasi-colonial overlords from the 190s to the last decade of the 2nd century BC.

Wiman (the usual modern Korean transliteration of Wei Man's name), may himself have been a sinified Korean. He swallowed a large part of the Choson culture area, then followed the usual imperialist procedure of simultaneously uplifting and exploiting the natives for fun and profit. This created in subzone A3 a colonial variant of late Warring States Chinese first stage high civilization.

Wiman's version of Choson soon became virtually a satellite state of China, but was not an integral part of the Chinese body politic.

This is roughly analogous to what happened after Cecil Rhodes led his filibustering expedition north out of South Africa to conquer what he rather grandeloquently called Rhodesia at the end of the 19th century. Rhodes set himself up in business as the private proprietor of a state which he then arranged to have swallowed up by the British empire.

Roughly the same fate awaited Wei Man's Choson, except the swallowing was involuntary. Most of Wiman Choson's territory was apparently not in what we now think of as Korea proper. It was in southern Manchuria, somewhere east of the Liao River, though just how far east we cannot tell from the Chinese historical record. Its reach may not have extended south of the Yalu river into what was destined to become historical Korea.

Emperor Wu of China's Han Dynasty came to the throne in 140 BC. Beginning in the 120s, he launched his ongoing series of campaigns against the Xiongnu. The Emperor soon decided he needed a secure northeastern flank to cover his moves against the pastoral-nomads further west and north.

He also decided that the greater Choson of Wiman's descendants was insufficiently reliable to truly secure that flank. And so in 109 and 108 BC, Emperor Wu launched two successive massive invasions of Choson. He took over its territory and reorganized it as a part of the Han universal state, setting up three commanderies within it, to rule it just as he did commanderies within the Great Wall.

This territory remained an integral part of China until well into the 3rd century AD. The Chinese connection even survived the fall of Han itself by several generations. This colonial period of over three centuries lasted a very long time—half again longer than the history of the United States under the Constitution of 1787.

## 2. *A Chinese colony*

### a) *Lolang*

Of these three commanderies, only one is frequently mentioned in the primary sources of Han times. This was Lolang (Nangnang in modern Korean pronunciation).

We do not know what happened to the other two. Was the announcement of their initial creation just puffery by Emperor Wu's courtiers? Did China have to later quietly withdraw from them because it could not afford to maintain an elaborate bureaucratic administration so far away from its capital? Even in the 15th-18th centuries AD, China had trouble maintaining a full range of administration in central and northern Manchuria. Han would have found this task even more daunting. But we simply do not know what happened. The Chinese sources are silent.

Still, we have some archeological evidence for the period of Chinese colonial overlordship. It comes from the region just north of modern Pyongyang in North Korea. Ironically, these sites of ancient Chinese colonialism were dug up during the 1920s and '30s by Japanese archeologists while Korea was a Japanese colony. Most scholars have assumed, even though direct evidence for the assumption is scant, that these were Lolang Commandery sites. If true, that would extend Lolang's boundaries below the Yalu to at least just above the Taedong in the narrow waist of northern Korea.

The evidence for this attribution is, however, just ambiguous enough so that in recent decades patriotic North Korean archeologists could claim that the Lolang thesis is full of hot air. The North Koreans claim that these sites are evidence of an independent Korean kingdom separate from Lolang that was under Chinese cultural influence, but took no political guff from the Chinese or from anybody else. This assertion also fits the basic principle of North Korean foreign policy, which is to maintain their independence from China, Russia and Japan (which they dismiss as an American client state). The North Koreans do not, however, have any real

substantiation for their thesis.

The evidence, which includes graves that resemble Han graves, suggests that these Taedong River sites could have been part of the Han period Lolang colony. But these people could also have been heavily sinified Koreans. So we cannot rule out the North Korean thesis altogether. If we assume that by some fluke all written sources disappeared, what would an archeologist living 2,000 years hence make of the material remains of one of the post-colonial late 20th century nations of Africa? Could he tell they were no longer colonies? Probably not.

### **b) Lolang & the effects of imperialism**

However we interpret the Taedong River archeological remains, it is evident that Chinese imperialism was having the same kinds of effects, both good and bad, in peninsular northeast Asia that imperial expansion has had everywhere else at all other times.

It is unfashionable now to recognize the good aspects of imperialism, just as in Kipling's day it was not particularly fashionable to admit imperialism's bad consequences. Perhaps, though, we are finally approaching the point after a generation of decolonization where we can concede that imperialism has both good and bad consequences.

If imperialism succeeds perfectly, it swallows up a colonized territory so effectively that the colony becomes an integral part of the imperialist's own territory. At that point it becomes pointless to call the colony a colony. Washington State is not, after all, a colony of the United States. It was a colony at one time, when it was a "territory," for control of which the American government squabbled with the British. It is now, except for a few curious customs (at least they are curious from the perspective of the east coast), completely assimilated. This is one alternative extreme pole of development for a colony. In East Asia, much of the middle stretches of Zone C followed this path and became fully, though idiosyncratically, Chinese.

The other alternative occurs when the colony and its culture lie just beyond

the effective long-range tether of the imperializer. This is close enough for the colony to learn from the imperializer. But eventually the colony becomes too tough and expensive for the imperializer to continue to handle. Once the natives have assimilated the new and higher level of civilization that the imperializers had brought in with them, they can, therefore, break away. That is what has happened since the 1950s in colonial Africa. It is also what happened in Korea after Han's fall.

Imperialism most often ends in the colony's political independence, but with one of its good effects manifest. Imperialism is one of the common ways for higher forms of civilization to spread from one area to another. It may not be the nicest way, but it works. That is why it has occurred so frequently.

The history of peninsular Northeast Asia illustrates the ultimate success of this second pole. Even if we interpret them in North Korean terms, the putative Lolang excavations on the Taedong seem to provide evidence for a transition to high civilization occurring among heavily sinified proto-Korean natives. If not they themselves, then their cousins in southern Manchuria had had their heads sat upon at some time by Chinese colonial overlords.

The Han Chinese colonialists undoubtedly also exploited these colonials. They found that Korea possessed some interesting and useful flora which could be shipped back to China.

Ginseng is a man-shaped root native to Korea, resembling Mandrake root in our part of the world. Since antiquity, Chinese people have liked to ingest it precisely because it resembled a man, and so was believed to restore certain manly functions. Since the root contains several mildly poisonous alkaloids, when you drink a tea made of it, you get the impression that something significant is happening to your body, including its nether parts. Hence, since the Han period, elderly Chinese have tried to restore their male vigor by imbibing drinks concocted out of ginseng. More recently, though, they have imported more of the stuff from New Jersey, Staten Island and Wisconsin than from Korea.

The Chinese also discovered that Korean iron ore made better steels than did Chinese ores. We now know this was because Korean iron ore, unlike Chinese, was low in phosphorus, which makes cast iron excessively brittle, and has the same effect on steel forged from cast iron containing it. Phosphorus could not be removed from ore by the smelting processes known then. Only ore with little or no phosphorus could, therefore, be processed into steel swords. The Han Chinese imported much Korean iron for weapons manufacture. Indeed it was not until the conquest of Korea that the Chinese shifted from tempered bronze to steel as the preferred material for swords.

### **3. Decolonization**

The fall of the Han Dynasty in the 220s AD was not enough in and of itself to shake the imperial connection of Lolang with China. The Chinese settlers and sinified natives kept running the colony more or less as before, just as English settlers and Anglicized Blacks continued to run Southern Rhodesia for more than a decade under its first post-independence white leader, Ian Smith. During that time Southern Rhodesia continued to think of itself as British in spirit even after England disowned it. Something similar must have happened with Lolang during most of the 3rd century AD.

Only the rise of the first Northern Dynasties in the late 3rd and early 4th centuries AD finally cut this erstwhile colony off from China decisively enough to dissolve these ties, and allowed an overtly Korean set of states to crystalize out.

This was roughly analogous to how Zimbabwe a few years ago crystalized out of the matrix of post-colonial Southern Rhodesia. Like post-Lolang Korea, even after achieving full independence under a revived old local state's name, Zimbabwe's ruler, Robert Mugabe, has continued to carry in his head at least some of his English Catholic mission school culture.

Most of the supposedly Lolang territory between the Yalu and the Taedong

and some of the territory between the Yalu and the Liao was inherited by two successor states to the Lolang colony. Both were influenced by Chinese culture, and both deserve to be called proto-Korean.

Puyo, a pastoral-nomad trading state in south central Manchuria, remained in fairly close economic contact with the states of north China. The larger part of the former Lolang colony was taken over by Koguryo, an originally more remote and more fully pastoral-nomad group with somewhat deeper roots in its home area to the southeast of Puyo.

Koguryo used these strong nativist roots to defeat and eventually take over Puyo and the parts of former Lolang controlled by Puyo.

#### 4. Chinese-influenced culture spreads south

People from Lolang had been drifting south during the preceding few centuries. In some cases they were refugees from the turbulent north, in others they were aggressors, expanding at the expense of the less civilized mixed Zone A and C cultures living below the Taedong.

Then, as Lolang itself finally dissolved during the 3rd and early 4th centuries, still larger numbers of descendants of Chinese settlers and sinified Korean aristocrats headed south as refugee-aggressors. Some of them founded the state of Paekche in the southwest. There they overlaid their own Chinese-influenced culture atop the local culture without quite eliminating it.

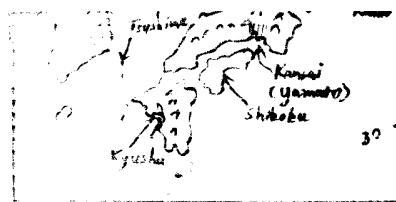
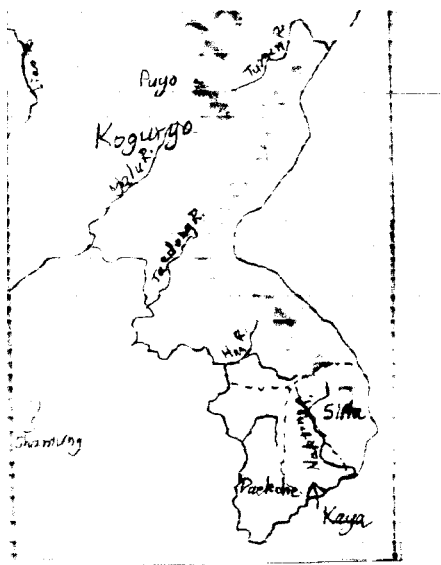
As a consequence of the partial survival of its local, partly Zone C culture, the southwestern part of the Korean peninsula remains peculiar compared with other regions of Korea to this day. Some of the most feisty of the Korean politicians of the contemporary period come from the old Paekche territory. This now encompasses N. and S. Cholla Provinces. Cholla people are still thought of as odd by people from other parts of Korea. The natives of Cholla in turn still think of themselves as special. Most of South Korea's Catholics live in S. Cholla, this modern foreign influence

echoing the Chinese cultural influence over ancient Paekche. Old cultural traits, styles of behavior and biases can last, it seems, for a very long time.

When Koguryo conquered Puyo, a large chunk of Puyo's ruling class took off for the south as well. They could not easily move into the southwest, since that was already in the hands of Paekche. Earlier refugees had already filled that niche.

They could not go into the southeast, because that niche was filled by a tight little nativist kingdom which eventually adopted the name Silla. They could only fill in the spaces between Paekche and Silla by founding a series of statelets along the Naktong River valley that are known in the early chronicle histories as the Kaya League.

If you extend a dotted line down the line of the Naktong past its mouth, you cross the Straits of Tsushima, the narrow waters separating peninsular from insular Northeast Asia. There is even a convenient stopover. The islands of Tsushima are on the way from Pusan to southwestern Kyushu.



That may have been the route taken by some of these Puyo aristocrats during

the 4th century AD. They may have cantered up to the salt water boundary, gotten off their horses, doffed their armor, led the horses onto small ships, crossed the narrow waters, and conquered a good chunk of the territory of a congeries of local states in Kyushu. This accelerated the later stages of the transformation of these insular northeast Asian local states into the Japanese version of the first stage of high civilization.

By the end of the 4th century AD, the "Three Kingdoms" of Korea were in place: Koguryo controlling the north, Paekche the southwest, and Silla in the southeast. Between Paekche and Silla, along the line of the Naktong River, lay the collection of local states sometimes referred to as the Kaya League. At least one of these, Mimana, had some sort of relationship with Japan.

Each of these three territorial states had retained or initiated (sooner or later) some sort of at least indirect cultural connection with China in the process of establishing themselves. That connection allowed the last stage of their transition into high civilization to get under way.

These states apparently lacked, however, a vision of Heaven sufficiently complex to be re-presented into the structure of a stable state and culture of a high civilization.

The Confucian vision of Heaven had apparently faded from the proto-Korean ruling aristocracies' minds along with the Han empire. Perhaps this was because the men of Han were themselves losing faith in the Confucian Heaven. Perhaps Confucianism was too diffused into Chinese secular institutions to survive amputation from them.

All these states had, therefore, were their own native faiths. Even influenced by the parallel Chinese Daoist fertility cult, these native faiths were inadequate to allow Koguryo, Paekche and Silla to complete their transition into high civilization.

## F. Unified Silla's Rise and Fall

### 1. Korea's Three Kingdoms

#### a. the trend toward Silla's dominance

Korean historians borrow the Chinese label "Three Kingdoms" (used for the first generation of successor states to China's Han Dynasty during the 3rd century AD) for this later period in Korean history. Korea's Three Kingdoms (3rd-7th century) comprised initially powerful Koguryo, weak Paekche and initially backward Silla, which eventually, with Chinese help, swallowed all of Paekche and most of Koguryo below the Taedong River.

In the course of these centuries, something that we might reasonably label a "Korean" first stage high civilization came into being. It was partly derived from the original high civilization of China, and still lagged behind China in certain respects. The most elaborate activities of high civilized culture were either not yet present in Korea, or tended to be carried on in Chinese terms, often by families of Chinese ancestry using the Chinese language.

Socially, a purely aristocratic ruling class of the sort we associated with an original early civilization continued to rule all three kingdoms well into this derivative daughter culture's high civilization stage. Political redistribution still dominated economic life. The market was confined to limited aspects of foreign trade.

And yet, despite these lags, before the Three Kingdoms period was over, all three of these territorial states became high civilizations. I suggest the label "derivative" for such high civilizations, as opposed to "original" for the Chinese high civilization from which they derived and behind which they still for some time lagged even after becoming high civilizations.

In some ways Paekche was the most cultured of these three kingdoms. It had the deepest roots in the old Chinese colony of Lolang, and also retained direct

connections with China itself. The southwest coast of the peninsula, which it controlled, had easy access to the secure Yellow Sea shipping route to both northeastern China and the lower Yangzi valley.

Paekche could, therefore, keep in touch with southern China even after the Xianbei peoples took control of much of northern China during the 4th-6th centuries. This made it relatively easy for Paekche to pick up from China whatever it needed evolve into high civilization. It also all but guaranteed that Paekche would take on a relatively effete and imitative version of that high civilization. Constant contact with China could not overcome Paekche's geographically imposed military vulnerability.

Once it lost the Han River valley to Koguryo (which then lost it to Silla), Paekche's northern frontier was always insecure. Once Silla took over the Kaya League states and the line of the Nakdong, Paekche's eastern frontier also became vulnerable.

Koguryo was much stronger than Paekche. It too inherited Chinese cultural influences. These came with the Lolang territory it swallowed up. It also enjoyed the stimulative challenge of being on the northern frontier where it had to compete with other Zone A states. Unfortunately, this challenge may have eventually become excessively strong.

Koguryo was challenged not only by the other non-Chinese states of Zone A, but after the 580s, directly by Sui and then by Tang China. These two successive newly reunited Chinese universal states repeatedly attacked Koguryo. Both wanted to imitate Han China by reconquering the Korean peninsula.

As it turned out, China could no longer own the entire peninsula outright (and likely never did control the whole peninsula, even during Han times). It could, however, destroy both Paekche and Koguryo before having to face that fact.

The challenge faced by Silla turned out to be just strong enough to stimulate it, but not so strong as to overwhelm it.

Silla was the last of the Three Kingdoms to receive cultural influences from China. As it turned out, it received them

just in time to both become a high civilization and successfully resist swamping by both China's culture and its armies.

Adoption of Buddhism as its official religion by each in turn of these three states is a convenient measure of that state's attainment of first stage high civilization, since it was the Buddhist vision of Heaven that all three represented onto Earth to create their high civilizations.

Koguryo made Buddhism its official state religion in 372 AD. Paekche did so by 384, and was more deeply influenced by Buddhism than was Koguryo.

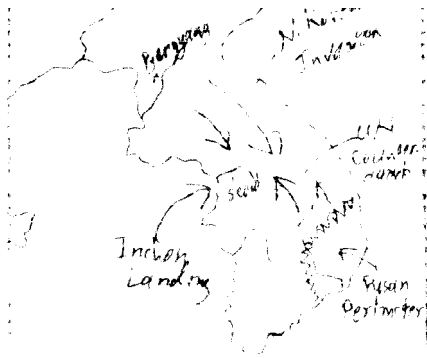
Silla did not turn Buddhist at the official level until 527. Even then it retained much of its local culture as an aboriginal Zone C culture slowly overlaid by Zone A and finally Chinese influences carried by Zone A culture-bearers. Silla more slowly absorbed Chinese culture than the other two but was simultaneously "inoculated" against Chinese culture by receiving regular but small (one is tempted to call them homeopathic) doses of it. This allowed Silla to maintain its cultural integrity while gradually becoming as "up to date" as its two rivals.

Silla also enjoyed a satisfactory defensive position. Because of its isolation in the southeast corner of the peninsula, it was the last place the Chinese would attempt to conquer.

#### b. parallels to the 1950-53 Korean War

The defensive edge given Silla by geographic factors was still present during the recent Korean War.

During the summer of 1950, the North Koreans invaded the south from the old Koguryo territory. The United Nations forces took refuge in the core of the old Silla territory while the Americans hastily mobilized their reserves to launch a counterattack. Huddled behind this "Pusan perimeter," the Americans just barely managed to hold on during July-August 1950.



The Inchon landings in September finally took the pressure off the perimeter. Inchon is at the mouth of the Han River. Control of the Han River valley remained as decisive in 1950 as in ancient times. During the Korean Three Kingdoms epoch, Paekche lost the Han valley to Koguryo. Koguryo then lost it to Silla, but from the landward rather than the sea side, which the Americans used in 1950.

During the mid-7th century, the Tang Dynasty had the same problems fighting both Paekche and Koguryo that Sui had encountered early in the 7th century against Koguryo. Unlike Sui, Tang decided to “use barbarians to help conquer other barbarians.” It allied with Silla, first against Paekche and then against Koguryo. The combination of Tang and Silla easily wiped up the floor with Paekche. However, this alliance served Silla’s interests even more than it did Tang’s.

Then, when Tang turned back to the northern land route to invade Koguryo, it found that Silla (which had a century earlier swallowed up the old Kaya League territory between it and Paekche), quickly took over most of the interesting parts of central Paekche as well.

Tang then discovered that it could not easily move against Silla.

Well before this, Silla had taken over from a Koguryo distracted by its battles with Sui the Han River valley in the middle of the peninsula. This is the region bisected by the contemporary truce line between North and South Korea, roughly along the 38th parallel.

It is one of the abiding strategic realities of the Korean peninsula that he who controls the Han River valley has made a decisive move toward control-

ling most of the rest of the peninsula. Neither North Korea nor the United Nations forces could win a decisive victory in 1950-53 because neither could take over the entire Han River valley. The subsequent 1953 truce split the Han valley between North and South Korea, leaving the peninsula in the highly unstable strategic situation its inhabitants have had to endure ever since.

Koguryo, distracted by its fight with Sui China in the north, had allowed Silla to take the Han valley from it, just as it had earlier taken it from Paekche. It thereby yielded strategic dominance over the peninsula to Silla, a dominance that even Tang China could not overcome.

While Tang was swallowing Koguryo, Silla could easily move up from the Han valley to the line of the Taedong River at the narrow waist of North Korea. There it established a stable defensible border with Tang China, which had conquered most of the rest of Koguryo from the north.

This, however, is where the 7th century analogy to 1950 breaks down. The line of the Taedong is also the place where General MacArthur *should* have stopped in the autumn and winter of 1950 rather than the 38th parallel (favored by the faint-hearted) or the Yalu-Tumen border with China favored by MacArthur and the American right wing. The United Nations counterattack against North Korea after the Inchon landing outflanked the northern invaders. It forced the North Koreans to flee back in disorder and beg for the Chinese Communists and Stalin’s Soviet Union to intervene so as to save them.

If MacArthur could have listened to me lecture in East Asian Studies 201 (which he could not, since I was only 14 years old at the time; but reading the missionary Hulbert’s history of Korea might also have done the job), he could have found the historical precedent for establishing a stable frontier with Chinese power.

This would have been along the line of the Taedong, just where Silla had established it. If he had stopped there, this surely would not have evoked the Chinese entry into the war during November-December 1950 that forced the

UN armies into a temporary retreat deep into the south, and so discouraged the American politicians that they could not manage to mobilize the power that would have brought the UN forces back to the Taedong. (Mao Zedong said at the time to his colleagues that he would at least have delayed entering the war if the U.S. had stopped at the Taedong.)

Silla was not so imprudent. It stopped at the Taedong, and never had to retreat from that line.

The Tang Dynasty thrashed about for the better part of a generation during the latter half of the 7th century trying to overcome Silla. Finally, under Empress Wu, Tang recognized the strategic realities, and negotiated the first explicit version of the tributary relationship with Silla. In exchange for steady access to Chinese culture and (via triennial and occasional annual tribute missions to China) officially sanctioned trade, the Koreans promised never to ally with any of China’s enemies.

Both China and Korea have cherished this tradeoff relationship at most times from the late 7th century right down to the present. The only exception was a short run anomaly from 1894 to 1945 when Japan made at first Korea and then much of Manchuria and northern China into Japanese colonies.

After 1945, North (if not South) Korea returned to an approximation of the old tributary relationship. This time, however (as was sometimes the case traditionally), it became simultaneously tributary to both China and the other dominant power in Zone A, the Soviet Union. South Korea entered the American orbit in 1945, and has also had ever closer economic relations with Japan since the early ‘60s.

## 2. Unified Silla

From the 7th through the 10th centuries, what the historians call Unified Silla (to distinguish it from Three Kingdoms period Silla) remained a very powerful territorial state. Well positioned between the powerful Tang empire and the rising first stage high civilization of Japan, it was able to profit by serving as an intermediary between the

two.

In size and complexity of political and cultural organization Silla quickly matured its first stage high civilization. The regular tribute missions it sent to Tang China somewhat deepened the surface veneer of Chinese culture for the ruling class.

Written records had long since begun to be kept in Silla, but almost exclusively in Chinese. Chinese characters could also be painfully used for their sound values to transcribe the sounds of Korean (the *idu* script). But so awkward was this that its use was largely confined to a few sacred poems, for which retention of the Korean sounds was of magico-religious importance. Even when the Buddhist monks had mostly become Koreans rather than Chinese missionaries, Sillan sacred books continued to be written in Chinese.

That the Buddhist Heaven continued to be re-presented onto the Earthly order of Unified Silla in a foreign language, was not peculiar to Korea. This was also the case for medieval Europe, which received its account of Heaven in Latin, the language of its Roman former colonial overlords.

Socially, Unified Silla still resembled an early civilization. It still retained a simple, two-class society of aristocrats and very low status commoners. The aristocracy, called by a term translatable as “the bone ranks,” was almost as archaic as its name suggests.

Almost all speakers of languages belonging to the Tungusic branch of the Altaic family (including Japanese, Korean, Manchu and Mongolian) distinguish between descent from the “flesh” or “blood” and descent from the “bone.” The “flesh/ blood” is the maternal side; the “bone” the paternal. The “bone ranks” were, therefore, at least patrilineal in their descent pattern.

The Silla aristocracy’s status was legitimized not by Buddhism, and not by Confucianism either, which had never caught on and now did not even send missionaries from China as did Buddhism. Instead, the aristocracy derived its legitimacy from the old aboriginal religion of Silla.

Eventually, however, Unified Silla added between its archaic aristocracy

and low status commoners at least a small middle class of reputable commoners. These were mostly overseas merchants engaged in the carrying trade between China and Japan via west coast Korean ports.

The most notable of these overseas merchants was a 9th century figure, Chang Pogo. As a young man, Chang joined the army of the Chinese Tang empire. After being mustered out, he used his savings to invest in a ship, and gradually built up the biggest mercantile fleet that northeast Asia had ever seen.

By Chinese standards for a first stage high civilization, Korea was overdue for development of a plutocratic component of its ruling class. Apparently Chang thought so too. He used his wealth to try to become what I would call a plutocrat. He spent time at court and even tried to marry his daughter to the crown prince of Silla.

The hitherto feuding aristocrats were furious at this act of presumption. (Remember that jealousy is the abiding vice of aristocrats. They are jealous of people from outside their class claiming what they feel are aristocratic privileges.) They united to murder Chang Pogo.

They could get away with this because Korea had not yet developed much of a domestic market. Almost all domestic exchange of goods was still on the basis of political redistribution, and that was controlled by the bone rank aristocrats. By killing Chang, the aristocrats were making sure that neither he nor other overseas merchants could muscle into the ruling class and dilute the bone ranks’ control over the internal economy.

His murder put an end to Chang’s commercial empire. It also created a vacuum into which Chinese overseas merchants began to move during late Tang and Song times. The Silla aristocrats did not care. They preferred preservation of their prerogatives more than wealth for the Korean commoners they despised.

Nevertheless, the Chang Pogo affair suggests that by the late 9th century Unified Silla’s Earthly arrangements at the social and political levels were slipping out from under the ability of its order of Heaven to legitimize. After

some six centuries, as a derivative first stage high civilization, it was beginning to suffer from a crisis of civilization.

### **3. Silla slips Into a crisis of civilization**

The aristocracy could not entirely reverse the tendency that Chang’s rise had illustrated. Within the aristocracy itself there was increasing tension between the senior “bone rank” archaic clans and a new, slightly meritized junior branch of that aristocracy. These somewhat meritized aristocrats served as lesser officials. They often accompanied tribute missions to China, which task the senior bone ranks disdained. They sometimes came back fluent in the Chinese language and at least beginning to understand the Confucian framework for political philosophy.

In their eyes, the mixture of Buddhism and the archaic Sillan religion was proving inadequate as the basis for re-presentation as the Unified Silla Earthly order. They began to add the Confucian vision of Heaven to their repertoire, and this eventually remedied that defect, though not in time to save Unified Silla.

Not wanting to risk Chang Pogo’s fate, some of these Confucianized junior aristocrats contented themselves with marrying the daughters of merchants rather than royalty. A century after Chang Pogo, the descendant of one such match, Wang Kon, took advantage of factional quarrels at court and the temporary disappearance of the Chinese tribute overlord with the fall of the Tang, to quietly overthrow Silla. He put together a new dynasty, under his own family. This was the Koryo Dynasty.

In the course of the next several centuries, Koryo worked through the crisis of civilization by deepening its connections with China and adding ever more sophisticated versions of Confucianism to Buddhism. Gradually the two fused to function as joint re-presenters of a more complex Heaven onto the Korean Earth. More smoothly than either China earlier or Japan later, Koryo Dynasty Korea successfully completed a transition into a second stage of high

civilization between the 11th and 13th centuries.

Unlike post-Han China or post-Heian Japan, Koryo Dynasty Korea could not risk political fragmentation as part of its resolution of the civilizational crisis.

Han aristocrats could abandon North China to a congeries of Zone A invader states and flee south with their Confucian culture. There they could gradually assimilate the Buddhism that the barbarians were bringing into northern China before reuniting with the north and resolving their crisis of civilization.

As we will see in the next set of chapters, by late Heian times, no outsiders were threatening Japan. So it could risk beginning a feudal process to resolve its crisis of civilization by going to pieces politically.

Korea had very little room within which to maneuver. Southern Korea was too close to northern Korea and the congeries of potential invaders breeding a bit further north in subzone A3. Unless resisted by a united Korean state, invading barbarians could easily swallow the whole peninsula.

As a consequence, Koryo realized it had to hold itself together despite its many external challenges. Hence its transformation of itself into a second stage high civilization was not accompanied by so dramatic a series of discontinuities with Korea's past as was endured by its two neighbors.