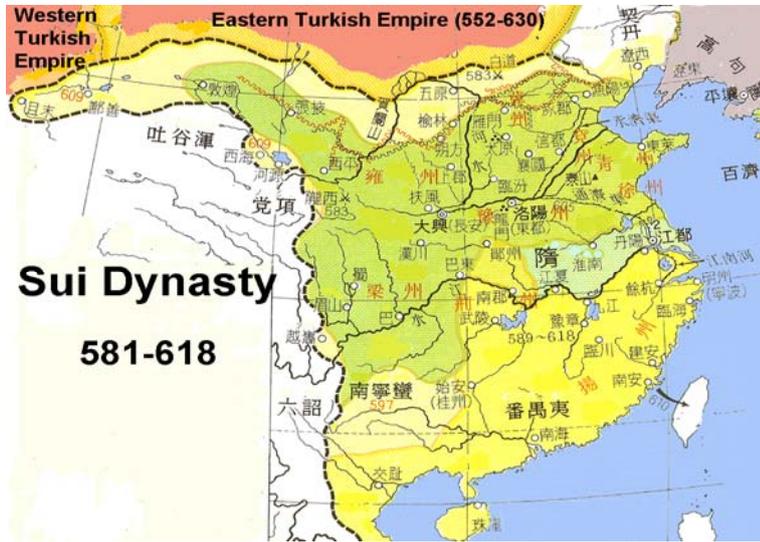


Chapter Seven

Sui and Tang Cannot Be Classified
as Han Chinese Dynasties

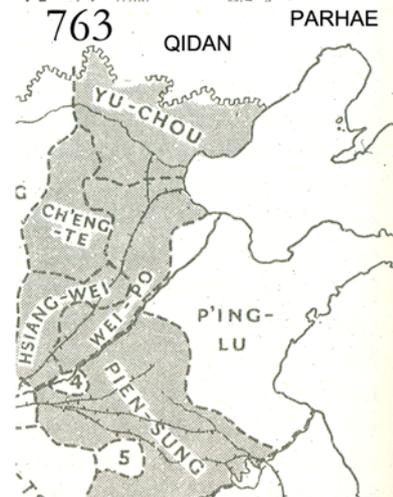
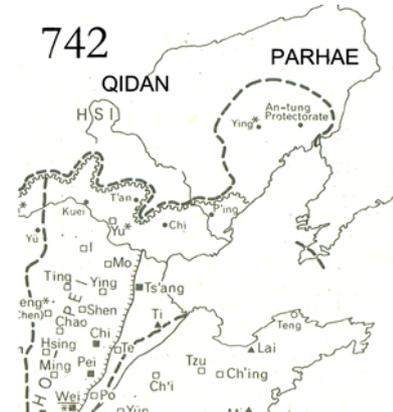
Successors to the Xianbei Conquest Dynasties



Sui Grand Canals
Blunden and Elvin (1998: 105)



From left to right: Sui Yangdi (隋煬帝 r.604-18), Wendi (隋文帝 r.581-604), Wudi of Northern Zhou (北周武帝 r.560-78) and the vanquished (by the Sui) last ruler of Chen (陳後主 r.583-9) looking up Zhou Wudi allegorically. *Emperors of the Successive Dynasties* (歷代帝王圖卷) attributed to Yan Liban (閻立本 600-73) Museum of Fine Art, Boston.



Tang Provinces in 742 and 763
Twitchett (1979: 403, 488)





7.1. The last ruler of Chen, vanquished by Yang Guang, looking up Wudi of Northern Zhou allegorically. (Close-up)



7.2. Tang Taizong (太宗), the Warrior, with one of his six horses (昭陵六駿 enshrined as 開國功臣) that he rode to attack Luoyang in 621 which had the Xianbei name for “crimson” (颯露紫). Originally in Taizong’s Tomb, Liqian.



7.3. Taizong acting-out the Chinese Emperor. Dunhuang Cave 220 of Zhai clan (翟家). Its family members held Tang military positions in 642 when the cave was built. See Ning (2004: 59).

CHAPTER SEVEN SUI AND TANG CANNOT BE CLASSIFIED AS HAN CHINESE DYNASTIES: SUCCESSORS TO THE XIANBEI CONQUEST DYNASTIES

The Tang rulers regarded their dynasty as the direct heir to the three preceding conquest dynasties: Tuoba-Xianbei Wei, Yuwen Tai’s Zhou, and Yang Jian’s Sui. The Sui-Tang founders belonged to the core ruling clans that had served the Xianbei conquest dynasties generation after generation, and became very close to the emperor’s family by marriage. As successors to the Xianbei conquest dynasties, Sui and Tang adapted the “dual system” inherited from the so-called *Northern Dynasties* to the needs of unified mainland China. They maintained the Buddhist ideology imposed upon the Chinese-style bureaucracy, and reinstated the Equal Field system, the innovations of Tuoba Wei; and they kept recruiting the *fubing* army mostly from the ethnically variegated Guanzhong and Shanxi area, an innovation of the Yuwen Tai’s Zhou. Sui Wendi began recruiting the Han Chinese gentry scholars for the lower level government service by formally institutionalizing the irregular and rudimentary old Han examination system. The formalized recommendation-cum-examination system emphasized filial submission and poetry, and came to produce about six percent of the total bureaucracy during the Tang. It was definitely a Sui-Tang innovation. The high-ranking positions were almost completely monopolized by the hereditary Xianbei aristocracy.

When the Tang dynasty perished, the Tang aristocracy also disappeared, together with its prominent collaborators, the ever-faithful Chinese dignitaries. The martial Qidan-Xianbei, fresh from Western Manchuria, had their own hereditary aristocracy. Huang Chao and Zhu Wen had slaughtered many high-ranking Chinese gentry officials. The Qidans chose few of the survivors as their collaborators; they preferred to make their own choices. The Han Chinese Song-Ming rulers wanted to build up their own new officialdom, though from the same landed-gentry stratum, but equipped with an entirely different mindset -- the inborn pride of serving the native dynasty. The proven system of “rule by compatriot aristocracy and Chinese collaborators” continued in Liao, Jin, Yuan, and Qing. If the Sui and Tang dynasties were ever classified as non-Chinese, then Chinese imperial history would become dynasties governed by a series of alien ruling houses “punctuated by native ones.” The Song and Ming dynasties would then have to be considered merely the “native interlude in Chinese dynastic history.”

1. Tang Was Officially Heir to the Wei-Zhou-Sui

In 753, Tang Xuanzong (r.712-56) designated a royal scion of each of the Northern Wei, Northern Zhou, and Sui as the Duke of Han (韓公), Duke of Jie (介公), and Duke of Xi (鄴公), respectively, according to the *Jiu Tangshu*, “as was done previously (依舊).”¹ The *Zhoushu* records that a royal scion of Northern Wei was invested as Duke of Han on September 14, 558; the *Suishu* records that the last emperor of Northern Zhou was invested as Duke of Jie on February 19, 581; and the *Jiu Tangshu* records that the last emperor of Sui was invested as Duke of Xi on June 12, 618.²

Ho (1998: 128) notes that “Yu (禹), the founder of the Xia dynasty searched out and ennobled the descendants of various ruling houses.” According to the *Shiji*, after conquering Shang in 1045 BCE, King Wu (1049/45-1043 BCE), apparently to propagate the idea that Zhou was a legitimate heir to the preceding dynasties, selected a royal scion for each of Shen’ong, Yellow Emperor, Emperor Yao, Emperor Shun, King Yu, and Shang, and honored them with enfeoffment.³ The Tang rulers also propagated the idea of their dynasty as the legitimate heir to the preceding three dynasties, maintaining the ancient Zhou ritual of selecting a royal scion from each of the three preceding dynasties and honoring them in their representative capacity (*Sanke* 三恪).

According to the *Xin Tangshu* and *Zizhi Tongjian*, the Tang rulers apparently regarded their dynasty as the heir to the three preceding conquest dynasties: Tuoba-Xianbei Wei, Yuwen Tai’s Zhou, and Yang Jian’s Sui. The *Songshi* (History of Song, 960-1127-1279) was compiled by Ouyang Xuan *et al.* in the final days (1343-5) of the Yuan dynasty (1206-1368) on the basis of various chronicles compiled from the time of Khubilai Khan (r.1260-94). Even at that time, people seem to have accepted, without reservation, the idea that “Tang was a successor to Sui; Sui to Northern Zhou and Qi; and Northern Zhou-Qi to Tuoba-Xianbei Wei.”⁴

The *Tangshu* and *Zizhi Tongjian* record an interesting episode that occurred in 750 and 753. An obscure Chinese man (處士) named Cui Chang had attempted to make Tang officially the heir to the Shang-Zhou-Han dynasties, and succeeded in letting the senile Xuanzong (685-762) implement the idea, but

¹ 舊唐書 卷九 本紀第九 玄宗下 十二載 [753] 以魏周隋依舊為三恪及二王後 復封韓介鄴等公

² 周書 卷四 帝紀第四 明帝二年 [558]封少師元羅為韓國公 以紹魏後 隋書 卷一 帝紀第一 高祖上 開皇元年[581] 以[北]周[靜]帝為介國公 舊唐書 卷一 本紀第一 高祖 武德元年 [618] 封隋[恭]帝為鄴國公
Dating is based on the *Zizhi Tongjian*.

³ 史記 卷四 周本紀 第四 封商紂子祿父殷之餘民...武王追思先聖王乃褒封神農之後於焦 黃帝之後於祝 帝堯之後於蓊 帝舜之後於陳 大禹之後於杞

⁴ 新唐書 卷五 本紀 第五 玄宗 七載 [748] 以魏周隋為三恪 資治通鑑 卷二百十六 唐紀三十二 玄宗 天寶七載 五月 擇後魏子孫一人為三恪 宋史 卷四百八十五 列傳 第二百四十四 夏國上 昔唐承隋後 隋承周齊 上適元魏

⁵ 舊唐書 卷九 本紀第九 玄宗下 九載 [750] 處士崔昌上...以國家合承周漢 請廢周隋不合為二王後 新唐書 卷五 本紀第五 玄宗 九載 以商周漢為三恪...十二載 [753] 復魏周隋為三恪

資治通鑑 卷二百十六 唐紀三十二 玄宗 天寶九載 八月 處士崔昌上言 國家宜承[殷]周漢 以土代火[魏]周隋皆閔位 不當以其子孫為二王後... 集賢殿學士衛包上言... 上乃命求殷周漢後 為三恪 廢韓介鄴公 以昌為

左贊善大夫 包爲虞部員外郎... 天寶十二載五月 復以魏周隋後爲三恪... 衛包以助邪貶夜郎尉 崔昌貶烏雷尉

⁶ 隋書 卷一 帝紀 第一 高祖文皇帝姓楊氏 諱堅 弘農郡華陰人也 漢太尉震八代孫鉉...仕燕爲北平太守... 鉉生元壽 後魏代爲武川鎮司馬 子孫因家焉 元壽生太原太守暉...暉生平原太守烈...烈生寧遠將軍禎...禎生忠即皇考也 皇考從周太祖起義關西 賜姓普六茹氏 位至柱國...隋國公

See Xiong (2006: 9).

⁷ 資治通鑑 卷一百六十五 梁紀 二十一 承聖三年[554] 泰廢魏主...復姓拓跋氏 九十九姓改爲單者 皆復其舊 魏初 統國三十六 大姓九十九... 泰乃以諸將功高者爲三十六姓 次者爲九十九姓 所將士卒 亦改從其姓

Tuoba Wei had originally ruled 36 tribal states and had 99 great surnames. Yuwen Tai awarded the most meritorious generals the 36 (state) surnames, and the next ones the 99 great surnames, making soldiers adopt the surnames of their generals. It is well known that, for thousands of years, extracts from the willow tree have been used for pain relief and that the plant's active ingredient (*salicin*) has now become a highly cost-effective treatment to prevent strokes and heart attacks and some cancers, but it is not so well known that willow [*P'u-liu-ju* in Xianbei, *bur-qa-sun* in Mongol, *fodo-ho* in Manchu] constitutes one of the most sacred tree gods in Eurasian shamanism. As Rawski (1998: 232)

only for 3 years (750-3). In 750, Cui Chang became a high official for his suggestion and Wei Bao, *Xueshi* of *Jixian-dian* Academy, who had supported Chang, was promoted. Three years later, however, the Chinese idea man and his supporter were both demoted for deluding (助邪) the emperor. ⁵ The scions of Wei-Zhou-Sui were restored to *Sanke*.

The object of this chapter is to show that the founders of the Tang dynasty could justifiably lay claim to being the legitimate heirs to the Tuoba-Xianbei Wei, Northern Zhou, and Sui dynasties.

2. Xianbei Roots of the Sui-Tang Founders

YANG FAMILY SERVED XIANBEI DYNASTIES MORE THAN 211 YEARS

The founder of Sui dynasty, Yang Jian (Sui Wendi b.541/r.581-604), belonged to a Guanlong aristocratic clan that had served for six generations the Xianbei conquest dynasties. According to the *Suishu*, the ancestor of the Yang clan was an unknown ahistorical figure called Yang Zhen with the rank of a junior military officer (*Grand Constable* 太尉) of the Han dynasty. There are gaping holes in the record. The record of his lineage jumps immediately to his 8th generation descendant who had served Murong-Xianbei Yan as the Grand Administrator (*Taishou* 太守) of Beiping. One may thus question whether Yang Zhen had actually ever lived. The dynastic biographies do not provide the links from the Han to the Cao Cao's Wei to the Western Jin. The *Suishu* genealogy lists the more recent ancestors who had received official positions from the Xianbei conquest dynasties. Yang Zhen's 9th generation descendant made his home at the Wuchuan Garrison to serve the Tuoba-Xianbei. His son, Yang Jian's 4th generation ancestor, served Northern Wei as the Grand Administrator of Taiyuan. Yang Jian's 3rd generation ancestor served as the Grand Administrator of Pingyuan, and his grandfather was a prominent Northern Wei general. ⁶ After the one odd Han progenitor, the generations for which names are supplied had all served the Xianbei conquest dynasties.

Yang Jian's father, Yang Zhong (507-68), first served the Northern Wei, and when it split into the Western and Eastern Wei, he (together with Dugu Xin) began to serve Yuwen Tai (507-

56) of the Wuchuan Garrison (after July 537), and was rewarded with enfeoffment as the Duke of Sui. When Yuwen Tai restored to his own people the original Xianbei surnames, Yang Jian's father came to have the surname P'u-liu-ju, meaning willow.⁷ Yang Jian's eldest daughter (樂平公主) was married in 573 to the Prince Imperial of Zhou Wudi, who conquered Northern Qi in 577. When his father died in 568, Yang Jian succeeded to his title and became the Duke of Sui. He played a major role in the annexation of the Northern Qi, and was appointed as commandant of a key conquered area in the Great Plain with the title "Pillar of State." Emperor Wu died in 578 at the age of thirty-six. Wudi's young heir Yun (宣帝) also died of a sudden illness in 580, and the throne went to an eight-year-old child, Yuwen Chan (靜帝). The late emperor's father-in-law, Yang Jian, usurped the Zhou throne and founded the Sui dynasty in 581.⁸

According to the above genealogy, even when we assume that the earliest ancestor of the Yang family was a Han Chinese, they must have started speaking the Xianbei language sometime before the fall of Former Yan in 370 (the time when Yang Zhen's 8th generation descendant started serving the Murongs as a Grand Administrator). The Xianbei must have been their family language for more than 211 years by the time Yang Jian founded Sui in 581.

LI FAMILY SERVED XIANBEI DYNASTIES ALMOST 179 YEARS

Li Yuan (Tang Gaozu b.566/r.618-26), one of the most powerful Sui generals, was a special favorite of Yang Jian and a first cousin to Yang Guang (Sui Yangdi b.569/r.604-18), their mothers being sisters.

According to the *Old Tangshu*, compiled c.941-5 under the auspices of the Shatuo Later Jin (936-47) court, Li Hao (李暉 d.417) was a seventh generation ancestor to the founder of the Tang dynasty, Li Yuan. According to the *Weishu*, Li Hao's earliest recorded ancestor was a general of Han (25-220). Hao's great-grandfather was a grand administrator, and his grandfather was a general of Western Jin (265-316). According to Han Chinese historians, these records on Li Hao's pre-317 ancestors constitute the necessary and sufficient basis to classify Li Yuan as a Han Chinese and Tang as the paragon of the Chinese empire.

A Xiongnu people, the Juqu, established Northern Liang (397-439) in today's Gansu province. In 397, Li Hao was

states, "Manchus revere the willow, which represents fecundity."

⁸ See Wright (1978: 54-7), Wechsler (1979: 151), and Wright (1979: 63-4).

⁹ See Klein (1980: 88-9, 92, 101-2).

The Juqu clan descended from a Xiongnu official whose title was Left Juqu. Juqu Mujian (r.433-9) and Tai Wudi (r.423-52) had exchanged each one's sister as consorts. One of Mujian's daughters was married to Tuoba Jun (r.452-65). See 北史 卷九十三 列傳 第八十一 北凉 沮渠氏. 資治通鑑 卷一百十九 宋紀一 武帝 永初元年[420] 七月 [北凉]河西王蒙遜 欲伐[西]凉..歆大敗...遂勤兵 戰于蓼泉 為蒙遜所殺 歆弟...翻...敦煌太守李恂 翻之弟...恂帥...入敦煌 二年 正月...蒙遜 帥衆二萬 攻李恂于敦煌 三月...恂自殺 蒙遜屠其城 資治通鑑 卷一百七十三 陳紀七 宣帝 太建九年 [577] 六月 初魏虜西凉之人 沒為隸戶 齊氏因之 仍供廩役 周主滅齊 欲施寬惠 詔...凡諸隸戶 悉方為民

¹⁰ 舊唐書 卷一 本紀第一 高祖...姓李氏 諱淵 其先隴西狄道人 凉武昭王暉七代孫也 暉生歆[r.417-20] 歆生重耳 仕魏為弘農太守 重耳生熙 為金門鎮將 領豪傑鎮武川 因家焉...熙生天錫 仕魏為幢主...皇祖諱虎 後魏左僕射 封隴西郡公 與周文帝及...稱為八柱國家...追封唐國公...皇考諱昺 周安州總管 柱國大將軍 襲唐國公...追尊元皇帝...高祖...七歲襲唐國公 北史卷六十 列傳第四十八 王雄...柱國大將軍...開國公李虎...柱國大

將軍…開國公**獨孤信**…與周文帝[宇文泰]爲八柱國 … 大將軍…開國公**楊忠** 是爲十二大將軍 每大將軍督二開府 [周書: 每一開府領一軍兵] 是二十四軍

隋書一 帝紀第一 高祖上 皇考從周太祖起義關西…位至柱國
魏書 卷九十九 列傳第八十七 李嵩…隴西狄道人…漢前將軍廣之後 曾祖柔 晉…北地太守 祖…武衛將軍父昶早卒 嵩遺腹子也 皇始中[397]…段業自稱涼州牧…嵩爲…敦煌太守 業私稱涼王 嵩詐臣於業 天興中[400] 嵩私署…涼公 年號庚子 居敦煌…嵩死[417]子歆統任 胡沮渠蒙遜[r.401-33]…其先爲匈奴左沮渠…爲諸胡所歸…天興四年…殺業 私署…涼州牧…年號永安…玄始元年 [412]…置百官…泰常中 [421] 尋滅敦煌

¹¹ 舊唐書 卷五十一 列傳第一 后妃上 高祖…隋文帝受禪 后聞以流涕…恨我不爲男 以救舅氏之難 毅與長公主…曰汝勿妄言滅吾族矣!

Yangdi was killed by a person with the Yuwen surname (化及, d.619), a son of the distinguished general Yuwen Shu (宇文述) from the Wuchuan Garrison. 隋書 卷六十一 列傳第二十六 宇文述…代郡武川人也 本姓破野頭 役屬鮮卑俟豆歸 後從其主爲宇文氏父盛周上柱國 述…平陳之役…征高麗..敗績…除名爲民…二子化及智及 列傳第五十…弒帝於宮中…皆斬之

¹² 周書 卷三十 列傳第二十二 竇熾兄子毅 漢…章十一世孫 章子統 靈帝時 爲雁門太守 避竇武之難[168] 以奔匈奴 遂爲部落大人 後魏南徙子孫因家於代 賜姓紇豆陵氏 累世

appointed by the Xiongnu ruler (Ye r.397-401) as the Grand Administrator of Dunhuang in the far west. In 400, Hao declared his independence from Northern Liang and established Western Liang (400-21) at Dunhuang -- an odd place to found a state for a person classified as a Han Chinese. Meng Xun (r.401-33) of Northern Liang invaded Western Liang in July 420 and killed Qin (歆 r.417-20), Li Hao's son, in a battle in a western Gansu area. Leading a 20,000-man army, Meng Xun attacked Dunhuang in February 421, and the *Taishu* of Dunhuang, a younger brother of Qin, killed himself. Meng Xun slaughtered the people of Dunhuang. Tuoba Tao (Tai Wudi r.423-52) of Northern Wei unified North China by annexing Northern Liang in 439. According to the *Zizhi Tongjian*, the Northern Wei made the Western Liang people slave households (隸戶) who were later employed for stock breeding as slaves (廝役) under the Northern Qi until emancipated (雜戶爲民) by Zhou Wudi in June 577.⁹

The *Old Tangshu* records the direct ancestors of the founder of Tang dynasty, Li Yuan (李淵), as saying that Li Hao's grandson had served Tuoba Wei as the Grand Administrator of Hongnong. The 3rd generation descendant of Li Hao was a prominent Northern Wei general who made his home at the Wuchuan Garrison. The 4th generation descendant of Li Hao was also a Northern Wei general. Li Yuan's grandfather, Li Hu, is counted as the 5th generation descendant. Li Hu (李虎) began to serve Yuwen Tai after February 534 and became one of the Eight Pillars of State, the chief commanders associated with Yuwen Tai's seizure of the throne for his son before his death in October 556 and founding the Northern Zhou in 557. Hu was ennobled as the Duke of Tang in 564. The title was inherited by Hu's son (李暉), Dugu Xin's son-in-law, who became the Great "Pillar of State" General (*Juguo Da Jiangjun*), and then by Li Yuan.¹⁰

According to the above genealogy, even when we assume that the earliest ancestor of the Li family was a Han Chinese, they must have begun speaking Xianbei language sometime after the unification of North China by the Tuoba Xianbei in 439 (when Li Hao's grandson started serving Northern Wei as a grand administrator). The Li family must have been speaking the Xianbei language almost 179 years by the time Li Yuan founded the Tang dynasty in 618.

LI YUAN'S WIFE WAS YUWEN TAI'S GRANDDAUGHTER

When Yang Jian liquidated all of Yuwen Tai's sons and their offspring and founded the Sui dynasty in 581, a daughter of Dou Yi (518-82), the future Li Yuan's wife, tearfully lamented: "It is too regrettable that I am not a man -- so that I can save the uncle's family from demise." Her father and mother, feeling afraid, cautioned her: "You should not speak aloud such a dangerous thing; our kinfolks can be liquidated!"¹¹

Li Yuan was married to the second daughter of a great Northern Zhou general, Dou Yi, whose wife was a daughter (襄陽長公主) of Yuwen Tai. According to the *Zhoushu* and *Zizhi Tongjian*, Dou Yi's ancestor escaped from the Later Han to the Tuoba-Xianbei in 168 (to serve as village chieftain) and his descendants later followed the Wei rulers south, settling at the Dai region and serving as high-ranking officials generation after generation. Dou Yi became Great Sima in 580 and Dingzhou Governor-General in 581. Li Yuan's wife was a Yuwen Tai's granddaughter, and was brought up at the court of her uncle, Zhou Wudi.¹² When she was still very young, she had advised Wudi to treat his Turkish wife warmly because Zhou may need the help of the strong Turkish forces.¹³ She gave birth to Shimin (Taizong r.626-49) in December 598. Though she (太穆皇后竇氏) died at the age of forty-five, not living to see Shimin enable his father to found the Tang dynasty, her daughter, Princess Pingyang (平陽 d.623), apparently embodying mother's courageous spirit, raised a 70,000-man army at the Shaanxi area in 617 and, leading a 10,000-man army in person, fought battles to assist her father.¹⁴

LI SHIMIN'S WIFE WAS FROM THE CORE TUOBA RULING CLAN

Wright (1973: 239-40) notes that Li Shimin's "paternal grandmother had been of the great powerful Xianbei clan of Dugu" and further notes that his maternal grandmother was a daughter of Yuwen Tai and he "was thus by birth a member of the Xianbei clan of Yuwen (ibid: 242)." Apparently assuming that the father (李昞) of Li Yuan was a pure Han Chinese, Ho (1998: 131) declared that Shimin "was genetically 75 percent Xianbei."

Shimin himself was married to a daughter of Changsun Sheng (長孫晟 551-609) whose 7th generation ancestor Song (嵩) was an elder of the Tuoba clan (宗室長因號長孫) and had rendered distinguished service to the first four Tuoba rulers,

仕魏 皆至大官...穀...孝武西遷...拜右將軍...魏廢帝二年 授車騎大將軍儀同三司 大都督...魏恭帝元年...開府儀同三司...孝閔帝踐阼 進爵神武郡公...加授上柱國 入為大司馬[580] 隋開皇初 拜定州總管...二年[582]薨...年六十四...二女即唐太穆皇后 資治通鑑 卷一百七十三 陳紀七 大建九年 紇豆陵毅本姓竇...本竇融之後 以竇武之難亡入鮮卑拓跋 部徙居南境...世為部落大人...魏穆帝[拓跋猗廬 Yilu r.304-12]命為紇豆陵氏 See also Wechsler (1979: 150-1, 188).

¹³ 舊唐書 卷五十一 列傳第一 后妃上 高祖 皇后竇氏京兆[關內/雍州]始平人 隋定州總管...毅之女也 后母周武帝[r.560-78]姊襄陽長公主...周武帝特愛重之 養於宮中 時武帝納突厥女為后 無寵 后尚幼 竊言於帝曰 四邊未靜 突厥尚強 願舅抑情撫慰...但須突厥之助 則江南關東不能為患矣 武帝深納之...崩...年四十五 周書 卷五 帝紀卷五 武帝 上...太祖[宇文泰]第四子也 舊唐書 卷二 本紀第二 太宗上...世民 高祖第二子也 母...皇后竇氏

¹⁴ 舊唐書 卷五十八 列傳第八 平陽公主 高祖第三女也...在長安...遂散家資...起兵以應高祖...公主引精兵萬餘與太宗軍會於渭北...獨有軍功 資治通鑑 卷一百八十四 隋紀八 恭帝 義寧元年 [617] 九月...李氏...散家皆 聚徒眾...至七萬...溯濟河...將精兵萬餘 會世民...置幕府 號娘子軍

¹⁵ 舊唐書 卷五十一 列傳第一 后妃上 太宗文德...皇后長孫氏 長安人 隋右驍衛將軍晟之女也

唐書 卷七十六 列傳第一 后妃上
太宗..皇后長孫氏 河南洛陽人 其先
魏拓跋氏 後為宗室長 因號長孫 高
祖...大丞相馮翊王 曾祖裕...父晟
資治通鑑 卷一百四十 齊紀六 明帝
建武三年 [496] 改跋跋氏為長孫氏

魏書 卷二十五 列傳第十三 長孫嵩
代人也...父仁 昭成時[什翼犍 r.338-
76]為南部大人 嵩...代父統軍...太祖
承大統...累著軍功...歷侍中,司徒,相
州刺史...太宗即位...聽理萬幾...節,
督山東諸軍事...世祖即位 進爵北平
王..薨年八十...後高祖[孝文帝]追錄
先朝功臣...長孫道生 嵩從子也...進
封上黨王...子抗...抗子觀...襲祖爵上
黨王..以其祖道生佐命先朝...子名稚
莊帝初 封上黨王 尋改馮翊王...子裕
資治通鑑 卷一百六 晉紀二十八 太
元十年[385]...珪母賀氏...故南部大人
長孫嵩 師所部七百餘家...歸珪
太元十一年 拓跋珪...即代王位...以
長孫嵩為南部大人...為北部大人 分
治其眾...長孫道生...侍從左右 出納
教命...道生嵩之從子也
資治通鑑 卷一百三十七 齊紀三 武
帝 永明十年[492] 春正月 魏宗室及
功臣子孫 封王子中...非烈祖之胄
餘王皆降為公...唯上黨王長孫觀 以
其祖有大功 特不降

¹⁶ 隋書 卷五十一 列傳第十六 長孫
覽 從子熾 熾弟晟 長孫覽...河南洛
陽人也 祖稚 魏太史...周明帝時
[557-60] 為大都督 武帝在藩 與覽
親善 及即位...超拜車騎大將軍...從
平齊進位柱國...宣帝時[578-80] 進位
上柱國大司徒...高祖[581-604]為丞...
[從子]熾...稚之曾孫也 祖...魏太常
卿 冀州刺史 父...周開府儀同三司

Shi'ijian, Gui, Si, and Tao.¹⁵ The surname Tuoba was changed into Changsun [*lit. elder of clan*] in 496. Sheng's 6th generation ancestor Daosheng (長孫道生) was enfeoffed as "King of the Supreme Clan (上黨王)," and his 4th generation ancestor Guan (長孫觀) was also a great general who was able to keep the title of king because of the distinguished military service of his grandfather Daosheng, while every other king who was not a direct descendant of the founder of Wei dynasty was demoted to the rank of Duke in 492. Changsun Sheng began to oversee the Eastern Turks in the reign of Xuan'di (r.578-80) of Northern Zhou, and contributed greatly to the subjugation of the Turks in the reign of Sui Wendi.¹⁶

Shimin, Lewis (2009a: 180) writes, "managed state affairs with the help of the Empress Changsun. Thus the power of Tang empresses... simply continued a northern [Xianbei] tradition in which women actively participated in the affairs of the realm." In June 628, Empress Changsun gave birth to Gaozong (r.649-83) who may as well be said to be, genetically, 87.5 percent Xianbei.

THE SUI-TANG FOUNDING FAMILIES

The eldest daughter of Dugu Xin (d.March 557) was married to the Yuwen Tai's eldest son, Mingdi (r.557-60) of Northern Zhou, the seventh to Yang Jian and the fourth to the father of Li Yuan. Father of the founder of Sui dynasty, Yang Zhong (507-68), grandfather of the founder of Tang dynasty, Li Hu (d.551) were all members of the Tuoba-Xianbei military elite who had settled at the Wuchuan Garrison and served Yuwen Tai (d.October 556) in establishing Western Wei and Northern Zhou. They were all from the core ruling clans that had served the Xianbei conquest dynasties generation after generation and became very close to the emperor's family by marriage.

Wright (1973: 239-40) states: Shimin's "families had strong military traditions; horsemanship, archery, and the hunt figured more in a boy's training than book reading. ... The sons of great houses were given the rudiments of literacy and perhaps a brief exposure to a Confucian Classics. In the three hundred years preceding Shimin's birth, one's genealogy and family connections had been decisive in gaining public office and wealth."

Xiong (2006: 222) is rather specific about the ethnic roots of the Sui-Tang founders: "the Northern aristocracy ... had been behind the creation of the Western Wei and Northern Zhou

and provided dynastic founders for both the Sui and the 'Tang.' Holcombe (2001: 144) tries to be a little bit more specific: "the coup was accomplished by yet another, very possibly Xianbei-language-speaking, northwestern frontier general." No historians say that Western Wei and Northern Zhou were established by the Han Chinese. And yet, virtually no historians dare to say that the founders of both the Sui and Tang dynasties were from the "Xianbei aristocracy." They use highly ambiguous expression such as "Northern" or "Northwestern" aristocracy without so much as mentioning the fact that they spoke the Xianbei language. Most historians seem somehow obliged to make an ambiguous statement about the ethnic roots (such as "probably from the Han Chinese or mixed-blood families strongly influenced by the Xianbei military traditions"), and then hasten to present both Sui and Tang as the paragon of Han Chinese dynasties.

The "Northwestern" area implies either "Guanlong" (關右隴西 implying the southwest Shanxi, Shaanxi and Gansu) or "Guanzhong" (關中 mainly the Wei River basin in Shaanxi, centered on Chang'an). Xiong (2006: 223) states that the Guanlong bloc had come into being in Western Wei times as is indicated by the *Suishu* passage (presented in sidenote 45, Section 5): "After Taizu of Northern Zhou (Yuwen Tai) entered the pass [into Guanzhong], he ordered the meritorious male offspring [of the Xianbei aristocracy] to become chiefs of their clans. Genealogical records were made to trace their ancestral lines."

THE QI COURT SPOKE XIANBEI AND GAO HUAN WAS BILINGUAL

Western Wei (535-56), in which the Xianbei elements remained strongest, became Northern Zhou (556-81), which was able briefly to reunify North China by annexing Northern Qi in 577 and occupying the northern territory of Chen in 579.

Twitcheit (1979: 3-4) declares that the "Guanlong aristocracy...still spoke Turkish as well as Chinese... even well into the 'Tang period.'" Twitcheit must have implied that "the Guanlong aristocracy spoke the Xianbei language well into the Tang period," because he apparently has mistaken the Tuoba for the Turks.¹⁷ The following statement is taken from the *Yanshi Jiaxun*: "One day an official of Qi court told me, 'I have a son who is already 17 years old. He is quite good in composing letters and memorials. I am having him taught the Xianbei language and

熊絳二州刺史...[熾弟]晟...武藝逸羣...宣帝時 突厥攝圖請婚于周...因遣晟...送千金公主...開皇二年[582]...突厥大入...乞為帝女...遣晟...賜公主...持節護突厥...仁壽三年[603]..有鐵勒...等十餘部 盡背達頭 請來降附 達頭衆大潰 西奔吐谷渾...煬帝...拜左領軍將軍...大業五年[609] 卒時年五十八...後突厥圍雁門 帝歎曰 向使長孫晟在 不令匈奴至此 Changsun Moji (長孫無忌), brother of the Empress, had played the key role in eliminating Jiancheng in 626 and making Shimin emperor.

¹⁷ Mote (1999: 5) also asserts: "the Sui and the Tang ruling houses arose in the northwest border zone, ... intermarried with Turkic princely families."

¹⁸ 顏氏家訓 齊朝有一士大夫 嘗謂吾曰：我有一兒 年已十七 頗曉書疏 教其鮮卑語及彈琵琶 稍欲通解 以此伏事公卿 無不寵愛 亦要事也

¹⁹ 資治通鑑 卷一百五十七 梁紀十三 大同三年 [537] [高]歡號令將士常鮮卑語[高]教曹在列 則為之華言

²⁰ Men from military households were enlisted at the age of 20 and served until 60. When not on guard duty at the capital or on an expedition, the soldiers returned to their prefecture for farming. See Graff (2002: 109-110, 189, 192).

²¹ Tang Gaozu was able to reinstitute the Equal Field system in 624. 資治通鑑 卷一百九十 唐紀六 高祖武德七年[624]初定均田租庸調法 丁

中之民 給田一頃...租粟二石...歲役二旬...工商雜類 無預士...二十爲丁 六十爲老 歲造計帳 三年造戶籍

資治通鑑 卷一百九十四 唐紀十 太宗 貞觀十年 [636] 十二月 凡十道置府六百三十四 而關內二百六十一 皆隸諸衛及東宮六率...每人 兵甲糧裝各有數 皆自備 輸之庫 有征行則給之 年二十爲兵 六十而免 其能騎射者 爲越騎 其餘爲步兵 每歲季冬 折衝都尉 帥其屬教戰 凡當宿衛者 番上兵部...皆二月而更

²² See Xiong (2006: 4, 115).

²³ Xiong (2006: 53, 61) notes that the southeast Hebei and northwest Shandong area “had seen continuous banditry since Northern Qi times,” and “it is no coincidence that a large-scale rebellion” against the Sui regime erupted “in the South and the North China plain.” Ho (1998: 133) declares that “No less unique in Chinese history is the fact that the various steppe ethnic groups...consistently dominated the Tang polyethnic army,” including the “polyglot mercenary army” that replaced the *fubing*. The *fubing* army had been supplemented by the tribal auxiliaries that were led by their own tribal leaders, and also by the short-term “conscript-recruits (*bingmu*)” who were usually drawn from those prefectures without the *fubing* regimental headquarters.

²⁴ 隋書 卷二 帝紀第二 高祖下 開皇十五年 [595] 收天下兵器 敢有私造者 坐之 關中緣邊 不在其例

playing the lute. I want him to learn these things so that he can become useful to the highest officials of the state and may gain their favor as well.’”¹⁸ Schreiber (1949-55: 388) notes that “to provide one’s own son with an elementary knowledge of the Xianbei language, as a means of giving him a better opportunity for a political career, makes sense only when the ruling class, the Tuoba, spoke the Xianbei language.”

Many historians believe that Gao Huan was such a pro-Chinese general that Northern Qi was essentially a Han Chinese dynasty, while the Yuwen Tai’s Northern Zhou was a pure-blooded Xianbei dynasty. Whatever the merit of their belief, the Northern Qi court apparently spoke the Xianbei language. Since almost the entire conquered population was Chinese, the Xianbei conquerors must have known and used the Chinese language. The *Zizhi Tongjian* indeed states that Gao Huan was bilingual: he always spoke Xianbei, but spoke Chinese when the extremely capable and proud Han Chinese general, Gao Aocao (d.538), was present.¹⁹ It is obvious that the courts of Northern Zhou and early Tang must have spoken the Xianbei language, although the formal language of administration of the empire could have been Chinese. Though the Xianbei rulers had been bilingual, Chinese, in due course, seems to have replaced Xianbei as the spoken language of the court, and the Tang rulers eventually came to speak primarily Chinese. Unlike the official promotion of Buddhism, which was a public and political act, the adoption of the Chinese language as the common spoken language of the ruling class is hard to trace and date; after all, scholars submerged in the Sinocentric ideology have not taken this as a subject for investigation. On the other hand, the Qidan-Xianbei in the western Manchurian steppe kept on speaking the Xianbei language and maintained martial tradition, eventually to lay claim to being the successor to Sui-Tang dynasties.

3. Fubing Military Machine: Innovation by Western Wei

FUBING COMMANDED BY THE GUANLONG ARISTOCRACY

Yuwen Tai’s Western Wei had introduced the *fubing* (territorially administered soldiery) system c.550 in order to augment the manpower of the Twenty-four Armies by enlisting

the Tibetans, the Turks, and the frontier Han Chinese in the ethnically variegated Guanzhong area. The “soldiers of the headquarters” served for a limited amount of time every year, and were provided with a tax-exempt land allotment under the Equal Field system that had been introduced by Tuoba Wei in 485.²⁰ Sui and Tang, as the successor states to Northern Zhou, organized their empires, Twitchett (1979: 4) states, “by means of tried institutions that had been employed” under the Xianbei conquest dynasties, including the Equal Field system that provided both Sui and Tang with the institutional mechanisms to field an enormous *fubing* army under central command.²¹

Under Yang Jian, the *fubing* system came of age, and the organization of the military forces in the first half of the Tang was also characterized by *fubing*.²² According to Graff (2002: 190), due to the fact “that they combined military service with farming, the *fubing* have sometimes been characterized as a ‘militia’ by Western authors. [T]his term is rather misleading when used in connection with the *fubing*. Given their life-long military service and the training they received over that period, it would be more accurate to view them as a special type of professional soldier.”

According to Graff (2002: 190-1), 353 *fubing* regimental headquarters were created by year 636 in the reign of Li Shimin, and “no less than 261 of them were located in the Guanzhong area, and many of the remaining 92 were” located in nearby areas such as modern Shanxi. That is, most of the early Tang army was recruited from the original base of Yuwen Tai and Li Yuan. The Western Wei, Northern Zhou, Sui, and the early Tang could successfully co-opt and mobilize the Turco-Tibetan tribes and frontier Han Chinese who were well experienced with life under the Xianbei conquerors. Few *fubing* regiments were ever set up in the east (such as Henan and Shandong) and south (of Huai/Yangzi River) because the Xianbei rulers simply did not trust the Chinese people in the eastern and southern plains.²³ According to the *Suishu*, when Yang Jian ordered the confiscation of all weapons in the empire in 595, the area around Guanzhong (關中緣邊) was exempted.²⁴ About a thousand years later, the Manchu Qing could successfully co-opt the frontier Han Chinese in Liaodong and the Mongols of Inner Mongolia to mobilize them for the conquest of mainland China. The Qing rulers treated the Liaodong Han Chinese as honorary Manchus, but

²⁵ See also Wright (1978: 64). Wright (1973: 241) notes: “It is suggestive of the ethos ... the Sui founder initially had only *one* fully trained literatus among his high officials, and this man’s advice was once dismissed by his master with the statement, ‘You bookworm! You are not fit to decide this matter.’”

資治通鑑 卷一百七十七 隋紀一 開皇十年 [590] 四月 上...不悅學 既任智以獲大位...每於殿庭捶人 數四

²⁶ De Bary and Bloom (1999: 326-7) 孝經 開宗明義章 第一 曾子侍坐 子曰 立身行道 揚名於後世...孝之終也 夫孝 始於事親 中於事君 終於立身 士章 第五 子曰 資於事父 以事母 其愛同 資於事父以事君 其敬同 故母取其愛 故君取其敬 兼之者父也 故以孝事君則忠 以弟事長則順 忠順不失 以事其上 然後能保其爵祿 而守其祭祀 蓋士之孝也

²⁷ 隋書 卷四十二 列傳第七 李德林子百藥... 朕方以孝治天下...公言孝由天性 何須設教 然則公子不當說孝經也 See Wright (1979: 74).

²⁸ The senior officials (and provincial officials after 130 BCE) were urged to recommend candidates for civil service also in 178, 165, 141, and 135 BCE. After 124 BCE, select young men began to be educated in the Confucian classics by erudite scholars (博士) in the Imperial Academy (*Taixue* 太學). To be granted government positions, those who attended the Academy had to undergo a written examination. This

practice developed into the National College (國子監) in Later Han. Franke (1972: 3) says: "The Han examination system had already declined during the later part of the Eastern Han period." Elman (2000: 5) notes: "After 132 CE local officials recommended candidates for office... [T]his simple recruitment process was the forerunner of the elaborate...civil examinations set up during the Tang and Song dynasties." See Bielenstein (1986b: 516), Loewe (1986: 153-4), Hulsewé (1986: 541), Ch'en (1986: 769) and Dien (1990: 10).

²⁹ "The great gentry clans of Nanyang joined Guangwudi's cause only after he had ascended the throne ... [M]ost of Guangwudi's thirty-five chief followers came from the lesser gentry [who later became] the great gentry (ibid: 275-6)."

³⁰ See also Elman (2000: 6). Lewis (2009a: 196) states that "Every prefecture...recommended a quota of men...who were sent to the court. There they were interviewed by high officials. Some were given posts, while others were offered further training."

資治通鑑 卷一百七十五 陳紀九 長城公 至德元年 [583] 隋既班律令... 吏卒增倍...民少官多...悉罷諸郡爲州...時刺史 多任武將 類不稱職

³¹ At the time of Northern Wei and Qi, only dozens of high officials were appointed by the central government for each prefecture, and these officials administered the commanderies and

never trusted the mainland Chinese.

Of the sixty top Sui generals (*Da Jiangjun*), no less than fifty-two had previously served under the Northern Zhou, while the fathers or grandfathers of forty-six of them had served either the Northern Wei or the Northern Zhou. Hence Wright (1979: 100) says that "these figures attest the overwhelming influence of the Northern Zhou military elite on the Sui establishment."

4. Sui-Tang Innovation: Institutionalizing the Examination System

GOVERN THE EMPIRE ON THE PRINCIPLE OF FILIAL SUBMISSION

Yang Jian's contempt for book-learning and for scholars was well known, Wright (1959: 66) says, and yet the ritual-symbolic procedures of Confucianism were "refurbished for use in the court and countryside to give the Sui an aura of legitimacy and to demonstrate that the Sui was reviving the ecumenical empire of the Han."²⁵

The *Classic of Filiality* (*Xiaojing* 孝經), one of the *Thirteen Classics* recording the discourse between Confucius and Zengzi, states that "To...practice the Way; ... filiality begins with service to parents, continues in service to the ruler, and ends with establishing oneself in the world (and becoming an exemplary person). If one serves one's prince with the filiality one shows to one's father, it becomes the virtue of fidelity (loyalty). If one serves one's superiors with brotherly submission it becomes the virtue of obedience. Thus one may preserve one's rank and office ... This is the filiality of the scholar-official."²⁶ Though inclined to be anti-intellectual, the Confucian moral principle of filiality had such great appeal to Yang Jian as the basis of hierarchical ordering of the conquest society as to exclaim, according to the *Suishu*, "We now govern the empire according to the principle of filial submission."²⁷

INSTITUTIONALIZING THE CIVIL EXAMINATION SYSTEM

If the indoctrination of alien Buddhist ideology and implementation of the Equal Field system were the innovations of the Tuoba Wei, and introduction of the *Fubing* system was the innovation of the Northern Zhou, then the institutionalization of

the Examination System was the innovation of the Sui. The unification of the whole of China had immensely increased bureaucratic paper work, and consequently the demand for anyone who could read and write. According to the *Suishu* and *Zizhi Tongjian*, Sui had 190 commanderies, 1,255 counties, 8,907,546 households, and a population of 46,019,956 as of 609. The Sui-Tang founders had extensively codified the law and administrative system. Wendi faced, Wittfogel and Fêng (1949: 457) note, “new administrative problems which could not be...solved by a hereditary officialdom. Additional intellectual resources were opened up by the creation of an...examination system which, in spite of many interruptions and changes, continued to flourish until the end of the Manchu dynasty.”

Franke (1972: 1-3) states: “After the dissolution of the [Zhou] feudal hierarchy and the breakdown of the authoritarian regime of the Qin dynasty,” the Han emperor had to find able men to replace “the hereditary nobility”; as early as 196 BCE, Gaozu of Former Han had “requested the feudal princes, the local prefects, and other officials” to recommend candidates “for official positions,” and sometimes “the men thus recommended had to undergo examination”; and the “predominant demand for men ‘obedient to their elders and incorrupt (*Xiaoliang-fangzheng* 孝廉方正)’...manifested...that [virtue and] moral qualities and not technical abilities were decisive criteria for official appointment.”²⁸

“The main dividing line in Han China,” Bielenstein (1986a: 274) explains, “was between rulers and ruled, between the educated gentry from which the officials were drawn and the peasant who could not read and write. ...Great gentry [magnate] clans...owned large tracts of land, and were...important on the national level. The clans of the lesser gentry, which merged at its lower levels with the rich peasantry, ... wielded considerable local power and had the resources to educate sons and to supply officials.” The members of “the lesser gentry picked Guangwudi as their candidate” for the emperor of Later Han (ibid: 275).²⁹

The Nine Rank system introduced in 220 by the Cao Cao’s Wei, by which candidates to office were assigned ranks from 1 to 9 by a respected person of the commandery, enabled the gentry families already established in officialdom to control the process of recommending officials and secure an edge in the competition for entry-level offices. Sui Wendi, while ordering

counties by recruiting locally the low level officials at their own discretion.

資治通鑑 卷一百八十 隋紀四 煬帝大業三年 [607] 牛弘等造新律 成凡十八篇 謂之大業律...曰 魏齊之時 令史從容而已 今則不遑寧處何故 炫曰 往者 州唯置綱紀 [長史司馬] 郡置守丞 縣置令而已 其餘具僚 則長官自辟 受詔赴任 每州不過數十 今則不然 大小之官 悉由吏部纖介之迹 皆屬考功

³² 隋書 卷二十八 志第二十三 百官下三年..罷郡 以州統縣..舊周齊州郡縣職 自州都 郡縣正已下 皆州郡將縣令至而調用...直謂之鄉官 別置品官 皆吏部除授..刺史縣令 三年一遷

唐書 卷四十四 志第三十四 選舉志上 唐制 取士之科 多因隋舊...由學館者曰生徒 由州縣者曰鄉貢...國子監生...州縣學生...弘文館...崇文館...孝經論語皆兼通之...立...以教宗室子孫及功臣子弟...吏民子弟學藝者...送于京學...設考課之法 州縣鄉皆置學焉...衆科之目 進士尤為貴...方其取以辭章 類若浮文而少實...皆文采浮華...[763]上疏言 進士科起於隋大業中 [605-17] 是時猶試策 高宗朝...加進士雜文...故為進士者皆誦當代之文而不通經史...先是 進士試詩賦及時務策五道...乃詔明經進士與孝廉兼行 卷四十五 志第三十五 選舉志下 凡擇人之法有四 一曰身 體貌豐偉 二曰言 言辭辯正 三曰書 楷法遒美 四曰判 文理優長...則先德行...得者為留...授官...姦利...或十年不得官

³³ Graff (2002: 138) states: “although the top echelon of the Sui administration

continued to be dominated by men of the same **northwestern aristocracy** that had run the Northern Zhou state, men from all regions of the empire occupied **lower-level offices.**"

³⁴ According to Schreiber (1949-55: 390-1), "love of singing and of playing the lute (琵琶) had been a noted peculiarity of the Xianbei." The collections of Xianbei songs, mentioned in the *Suishu*, "bear testimony to the love of the Xianbei for songs (ibid)." Li Bo (李白 701-63) was a Turk born somewhere along the Silk Road. His poetry "is haunted by ... symbolism deriving from a totally non-Chinese culture and by atavistic echoes of the virile life of the...nomadic neighbors," captivating Du Fu (杜甫 712-70) and other good Confucians of the Tang (ibid: 42) who "could accept Li Bo more wholeheartedly than could the scholars of [Song-Ming] dynasties (ibid: 375)."

³⁵ Ebrey (1978: 105) notes that an examining official "had ranked a kinsman [of Cui family] number one in the *jinshi* examinations out of gratitude for the generosity this man had once shown in offering to contribute to the expenses of his mother's funeral."

³⁶ The selection process (*xuan* 選) is described in the *Zizhi Tongjian*. 資治通鑑 卷二百一 唐紀十七 高宗總章二年 [669] 大略唐之選法 取人以身言書判 計資量勞而擬官 始集而試觀其書判 已試而銓察其身言... 詢其便利...集衆告之 然後類以爲甲

recommendation of candidates for civil service to all prefectures, abolished the Nine Rank system together with all commanderies in 583.³⁰ Yang Jian, Ebrey (1978: 80) notes, "decreed that all regular bureaucrats in the provinces would receive their appointments from the central government instead of the Prefect [*cishi* 刺史]."³¹ The local government "officials could no longer choose their own subordinates, restricting...opportunities for patronage," and the local family rank "was no longer an officially recognized criterion for assigning office (ibid: 28-9)." There soon followed the examination system as a permanent institution.³² According to Wright (1979: 86-7), exams for *xincai* (秀才) were conducted in 595; and exams for the *mingjing* (明經 *clarifying the classics*) and *jinshi* (進士 *literatus presented to the emperor for appointment*) were conducted in 589, 603, 609 and 614.

Sui recruited a large number of lower ranking officials by means of the newly established civil service examinations.³³ The Tang dynasty was built on the foundations laid by Sui. The examination system came to be designated as *Keju* (科舉). When institutionalizing the rather irregular and rudimentary Han examination system, the Sui and Tang rulers, as the heirs to the Xianbei conquest dynasties, emphasized in examinations not only the Confucian moral principle of filial piety but also "poetic ability ... especially so in the *jinshi* examination." This, Mao (1990: 107) notes, "signified a change in the character of the genteel families...to accommodate a delight in poetry and song." Under the Tang, according to Wright and Twitchett (1973: 42), the Han Chinese were "subject to foreign influences as never before or since. ... Poetry was not written for the eye alone. It was sung, and the foreign tunes ... introduced new and strange melodic shapes, rhythms, and forms into poetry. ... To the disgust of conservative Confucian scholars, even the solemn ritual music of the court...was gradually replaced by foreign music."³⁴

Unlike the examinations in the Song-Ming dynasties, Lewis (2009a: 204) says, "which relied on written papers whose authorship was concealed from evaluators, Tang examinations required an extended, ritually orchestrated interaction between examiners and candidates. ... More often, factions and networks formed around particular candidates, and social or political ties were manipulated to secure the desired results."³⁵ Personal connections were important to obtain a post. When a Chief

Minister was “criticized for mainly selecting his own friends and acquaintances,” Ebrey (1978: 107) says, “he responded by arguing that he could only judge the character of men he knew personally.”

According to Elman (2000: 7), the candidates had to take first the “qualifying examinations (*ju* 舉) demanding literary skills; then, to enter officialdom, they had to undergo a selection process that evaluated a candidate’s character and determined the level of his appointment. Department, eloquence, calligraphy, and legal knowledge were used to select new officials from the pool of examination graduates.” As a result, next to connection-building (i.e., developing *patron-client* relations), “literary composition was the most popular field of learned life” in Tang society (ibid: 11).³⁶

Yang Jian, Mao (1990: 105-6) states, “abandoned the system of Nine Grades [dismantling] the method of selecting candidates for office on the basis of a grading system which relied on the relative status of their families, and so there was an increased possibility for those of humble background to enter office.” Some exceptionally bright persons born to peasant families occasionally rose to high official rank, but the landed-gentry families that could afford the expense of tutoring their children over an extended period of time became the primary source of Han Chinese civil officials.³⁷

A good number of influential Han Chinese gentry families of the Tuoba period remained in leading positions even until tenth century, reflecting the stability and rigidity of the social system. Based on this, Eberhard (1965: 170) concludes that “it cannot be maintained that in medieval China the system of official examinations [institutionalized by Sui Wendi] created an open society on the basis of achievement.”

Franke (1972: 5) states: for admission to the “preliminary informal examination [for *Xiang’gong* 鄉貢] by the provincial authorities, ...the candidate usually had to secure an introduction from a person of importance. ... Thus during the Tang period it was still impossible to present oneself for examination without the sponsorship of influential people.” It was the Han Chinese Song dynasty that abolished the recommendation requirements “for the examination on the prefectural level.” Any candidate “who had the necessary literary education could present himself for the examination,” and those who passed the prefectural

先簡伏射 乃上門下 給事中讀 侍郎省 侍中審之 不當者駁下 既審然後 上聞 主者受旨奉行 各給以符 謂之 告身 兵部武選亦然...以騎射及翹關 負米...黔中嶺南閩中州縣官 不由吏部 委都督 選擇土人補授

Elman (ibid: 8-10) states: “When the palace examination was formally introduced by Empress Wu [in 677], the...questions reflected the literary turn toward belles lettres (雜文 *za-wen*), which often included poetry, rhyme-prose, or eulogies. Such belles lettres had already been used in earlier Tang dynasty...examinations for the...*jinsi* degree. ... The Tang turn toward poetry questions and literary formalism...after 681...reflected...culture among Tang aristocratic elites, who were dissatisfied with the standards of classical learning adopted in the *mingjing* ... Literary criteria remained dominant...until the end of the dynasty.”

Vita (1988: 97) states that “As a consequence of a recruitment process of state officials which increasingly stressed literary skills, during the Tang dynasty bureaucrat and *literatus* became two roles much closer than we might realize today.”

³⁷ See Xiong (2006: 109, 122-6, 143-71), and Guisso (1979: 321-2).

³⁸ Johnson (1977: 58) states: “during the Song dynasty...social origin...played very little part in eligibility for office ... merchants and artisans having begun to gain the right to hold office... [F]amily status no longer mattered very much.”

³⁹ Ebrey (1978: 104-5) notes that “In the Tang, relatives of emperor, the empress dowager, the empress, and the sons of the highest officials [above the rank three] could enter the Chong-wen or Hong-wen Pavilions which gave their own relatively easy examinations.”

⁴⁰ Under Sui Wendi, according to Xiong (2006: 120-1), “there was not a single appointee to a chief ministerial or board presidential position” from the newly conquered south. See also Wright (1978: 202) and Franke (1972: 4).

⁴¹ See Jin (2000: 86, 92, 163), and also Johnson (1977: 149) quoting Sun Kuo-tung (1965) for the estimate of 6%. 資治通鑑 卷二百 唐紀十六 高宗顯慶二年 [657] 十二月 吏部侍郎... 以爲... 每年入流之數 過一千四百... 即日內外文武官 一品至九品 凡萬三千四百六十五員 約準三十年... 約年別入流者五百人 足充所須之數

On the other hand, almost 10,000 persons passed the *jinshi* during the reign of Song Taizong (r.976-97). 宋史 卷二百九十三 列傳第五十二 王禹偁 至道元年 禹偁上疏... 三曰... 隋唐始有科試 太祖之歲 每歲進士不過三十人... 太宗... 在位將逾二紀 登第殆近萬人

Wechsler (1979: 179) notes: “For those who intended to take the examinations, Gaozu re-opened three Sui schools in Chang’an; the School of the Sons of State 國子學, the Superior School 太學, and the School of the Four Gates 四學 ... In 626 they had only 342

examination “were sent to the capital for the metropolitan examination (ibid: 6).” Franke declares that it was therefore only with the beginning of the Song period that “the examination became the major road to power and wealth (ibid: 7).”³⁸

Wright and Twitchett (1973: 28) state: “Under the Northern and Southern dynasties ... prefectural and county administrations [were] dominated by the member of prominent local clans [gentry families]. These were replaced by central appointees [the career officials who went through the selection process], and locally recruited men were no longer employed except in lowly positions. Both the personnel and the methods of local government were thus brought firmly under central control. ... A sub-bureaucracy of local headmen and minor functionaries [the substructure of clerks and local employees]... were at one and the same time representatives of the local population... and also minor employees of the state.”

Wright (1979: 85) notes that the Sui rulers applied the “rule of avoidance,” preventing the prefectural (*xian*) and county (*xian*) officials from serving “in their place of origin”; fixed the terms for “local officials at three years”; forbade local officials to take their parents or adult sons to local posts; and let “itinerant inspectors of the local governments serve as the eyes and ears of the emperor.” Wright and Twitchett (1973: 32) state: “until 755 the Tang state remained a strongly centralized empire in which the emperor and his executive ministers at the capital exercised real direct authority over local government, and in which the codified laws and administrative procedures laid out at the capital were strictly enforced throughout the empire.”

ARISTOCRACY KEEPS DOMINATING THE SUI-TANG BUREAUCRACY

The powerful Xianbei aristocracy still monopolized the highest-ranking offices. As Franke (1972: 5) notes, the “aristocracy had the right to nominate a certain number of their sons or heirs to official positions without any examination.”³⁹ A substantial proportion of the officials of the early Tang had served the Sui as well, and most of them were the “carry-over” from the previous Xianbei conquest dynasties.⁴⁰ There were eighteen core members who helped Yang Jian seize power, design Sui institutions, and implement major policies, constituting the top ranking officials of the three departments. According to Wright (1978: 94), “of the

eighteen, five were princes of the blood. Of those who had held office under a previous dynasty, eleven had been officials of the Northern Zhou. The fathers of fourteen of them had served under the Northern Wei or one of its successor states. ... Their Confucian learning was rudimentary and their knowledge of Chinese literature ... thin; the overwhelming majority were Buddhists.”

According to Twitchett (1979: 21), the examination system indeed opened up “to a wider segment of the [Chinese] population the opportunity of government service and the avenue to social advancement,” but during the Tang “the examinations never produced more than an elite stream of officials, probably little more than 10 percent of the total bureaucracy,” and “just as many of the examination candidates were aristocrats” who had studied rather leisurely at the academies. According to Jin Zheng (2000), only about 6,000 persons passed the *jinsbi* exams during the 289-years of the Tang dynasty. The annual average was about 20, and never exceeded 30 even during the peak. According to the *Zizhi Tongjian*, about 500 new officials were required annually for replacement, and hence the proportion of “Tang officials who entered service because of passing an examination” is estimated at most “around 6%.”⁴² Guanlong, especially the Guanzhong area, was the home territory of the Western Wei, Northern Zhou, and Sui dynasties, and hence, Xiong (2006: 224) notes, it “was the only viable geographical area from which the court could draw trustworthy talents. Consequently, the central officialdom could not help but be dominated by that bloc.”

Empress Wu took over the political power of the court in 659, and the first thing she did seems to have been to classify the Wu clan as the First Rank in the Compendium of Genealogies (氏族志/姓氏錄 *Shi-zu-zhi*). It is also recorded, however, that the soldiers (士卒) who had reached the Rank Five by distinguished military service were included in the Scholar Class (士流), called the Merit Rank (勳格) at that time.⁴¹ According to Twitchett (1979: 21), the role of Empress Wu “in the emergence of the examination stream within the bureaucracy was certainly exaggerated ... [T]he new bureaucrats were mostly recruited from the lower levels of ... aristocracy...and the aristocrats maintained a greater degree of dominance than...believed to be the case.” Empress Wu even selected officials through self-recommendation,

students altogether, drawn almost exclusively from the sons of the imperial family, the nobility and the highest ranking officials. Only in the lowest ranking school of the Four Gates was this exclusiveness slightly relaxed.” As Kuhn (2009: 127) notes (in relation to the Song system), the students in these schools “enjoyed the privilege of being exempted from the prefectural exam...to proceed directly to the metropolitan exam.”

⁴² 資治通鑑 卷二百 唐紀十六 高宗顯慶四年 [659] 六月 詔改氏族志爲姓氏錄...以後族爲第一等 其餘悉以仕唐官品高下爲準... 於是士卒以軍功 致位五品 豫士流 時人謂之勳格

⁴³ 資治通鑑 卷二百三 唐紀十九 則天后 垂拱元年 [685] 五月 制 內外九品以上 及百姓 咸令自舉 資治通鑑 卷二百三十四 唐紀五十五 德宗 貞元八年[792] 五月...往者 則天...非但人得薦士 亦得自舉其才... 則天舉用之法 傷易而得人

⁴⁴ According to Wright (1979: 96), Yang Jian had established (in 582 at village-level and in 589 at county-level) local groups “along time-tested lines,” each with a headman responsible for tax registers and tax allotments, but “under the threat of group sanctions for tax and corvée evasion.” This system of “mutual surveillance” proved effective. Those with official rank or titles were exempt from tax and corvée levies (ibid: 95).

⁴⁵ 隋書卷三十二 志第二十七 經籍

一 氏姓之書 後魏遷洛 有八氏十姓 咸出帝族 又有三十六族 則諸國之 從魏者 九十二姓 世為部落大人者 並為河南洛陽人 其中國士人 則第 其門閥 有四海大姓 郡姓 州姓 縣 姓 及周太祖入關 諸姓子孫有功者 並令為其宗長 仍撰譜錄 紀其所承 又以關內諸州[雍州/京兆]為其本望

Consequently, the statement that “so-and-so was a man from Luoyang or Chang’an (or *Within the Pass*)” more often implies that he was a member of the Tuoba-Xianbei aristocratic clans.

資治通鑑 卷一百四十 齊紀六 明帝 建武三年 [496] 魏主...詔...舊為部 落大人 而皇始已來 三世官在給事 已上 及品登王公者 為姓 若本非大 人...在尚書已上 及品登王公者 亦 為姓 其大人之後 而官不顯者 為族

⁴⁶ Lewis (2009: 13) states that “during the civil war that led to the Tang’s founding, the single greatest rival of the Guanzhong-based Tang house was the scion of a wealthy northeastern [Hebei] family of **Xianbei descent**, Dou Jiande (竇建德 573-621).”

⁴⁷ Ho (1998: 136) quotes the *Zizhi Tongjian*: Taizong “resettle[d] some one hundred thousand surrendered Turks in the Ordos area...It is said that in the year 630 the total of Turkish officers at the Tang court almost matched that of similarly ranked Chinese civil officials.

Consequently...nearly ten thousand households of Turks came to reside in the metropolitan Chang’an area.”

infringing the examination system itself.⁴³

According to Wittfogel and Fêng (1949: 20), although both the Sui and Tang dynasties recruited civil officers through the examination system, “from the Sui and Tang periods on, the *yin* privilege (蔭 the employment of sons because their fathers held high government positions) had limited the effectiveness of the newly created examination system,” and “this privilege was particularly favored by the Liao regime and later by the Mongols, evidently because it resembled in intent, if not in detail, the tribal tradition of a hereditary officialdom.”

In order to meet the needs of a greatly expanded empire, Sui and Tang ruled the peasant masses through the Han Chinese local officials and the gentry elites of each region.⁴⁴ The Sui and early Tang were, according to Twitchett (1979: 12-3), “not periods of radical institutional change or innovation. Their real achievement was the adaptation of existing methods of administration [established by the previous Xianbei conquest dynasties] to meet the needs of a greatly expanded empire... It was a period of rationalization, simplification and streamlining of procedures. ... As late as 657, there were only 13,465 ranking officials to control a population perhaps in excess of 50,000,000. ... Local implementation of government policy... depended very much on compromises between the county officials [the central appointees] and the large sub-bureaucracy of clerks [who were not eligible for higher offices] and village headmen who were both minor employee of the state, and also representatives of the local [Han Chinese gentry] society. ... In central government, the emperor was just constrained by the entrenched interests of the powerful [Xianbei] aristocratic group which still provided almost the entire echelon of the administration. ... Tang Taizong’s real achievement was ... to establish a firm ascendancy over the ... powerful aristocratic groups among his high-ranking officials.”

5. Xianbei Aristocracy and Han Chinese Collaborators

COMPOSITION OF THE TANG RULING CLASS

According to Johnson, it is “the generally accepted idea that the medieval (denoting the period from the fall of Han to the fall of Tang) Chinese ruling class was a hereditary aristocracy

(1977: 1): many have called the period up through the Tang dynasty aristocratic, in contrast to the more meritocratic and socially mobile age that followed (ibid: *the opening statement*).”

According to the *Suishu*, at the time when Xiaowen'di (r.471-99) of Northern Wei moved the capital to Luoyang [in 493], the Tuoba imperial clans (帝族) had eight lineages (氏) and ten surnames (姓). Further, the Tuoba-Xianbei aristocracy had 36 clans and 92 surnames who had been serving as hereditary chieftains of their villages. All these imperial and aristocratic families came to be registered as Henan Luoyang men. As for the Han Chinese gentry-scholars (士人) Xiaowen'di had ranked the status of prominent families by associating their surnames with four administrative levels: the nationwide great surnames, the prefectural surnames, the commandery surnames, and the county surnames. When Yuwen Tai entered the pass, all those descendants of the various surnames who had rendered meritorious services were ordered to become their clan leaders (宗長) and, further, to compile their genealogies to record their descent (譜錄). He then made the various prefectures within the pass (關內) their place of registration (本望).⁴⁵

Yuwen Tai had filled the civil and military bureaucracy almost exclusively with the members of the hereditary Guanlong aristocracy, the loyal supporters for his founding of Western Wei and Northern Zhou. Although Yang Jian established Sui by liquidating Yuwen Tai's family, he also filled the high offices with the Guanlong clans. Hence Wechsler (1973: 105) states that the Guanlong bloc “was comprised of the descendants of the [Xianbei] aristocratic families that had been in control of political power in China since the Western Wei, Northern Zhou, and Sui dynasties and that still dominated the court during the early Tang.”

Li Yuan, whose wife was a granddaughter of Yuwen Tai, raised his standard of revolt against the Sui at Taiyuan. As a result, there emerged the great clans of Taiyuan (the great families of Shanxi of which the Wu Zetian's family was one) that had served as the power base for the Tang's initial rise to power. According to Wechsler (ibid: 105), “the executive body of Gaozu's organization (大將軍府)...was overwhelmingly composed of Sui civil and military officials who either currently held offices in the vicinity of Taiyuan...or retired...to their native places in the Taiyuan region.”

資治通鑑 卷一百九十三 唐紀九 太宗 貞觀四年 [630] 四月...突厥...部落或北附薛延陀或西奔西域 其降唐者尚十萬口...分突利故所...以統其衆 五月..其餘酋長 至者皆拜將軍...五品已上百餘人 殆與朝士相半 因而入居長安者近萬家

⁴⁸ Twitchett (1973: 49) further notes that “these distinctions were expressed in legal terms by scholar-official households being listed in household registers entirely separate from those of commoner families. Scholar officials registered in this way were accorded the privilege of exemption from corvée labor, military service, land tax, and market tolls; were not liable to corporal punishment; and were entitled to commutate punishments either to money fines, or to a proportionate reduction in rank... Even more important, marriage between members of scholar-official families and commoners was forbidden.”

⁴⁹ Wright (1979: 81) states that: “about 65 percent of top-ranking Northern Zhou officials were of non-Chinese origin. [Sui] Wendi... and most of his friends and chief advisors came from this group.” They placed strong emphasis on martial virtues, and personal participation in warfare and hunting was highly valued. The ruling families of the southern dynasties, mostly made up of those who had fled from the north, had considered themselves the true heirs to old Han Chinese culture.

⁵⁰ Lewis (2009a: 203) notes that “young men aspiring to the highest posts... even those eligible for hereditary [*yin*] access to a post often attempted to pass the *jinshi*... They proved so adept at mastering the examination that it became a new gateway to perpetual status rather than a roadblock. ... Top educators were concentrated in three metropolitan schools [國子學, 太學, 四學] in Chang’an ... Schools in the provinces were...largely reserved for sons of local officials or scions of large landholding families.”

Twitchett (1973: 79) notes that there was, however, the “possibility for members of... minor locally prominent clans to secure accelerated promotion and to rise to the very highest offices which had previously been more or less monopolized by the **greatest aristocratic clans**.”

⁵¹ Lewis (2009a: 197) presents the case of the Cui family of Boling, one of the so-called “four great *Shandong* families (山東 四姓: 崔盧李張).” During the Murong-Xianbei era of the 4th century, the Cui family relied on their landed estates, sometimes holding local office. During the Tuoba-Xianbei era of the 5th and 6th centuries, the Cuis occupied the high court ranks while maintaining economic influence at the local level. Under Sui and Tang, the leaders of the Cui family abandoned their local estates and moved to Chang’an in pursuit of positions in central government. Such “great” collaborator families “grouped themselves together

Wechsler (1973: 106) states that during 618-21, Li Shimin “was almost constantly engaged in campaigns of pacification... on the northeastern plain, where he defeated two of the Tang’s most powerful rivals... At the same time, he began...recruiting men for his own staff from among the officer corps of his vanquished enemies ... These men later formed the nucleus of the Zhenguan civil and military bureaucrats. Northeasterners on Taizong’s staff became so numerous that ... people at court charge[d] that Taizong’s associates were all Shandong people.” The “Shandong” here implies the northeastern plain in the east of the Taihang Mountains, the area coextensive with Northern Qi. Certainly there must have been the Xianbei aristocratic clans that had followed Gao Huan (when Northern Wei split into eastern and western Wei) and were classified neither as the Guanlong bloc nor as the Taiyuan (Shanxi) bloc but, rather, as the Shandong bloc that was the most powerful rival of the Tang founding family who had served Yuwen Tai.⁴⁶ There must have been Chinese collaborators, as well, who had served as the officer corps of Taizong’s vanquished enemies and then recruited as Taizong’s staff officers.

The leaders of the great Xianbei aristocratic clans (i.e., the 92 surnames of the 36 clans mentioned in the *Suishu*), that were ranked just below the imperial clans, consisted of the core founding members and principal supporters of the Xianbei conquest dynasties who became high-ranking officials. The aristocratic lineages enjoyed hereditary appointments in the civil bureaucracy and the military. During 632-8, at the order of Tang Taizong, the compendium of genealogies (*Shi-zu-zhi*) was created that defined the status of major lineages. According to Lewis (2009a: 201), “most of the Guanzhong and Daibei [northern Shanxi] elites” claimed “descent from a highly prestigious alien lineage, such as the ruling house of the Northern Wei” or “descent from a ruling or noble house of the steppes.”⁴⁷

Twitchett states that, under the conquest dynasties, “at the highest level, the...emperor and...the upper echelons of central government were dominated --almost monopolized-- by the members of a comparatively small number of immensely powerful [Xianbei aristocratic] clans. ... At a rather lower level, there was a rigid and formal distinction in legal status between [the Han Chinese] scholar-official and commoner lineages.”⁴⁸ When Yang Jian usurped the throne in 581, the real power was

held by the members of Xianbei military aristocratic clans.⁴⁹

The leaders of the great Han Chinese families consisted of the prominent collaborators selected by the Xianbei rulers among the ex-officials and gentry elites who had served the series of conquest dynasties (beginning with Murong-Xianbei Former Yan, and followed by Tuoba-Xianbei Northern Wei, Eastern/Western Wei, Northern Qi/Zhou, and Sui) as officials in the central or local government bureaucracy, and could enjoy the *jün* privileges.⁵⁰ The Sui-Tang rulers began to fill less than 10% of the bureaucracy through the newly instituted examination system, but more than half of the exam graduates originated from the Han Chinese gentry families. The newly established examination system increased, even as it limited, the opportunities for social mobility for the members of Han Chinese landed-gentry elites.⁵⁰ Until the end of the Tang period, however, the hereditary Xianbei aristocracy remained all powerful.

Twitchett (1973: 54-7) quotes Shen Gua (1031-95) of Northern Song: “not only the social origins of the political elite, but the whole structure of society during the Six Dynasties, the Sui, and the Tang, had been quite different from the social order of [our] own day. ... It is only among the four barbarians [四夷 a generic expression for the Donghu-Xianbei, Dongyi-Tungus, Xiongnu-Turks, and Tangut-Tibetans] that noble and base are distinguished purely on the basis of their family. ... At the end of the Tang period, these customs fell by degrees into decline and disuse.” Shen Gua apparently believed that the rigid “hierarchical distinctions between various social groups” was “common to all non-Chinese peoples,” and “had been introduced into China by the Tuoba during the Northern Wei period.” Twitchett therefore declares that “Shen Gua thus believed that while lineage, descent, and recognized family standing had played a major role in the recruitment of potential officials since the third century, under the foreign influences which reached their peak under the Tuoba Wei dynasty...a super-elite of extremely powerful clans emerged, which survived, with some changes and additions, into the Tang dynasty. ... Shen Gua, however, adds a totally new factor ... the emergence by early Tang times of a larger, lower grade, locally rather than nationally prominent group of a hundred or more lineages calling themselves ‘scholar-official lineages.’ These too were an exclusive group who married only among themselves and

...through... exclusive intermarriage,” securing “alliances with rising families (ibid: 198).” Lewis further notes that “The primary routes to office were hereditary. Imperial relatives were entitled to enter the bureaucracy at the fourth or fifth rank, while great grandsons, grandsons, and sons of officials of the fifth rank or above were entitled to entry at the seventh, eighth, or ninth rank...[H]ereditary ‘aristocracy’ that held archaic noble titles...[were] entitled...to entry-level posts at the fifth, sixth, or seventh rank. By comparison, the vast majority of examination candidates entered at the lowest tenth rank. The Tang also maintained a distinction between ‘pure’ posts [the first five ranks including major scholarly offices and most important prefectural posts] devoted to ritual observance and high-level policy-making, and ‘turbid’ posts, consisting of clerical work. Pure posts most frequently went to those who entered the bureaucracy through hereditary privilege (ibid: 202-3).” See also Bol (1992: 42, 44).

⁵² 貞觀政要 第七卷 論禮樂 第二十九 五章 貞觀六年 太宗謂...房玄齡曰 此有山東崔盧李鄭四姓 雖累葉陵遲 猶恃其舊地 好自矜大 稱為士大夫 每嫁女他族 必廣索聘財 以多為貴 論數定約 同於市賈 甚損風俗...理須改革 乃...刊正姓氏 普責天下譜牒...撰為氏族志 士廉等及進定氏族等第 遂以崔幹為第一等 太宗謂曰 我與山東崔盧李鄭 舊既無嫌 為其世代衰微 全無官宦 猶自云士

大夫 婚姻之際 則多索財物...我不解
人間何為重之 且士大夫有能立功
爵位崇重 善事君父 忠孝可稱...可
謂天下士大夫...今定氏族者 誠欲崇
樹今朝冠冕...卿等不貴我官爵也...祇
取今日官品人才作等級 宜一量定
用為永則 遂以崔幹為第三等

Cf. Interpretations of this passage by
Johnson (1977: 48-9), Ebrey (1978: 88-
9), Wechsler (1979: 212-3), Twitchett
(1973: 62-8), and Lewis (2009a: 198-
206).

資治通鑑 卷一百九十五 唐紀十一
太宗 貞觀十二年 [638] 正月 山東
人士崔盧李鄭諸族..其子孫才行衰薄
官爵陵替...今三品以上 或以德行 或
以勳勞 或以文學 致位貴顯 彼衰世
舊門..捨名取實...專以今朝秩為高下

⁵³ See Twitchett (1973: 67-8). Johnson
(1977: 46) states: “Taizong’s protests
reveal a basic split in the ruling class of
early Tang...between powerful families
from the Northwest—most of whom
traced their origins back through the
Northern Zhou and Western Wei to the
Xianbei Six Garrisons of Northern
Wei—versus...old Chinese families.”

⁵⁴ Johnson (1977: 141) states that,
despite the “explicit anti-great clan
policies of Taizong and Gaozong,” the
great Han Chinese “clans remained in
control of the central government until
the end of the dynasty.”

⁵⁵ Bol (1992: 33) states: “Yan Zhitui’s
polemical contention...was aimed at
men...who he believed were selling out

claimed favorable treatment in seeking official appointment ...
such castelike and exclusive social groups, with the great Hebei
clans at the top and the very much larger group of locally
prominent lineages at the bottom, who in turn were rigidly
distinguished from the commoners.”

THE PROMINENT HAN CHINESE COLLABORATOR FAMILIES

The so-called great “Han Chinese” *Shandong* families, in
the words of Twitchett (1973: 50), “who claimed to be the
representatives of the purest Chinese cultural tradition, who
married only among themselves, and who looked down upon even
the Tang imperial house as social upstarts,” represented the group
of high-ranking Chinese collaborators in the *east of the Taihang
Mountains*, the area coextensive with Northern Qi, who had
already served the Xianbei conquest dynasties generation after
generation, as well as the Han Chinese gentry elite of, in the words
of Wechsler (1973: 89) “predominantly literati of modest
backgrounds,” who could begin their career in local office via the
newly institutionalized examination system but could eventually
hold high-ranking positions in the central government.⁵¹

In the chaotic situation of the Six Garrisons Revolt
(523-35), some members of the leading Han Chinese gentry
families, such as the Cuis, happened to side with Yuwen Tai and
were promoted to high civil or military posts, even to the extent
of being put in charge of one of the Twenty-four Armies. Ebrey
(1978: 74) states: “But the Cuis were basically outsiders,
descendants of an eminent Chinese family with no connection to
the garrisons. They were treated well, but never became part of
the inner circle around the rulers.” The offspring of such high-
ranking Chinese collaborators could enjoy, though not hereditarily,
the *yin* privileges in the Northern Zhou, Sui, and Tang courts.

The prominent Chinese gentry families had somehow
annoyed the early Tang rulers and hence, according to the *Zhen-
guan Zhengyao*, Li Shimin curtly spoke to Fang Xuan-ling, in 632, as
follows: “In Shandong, there are Cuis, Lus, Lis, and Zhengs. They
have been in decay for generations, and yet they are fond of
boasting their old fame, calling themselves *shi-da-fu* (gentry
officials). When these people marry their daughters off to other
clan members, they demand enormous dowry as if merchant
dealers, degrading public morals and manners. This warrants a

reform.” Taizong ordered a thorough investigation of the genealogies and histories of the leading Han Chinese gentry families, and appointed a committee to draw up the genealogical compendium (*Shi-zu-zhi*) covering the whole empire which would rectify the falsehood. The first draft, however, assigned the highest rank to the Cui Gan branch of the Cui families and, according to the *Zhenguan Zhengyao*, Taizong rejected it, saying: “I have never held any grudges against the *si-xing* people, but they have been in decay for generations and few of them have taken official posts. I do not understand why people esteem them. They are only showing off their ancestors’ status. I want to rank the clans rather to exalt the high ranking officials of our own dynasty.”⁵² In short, Taizong ordered the committee to make rankings simply on the basis of present offices and titles that were obtained either by “virtue, meritorious deeds, or literary talent (德行/勳勞/文學),” and ignore the undeserved folkloristic fame.

They accordingly made revisions, reducing the status of the Cuis down to the third rank, and the revised genealogy was approved by Li Shimin in 638. There followed many official compilations of genealogies, but none of them survives in its original form. They make all sorts of fabrications, but a few tiny fragments quoted here and there do not give a reliable overall picture of the originals.⁵³ After all, according to Johnson (1977: 55), “the clan lists seem to have played no special role in the selection of officials.”

Ebrey (1978: 31, 89) notes that the prominent gentry families, “however, were not vanquished by these efforts. ... [They] used their many resources to prepare carefully for office, and the government allowed them to occupy a disproportionate number of posts. ... When regional military forces threatened the integrity of the dynasty in the later half of the Tang, the rulers found in the members of the old families committed bureaucrats and loyal supporters.”⁵⁴

Ebrey (1978: 118) gives two major reasons why the so-called “four great Shandong [Han Chinese] families” such as the Cuis did “not gain greater power.” First of all, “the ruling houses in the North were alien.” Second, “the Tuoba and later the Gao, Yuwen, and Yang families kept a tight control over the most powerful government positions, reserving them for their own close allies, including leading Xianbei clansmen or later victorious

to conquerors who cared little about culture.” Twitchett (1979: 4) notes: “In the north-eastern plain the great ...clans... had gone to great lengths to preserve their social and cultural identity as the true heirs of the culture of the Han period...avoid[ing] intermarriage with the alien nobility.”

⁵⁶ According to *the Tangshu*, ancestors of such prominent collaborators as Du Ruhui 杜如晦 and Fang Xuan-ling 房玄齡 had served as central/provincial officials (大將軍, 刺史, 太守, 工部尚書, 長史/鎮遠將軍, 郡守, 主簿, 令) of Northern Wei, Northern Zhou, and Sui. Du Ruhui and Fang Xuan-ling had never exercised military command.

資治通鑑 卷一百九十二 唐紀八 高帝 武德九年 [626] 九月 諸將爭功...房玄齡杜如晦等 專弄刀筆 卷二百九十三 唐紀九 太宗 貞觀三年三月 房玄齡 明達政事 補以文學 資治通鑑 卷二百 唐紀十六 高宗顯慶四年[659] 十月 太宗疾山東士人...王妃王塔皆取勳臣家 不議山東之族以魏徵房玄齡李勣家 皆盛與為昏常 Since Taizong spited the Shandong gentry scholars, kings and princesses obtained their spouses only from the meritorious families, but the Han Chinese Wei Zheng, Fang Xuan-ling, and Li Ji (李世勣) families often married the Shandong families.

⁵⁷ Bol (1992: 38) states: “The lack of interest in providing for the welfare of all descendants distinguishes the great clan from the ‘lineages’ that began to

emerge among Song *Shi-da-fu*. [They] no longer had a common home base of extensive landholdings to fall back on, much less a body of armed retainers.” According to Johnson, the medieval *shi* denotes “a loose category of people whose status is earned rather than a coherent group with ascribed status: an elite, not an aristocracy (1977: 16). ... [J]oint clan property and ancestral temples...for worship, did not exist before the Song (ibid; 118).” Ebrey (1978: 31) states: “The [so-called] *aristocratic* families in the Tang are best seen as a status group, a community with a distinctive way of life, sustained by prestige [and marital exclusiveness] more than power” Ebrey (ibid: 10) continues: “By defining the aristocratic families in this way, I am excluding the families who in almost all dynasties gained great wealth and prestige as a result of their ties to the imperial family as relatives or early supporters. These families are called here the nobility (*gui-zu* 貴族 or *gui-you* 貴右). They were usually given hereditary titles... and stipends...”

⁵⁸ Lewis (2009a: 195) also notes that “Su Mian, whose administrative encyclopedia (唐會要) was completed in 803, observed that all those who founded the dynasty and became high ministers in the early decades came from ‘noble lineages’ (*guizu* 貴族). He observed that nothing like this group had existed in earlier Chinese history.” In early Tang, governors were often military men, and hereditary.

generals of garrison origin.” The status of the so-called great *Shandong* Han Chinese families depended on gaining “respectable offices” that were “dependent on favorable treatment by any groups or individuals who controlled the court (ibid: 116-7),” and hence, “through the Tang, despite pretensions of social and cultural superiority,” they “continued to do whatever was necessary to gain office (ibid: 117-8).” In fact, during the Tang, quite a few Cuis ended their career in the bureaucracy as county officials, such as magistrates (*xianling* 縣令), assistants (*cheng* 丞), registrars (*zhubu* 主簿), or constables (*wei* 尉) (ibid: 108).

Graff (2009: 144-5) notes: “Those Tang officials who were assigned to the... compilation of history [*shi guan*]...had established their credentials by passing the... *jinsbi* examination... Many official historians later rose to become chief ministers, members of the collective premiership ... Rarely, if ever, did such men ...exercise military command.”⁵⁵

According to Lewis (2009b: 150-1): “Although some literati through the centuries argued that Han Chinese should not serve barbarian rulers, in practice most Chinese elites proved willing to accept any conqueror.” The so-called “Han Chinese aristocratic families” of *Shandong* may better be classified as “the empire’s most prominent collaborator landed-gentry families.”⁵⁶ After all, there never had been any hereditary aristocracy in Chinese society, after the ancient Zhou dynasty, to be classified suddenly as the premier Chinese “aristocratic” clans. In China, Mote (1999: 4) states, “there was no hereditary military aristocracy ... nor even a civil aristocracy. ... China was from the beginning [Qin dynasty] largely governed by men who gained their position by their individual qualities, not by inheritance. They were drawn from a society that had no legally established class distinction.” The chosen few members of the landed-gentry families had served as (high and low) functionaries for the Xianbei conquest dynasties. Ebrey (1978: 114) states that “as a status group they had advantages [in entering the local or central bureaucracy], not legal privileges or monopolies, and their advantages were neither fully perceived nor considered legitimate.” And yet, as if to maximize the semantic confusion, Ebrey calls such prominent collaborator families as the Cuis “*aristocratic* families.” The Xianbei conquest dynasties indeed had the hereditary aristocracy who inherited noble titles from an ancestor who gained the titles by virtue of his

service to the dynasty or imperial kinship, but Ebrey calls them the “nobility” and excludes them altogether from her investigation of “the *Aristocratic Families of Early Imperial China*.”⁵⁷

The Tang government had maintained a rather rigid distinction between the officially recognized Han Chinese scholar-official families and the commoners. In theory, commoners and even merchants could take civil examinations. Twitchett (1973: 79), however, notes that there was “an unchanging permanent castelike group of [Han Chinese] scholar-official clans” in Tang society, and contends that the achievement of the Tang in broadening the elite through the examination system has been very much exaggerated. One may accurately say that an extremely limited meritocracy was superimposed on an aristocratic society. Twitchett contends that “the real breakthrough in social mobility ...seems...to have come not so much with the development of the examination system in the late seventh century, as with the greatly increased...possibilities for employment in provincial government...which followed the decay of central...authority and the transfer of effective political and military authority...to the provinces a century or more later.” The latter-day military governors (*jiedushi*) recruited men on the basis of military and administrative expertise.

According to Twitchett (1973: 82), “Tang society at its higher levels was far more distinctly stratified and hierarchical than Chinese society has been ... There existed a small and still extremely influential super-elite of old, established aristocratic clans whose roots were entangled in the complex political history of the period of division in the fifth and sixth centuries [a typical euphemism for the ruling Xianbei aristocratic clans].” Twitchett (*ibid*: 51) quotes Su Mian’s writing (in 804-5): “all of the chief ministers who assisted in the founding of the present dynasty came from the great [Xianbei] aristocratic clans. ... There has never been any dynasty so (aristocratic in its origins) as our own Tang house.”⁵⁸ Twitchett, however, points out the “extinction of the aristocratic clans at the end of the Tang (*ibid*: 52),” apparently having only the Han Chinese Song-Ming dynasties in mind.

In the Han Chinese Song, the examination entry indeed replaced the old Xianbei aristocracy with a meritocracy. Hence Cheng Yi (程頤), quoted by Bol (1992: 327), had “recognized the *shi* as a distinct, self-perpetuating social group” in Song society,

資治通鑑 卷一百九十五 唐紀十一
太宗 貞觀十一年 [637] 今朝廷...輕
州縣之選 刺史多用武人 或京官不
稱職 始補外任...上...曰 刺史朕當
自選 縣令...京官...各舉一人 十三
年...宗室羣臣襲封刺史...割地以封功
臣...時皇子爲都督刺史 多幼穉

⁵⁹ Bol is quoting *Er Cheng Ji* 二程集, 一 (18.242-4).

⁶⁰ Ebrey (1978: 33) notes: “When ... the Tang dynasty was overthrown, members of the old families ... are mentioned less and less frequently in the histories. Many were undoubtedly killed in the rebellions and wars...from 860 to 960. But what seems most important is that few of the new rulers found their services of value. ... The old families had nothing left to offer.” On the basis **the commandery-level clan lists (郡望表)** discovered at Dunhuang, Johnson (1977: 3) states that “high proportions of important officials ...came from great [Chinese] clans...almost 75%...under the Eastern Jin...and...Southern Dynasties ... In the Northern Dynasties the proportions were much lower, because **many high officials were not Chinese, and the clan lists included almost no non-Chinese clans**. But if one analyses **only** the background of Chinese officials, the proportions are over 75% for Northern Wei and Western Wei-Northern Zhou, and around 60% for Eastern Wei-Northern Qi. ... In Tang, the proportions of great [Chinese] clan representatives in high office fell from

these levels to 56.4% in the first half of the dynasty... But the most remarkable finding of all was that in the first century of Northern Song, an extremely small proportions of the chief ministers came from this group of clans -- perhaps as few as 2.5%. Apparently **the nature of the [Chinese] ruling class changed drastically between Tang and Song.**"

⁶¹ 資治通鑑 卷二百五十二 唐紀六十八 僖宗 廣明二年 [880] 十二月...入長安...尤憎官吏 得者皆殺之...黃巢殺唐宗室在長安者 無遺類...巢即皇帝位...唐官三品以上悉停任 四品以下位如故

資治通鑑 卷二百六十五 唐紀八十一 昭宗 天祐二年 [905] 五月...良由衣冠[官吏]浮薄之徒 紊亂綱紀且王欲圖大事...不若盡去之 全忠以為然...或門胄高華 或科第自進 居三省臺閣...貶逐無虛日 搢紳[文官]為之一空 六月...故深疾 搢紳之士言於全忠曰 此輩常自謂清流 宜投之黃河 使為濁流 全忠笑而從之...時士大夫避亂 多不入朝

⁶² The rulers of the Five Dynasties had appointed mostly military men as Prefects, Grand Administrators, and Magistrates.

新五代史 卷四十六 雜傳第三十四 郭延魯 天福中 [936-43] 拜單州刺史 卒于官 當是時 刺史皆以軍功拜...武夫 為害不細

舊五代史 卷九十八 晉書二十四 列傳第十三 安重榮 自梁唐已來 藩候郡牧 多以勳授 不明治道

“but at times he spoke nostalgically of the clan system of the Tang as being in accord with heaven’s pattern (天理) and of the prospect of once more having a court with hereditary ministers.”⁵⁹ When Twitchett (1973: 83) declares that, “by the end of the tenth century,” the process of radical social change had “swept the last remnants of the old aristocratic order into final oblivion,” he apparently does not take any of the subsequent Liao-Jin-Yuan-Qing conquest dynasties into account.

When the Tang dynasty perished, the Tang aristocracy also disappeared, together with its prominent collaborators, the ever-faithful Chinese dignitaries.⁶⁰ The Qidan-Xianbei, fresh from Western Manchuria, had their own hereditary aristocracy. Huang Chao and Zhu Wen slaughtered not only the hated eunuchs, who came to command even the elite military forces (神策軍), but also a large number of high-ranking Han Chinese gentry officials.⁶¹ The Qidans chose few of the survivors as their collaborators; they preferred their own choices. “Tang Restoration” by the Shatuo Turks was a fiction.⁶² The Han Chinese Song-Ming rulers wanted to build up their own new officialdom, though from the same landed-gentry stratum, equipped with an entirely different mindset--the inborn pride of serving the native dynasty.

6. Buddhism as the Unifying Ideology: Innovation by Tuoba Wei

Yang Jian was born in a local Buddhist temple in 541. He was brought up by a nun until the age of twelve. He promoted Buddhism as the unifying ideology for the Sui empire, presenting himself as the surrogate of the Buddha.⁶³ Xiong (1993) notes that “through his family tradition, Yangdi was exposed to Buddhism at an early age and considered himself to be a Mahāyāna Buddhist.” The founding family of the Tang dynasty, Wechsler (1979: 188) says, “the Li clan, bearer of a strong northern tradition, was naturally Buddhist.” Although quite a few Han Chinese ministers seem to have urged Li Yuan to discard Buddhism, contending that “prior to the era of Five Barbarians, monarchs were sagacious and ministers loyal because of the absence of profligate Buddhism,” Tang Gaozu and Taizong consistently supported Buddhism.⁶⁴ Xuan Zang (玄奘/陳祿 602-64), the most renowned of all Chinese Buddhist pilgrims, returned to Chang’an in 645 after

living for fifteen years in India, and commenced his great translation project, supported by lavish imperial subsidies. Taizong's enormous interest in Xuan Zang was apparently derived from his personal devotion.⁶⁴ Gaozong and the Empress Wu were both deeply religious. When the empress achieved supreme power for herself, she established Buddhism as the state religion (in 691).⁶⁵ Dunnell (1996: 19) explains "how Empress Wu cultivated Buddhist sources of legitimation for her rule," and also notes the "repudiation of Wu Zhao's reign in Confucian historiography."

According to Wright (1959: 66-7), Buddhism, "by the end of the period of disunion, had a wide following among peasantry and elite in north and south alike. It thus commended itself to the reunifying dynasty of Sui, and to its successor, the great Tang, as an instrument for knitting together the two cultures." The Sui and Tang emperors "made it a matter of imperial policy to patronize Buddhist establishments and clergy."

The Chinese emperors had traditionally tried to attain the legitimacy of their *Mandate* (受命而帝) in terms of Confucian ideology of *Virtue* (合德). The rulers of conquest dynasties, including the emperors of Sui and Tang, relied heavily on the Buddhist ideology of *Compassion* and *Wisdom* to enhance their legitimacy. Wright (1959: 70) states: "For the first two hundred years of the Tang, Buddhism flourished as never before. ... Buddhist ritual now became an integral part of state and imperial observances. ... The Sui and Tang emperors had ... unlike their Han predecessors, whose position had been rationalized in the ideas and symbols of native traditions, ... relied heavily on an alien religion to augment the credenda...of their power. ... Buddhism was woven into the very texture of Chinese life and thought. These centuries were the golden age of...Buddhism."

Wright (1959: 124) contends that Buddhism could never have established itself in the Empire of Han.⁶⁶ Thanks to the ceaseless efforts of the Xianbei rulers of true piety, however, Buddhism became the common faith of not only the conquest elites, but also of all Han Chinese.⁶⁷ The Buddhist temples flourished as tax-exempt property-owning institutions, promoting art, literature, and scholarship. There was a great increase in charitable works of all kinds, led by Buddhist monks and actively supported by the government. Buddhism merged into popular Daoism, old and new Confucianism, and all sorts of folk cults.⁶⁸

⁶³ Wright (1979: 57, 61, 75-7)

資治通鑑 卷一百七十五 陳紀九 宣
帝 太建十三年 [581] 是歲 隋主詔
境內之民 任聽出家 仍令計口出錢
營造經像 於是時俗隨風而靡 民間
佛書 多於六經數十百倍

⁶⁴ 資治通鑑 卷一百九十一 唐紀七
高帝 武德九年 [626] 四月 太史令
傅奕上疏...請除佛灑 曰...言妖...使
不忠不孝...遊食...逃租賦...至於有漢
皆無佛灑 君明信忠...漢明帝 [r.57-
75] 始立胡神 西域桑門 自傳其灑...
不許中國之人...髡髮...泊于符石 羌
胡亂華 主庸臣佞 政虐祚短...僧尼
徒衆 糜損國家...寺塔...虛費金帛
See Wright (1957).

Wechsler (1979: 180) notes that in 621 and 624, the Chinese "spokesman Fu I presented memorials to the throne attacking Buddhism as a foreign and unwholesome religion...and called on the emperor to expunge it from China."

⁶⁴ Wechsler (1979: 180-1, 219, 235)

⁶⁵ See Twitchett and Wechsler (1979: 263, 265).

資治通鑑 卷二百四 唐紀二十 則天
順聖皇后 天授二年 [691] 四月...制
以釋教開革命之階 升於道教之上

⁶⁶ 資治通鑑 卷九十五 晉紀十七 成
帝 咸康元年[335] 初趙王勸 以天竺
僧...及虎即位 奉之尤謹...國人化之
率多事佛...爭造寺廟 削髮出家...虎
...下詔 問...等 議曰...佛 外國之神
非天子諸華所應祠奉 漢氏初傳其道
唯聽西域人 立寺都邑 以奉之 漢人
皆不得出家 魏世亦然 今宜禁公卿

以下 毋得詣寺燒香禮拜..虎詔曰 朕
生自邊鄙...君諸夏 至于饗祀 應從
本俗 其夷趙百姓 樂事佛者 特聽之

The rulers of Han and (Cao Cao's) Wei
dynasties had never encouraged
Buddhism. The "barbarian" rulers,
however, were free from Confucian
prejudice, and even "the bloodthirsty
despot Shi Hu (石虎 r.334-49)," could
unreservedly adopt Buddhism.

⁶⁷ Wright (1959: 75) notes: "The Sui
and Tang dynasties made a practice of
building battlefield temples ...and
endowing perpetual services for the
repose of the souls of the war dead."
According to Wright (1959: 74), it
worked "as a social cement, binding
together all classes and races in
common belief and activities. ...
Buddhist teachings of compassion and
respect for life should have done much
to moderate the cruel punishments
decreed in Chinese penal code."

⁶⁸ Wright (1957: 32-3) states that "The
great clerics were given special
imperial honors and titles. Pu-k'ung
(705-74)...was allowed to go in and
out of the palace on horseback...The
hierarchy of clerical officials developed
on the Northern Wei pattern was a
bureaucracy responsible to the state
for the maintenance of order, propriety,
and conformity among believers, for
the official ordination of monks, and for
the chartering of Buddhist
establishments ... Officials and nobles
were munificent patrons of Buddhism."

Wright (1957) states that the "ideas and institutions of Buddhism
were used...to bring about cultural unity and to sanction the new
Sui hegemony ... The Sui dynasty adopted many policies which
are characteristic of the state's relation to Buddhism throughout
the Tang" and yet the "Confucian historians...regarded Buddhism
as an alien cultural excrescence, and the Buddhist periods of
Chinese history as shameful chapters in the life of a great people."

Abramson (2003) states that "beginning in the seventh
century, [the traditional tomb guardians] were gradually replaced
by Buddhist protective deities known ... as the Four Great
Heavenly Kings (四大天王). They display even more exaggerated
features...of barbarian images ...[which was] not only the result
of ... the near total acceptance of Buddhism's extra-Chinese
origins...but also from a growing consciousness of the power
associated with fluid ethnic boundaries and the figure of the
barbarian (ibid: 141-2). ... Non-Han troops, mostly with Inner
Asian ethnic origins, were a mainstay of the Tang armies, and
non-Han generals occupied the highest levels of the military. ...
[I]t seems logical that images of protective deities would take on
features of their mortal equivalents (ibid: 145)."

7. Sui and Tang: Successors to the Xianbei Conquest Dynasties

Wright (1978: 11) contends that "Whereas [Sui] Wendi
and his son after him could blandly disguise the fact that their
ancestors had partaken of the 'barbarian' culture..., Charlemagne
[r.768-814, of the Carolingian Empire, 751-987] could not and
would not disguise his Germanic inheritance, and was restrained
by it...from 'acting out' the part of Roman Emperor." That is,
the Sui-Tang rulers "disguised" their Xianbei inheritance when
"acting out" the part of Chinese Emperor.

The Eastern Turks were subjugated in 630 and Li Shimin
became both the Emperor of China and the "Heavenly Khaghan"
of the nomads (天可汗). He personally led troops in numerous
battles and displayed a profound knowledge of the steppe culture.
Ho (1998: 132) asserts that "the Turks and various steppe people
genuinely believed that [Tang Taizong] was 'one of them.'" ⁶⁹

Wright and Twitchett (1973: 1) assert that the Tang
rulers "saw their political model" in the great empire of Han, and

yet admit that “the effects of the intervening Age of Disunion (c.180-581), when invaders from the steppe displaced the Chinese from the ancient centers of their culture in North China, were to be seen in almost every aspect of Tang life.” They (ibid: 25) further declare that “When the Sui had reunified China, it did so as **the successor to the Northern Dynasties, the series of ... non-Chinese regimes beginning with the Northern Wei...** The Wei had already formulated what were to become the basic military, financial, and administrative policies adopted by...the Sui and the Tang.” Although the Sui-Tang founders extensively codified the law and administrative system, they were “neither revolutionary nor innovative (ibid: 29).” Rather, they were simply “the perfected end-product of centuries of development” under the Xianbei conquest dynasties.

“The fundamental tension in Tang administrative history,” Wright and Twitchett (1973: 31) write, “arose from the fact that the institutions inherited from the relatively backward Northern Dynasties were now called upon to deal with a far more highly developed social situation [of unified mainland China].”⁷⁰

Chinese historians almost always mention the aristocratic Tang empire together with the socially mobile Han Chinese Song state. In the Tang-Song package of dynasties, the first is praised, in the words of Wang (1963: 1), “as a period of vigorous growth and brilliant achievements and the second as one of literary and artistic maturity.” Franke and Twitchett (1994: 23) even declare that Tang was a “purely Chinese state,” and then praise the Song dynasty for its feats of “reunification (ibid: 11).” Rowe (2009: 2) lines up Tang poetry, Song painting, and Ming porcelain in the same breath.⁷¹ Only by making Tang the paragon of Han Chinese dynasties, can they uphold the traditional view of Chinese imperial history as governed by a series of the Han Chinese ruling houses “punctuated by alien ones,” pretending that the conquest dynasties were simply the “barbarian interludes in Chinese history.” If the Sui and Tang dynasties were ever classified as non-Chinese, then Chinese imperial history would become dynasties governed by a series of alien ruling houses “punctuated by native ones.” The Song and Ming dynasties would then have to be considered merely the “native interludes in Chinese dynastic history.”

⁶⁹ In 647, Li Shimin could assert that “From the old days, everybody honored Central China and looked down upon the *Barbarians*; only I have loved them without any distinction; and hence these tribes depend on me as parents.”

資治通鑑 卷一百九十三 唐紀九 太宗 貞觀四年[630] 三月...稱天可汗
資治通鑑 卷一百九十八 唐紀十四 太宗 貞觀二十一年 [647] 五月 自古皆貴中華賤夷狄 朕獨愛之如一 故其種落 皆依朕如父母

Abramson (2003: 126) quotes Su Mian's (蘇冕) Tang Huiyao (唐會要): “Taizong unsuccessfully tried to popularize a new type of hat to replace the *futou* [the traditional Han Chinese cloth head-covering], arguing that the latter emblemized the militarism of the reign of the Emperor Wudi of the Northern Zhou (北周 武帝 r.560-78).”

⁷⁰ For instance, the Equal Field system was “developed...in a situation of underpopulation [but] now had to be employed in many regions to ensure an equitable distribution of land that was in short supply. ...The...tax ...made no attempt to derive revenue from the non-agricultural sectors (ibid: 31).”

⁷¹ Wittfogel and Fêng (1949: 463) call Tang, Song, and Ming “essentially Chinese dynasties.” Kuhn (2009: 278) lines up Han-Tang-Song as “the three major early Chinese dynasties in the first millennium.”

Chapter 8 begins at 231.