

Chapter One

Writing East Asian History with
a Tripolar Framework of Analysis

A Summary and Conclusion



Ink-line Sketch of a Portion of the *Di Li Tu*

An Atlas of Ancient Maps in China: From the Warring States Period to the Yuan Dynasty, edited by Cao Wanru, et al. (1990: 27)

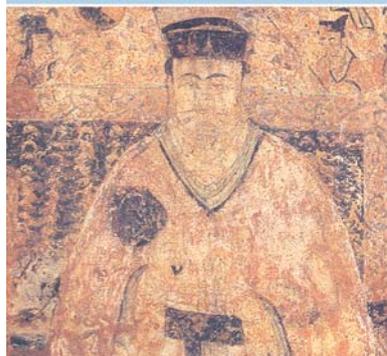
墜理圖

The author of *Di Li Tu* is Huang Shang of the Southern Song (1127-1279). This is one of the eight maps Huang presented to Zhao Kuo, who was then the king of Jia State and later became the Southern Song Emperor, Ning-zong (1194-1224). The map was obtained by a man called Wang Zhi-yuan in Si-chuan Province. In 1247, Wang had the map engraved on stone in Su-zhou. The tablet is now preserved in the Su-zhou Stone Tablet Museum. (Excerpt from *ibid.*, p.23, by Qian Cheng and Yao Shi-ying.)

As the map shows, the present-day Luan River (灤河) ---which flows north of Yan Shan (燕山) and south of Cheng-de (承德), reaching Parhae (Bo Hai 渤海) after crossing the Great Wall in the west of old Ping-zhou (平州) and Ying-zhou (榮州)---was called the Liao River (遼水) in former times, and the present-day Liao River was called the Lesser Liao River (小遼水).

According to the *Huai-nan-ji* [西漢 劉安 淮南子 墜形訓], the Liao River flows from the Jie-shi Mountain (遼水出碣石山).

The Jie-shi Mountain is located in the modern-day Chang-li (昌黎) prefecture to the west of Shanhai-guan (the old Ying-zhou area) but to the east (not west) of the modern-day Luan River.



1.1 (Top) Xinjiang Uighur Zizhigu, Urumqi, 4-5th century Tomb Painting; (Middle) Xianbei Former Yan Tomb, Chao-yang, Daling River Basin; and (Bottom) Koguryeo, Duck-heung-ri Tomb, Nam-po City, 408 CE

CHAPTER ONE

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**WRITING EAST ASIAN HISTORY WITH A TRIPOLAR
FRAMEWORK OF ANALYSIS**

The interactions among the Han Chinese mainland China, the Mongolian steppe of the Turko-Mongols, and the greater Manchurian ethnohistorical sphere of the Xianbei-Tungus, including the Korean peninsula and the Japanese islands, have formed the complexity of East Asian history. Ledyard (1983: 350) contends that “the time has come for the establishment of East Asian history as a field in itself, with East Asian history by definition reckoned as something greater than the sum of the histories of its constituent parts.” My objective is to write East Asian history with a tripolar framework of analysis.

The present volume is the result of my quarter century’s work (1988, 1994, 2003, 2006) on the relationship between Korea and Japan during the period 300-700 CE in the context of the entire history of East Asia. I am writing a history of the relationship between Korea and Japan from the Korean perspective, and the entire East Asian history from the perspective of ancient northern Mongoloid peoples of Altai-Baikal provenance that had dispersed across the Greater Xing’an Range. I look more closely at East Asia’s prehistory.

I emphasize the ethnic origins of the conquest dynasties in China in order to deconstruct the Sinocentric bias in the writing of East Asian history that has been preserved

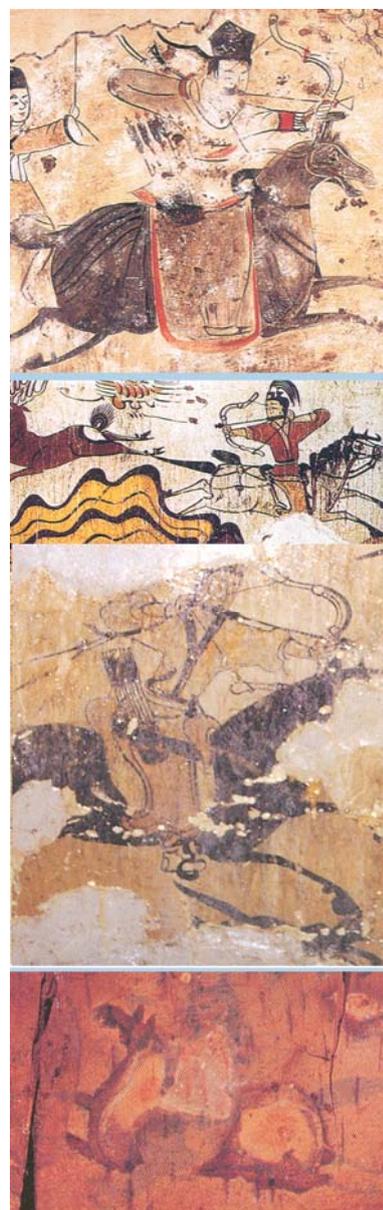
more than the two thousand years, since Sima Qian (c. 145-80 BCE). I challenge not only the Japancentric perspective but also the Sinocentric perspective of Chinese-language records which portray sinicized conquest governments dominated by Han Chinese literati.

Readers may regard my perspective on East Asian history as an extension of Barfield (1989) and Janhunen (1996), and my model of the relationship between Korea and Japan as merely a natural evolution from the sequence of Egami (1962, 1964) and Ledyard (1975).

A SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Chapter 2 sketches the historical stage for my tripolar framework of analysis of East Asia by highlighting the Neolithic Hong-shan culture of the proto-Altaic speech community of Xianbei-Tungus people in Manchuria, and the Neolithic Yang-shao culture of the Tibeto-Chinese speech community of Hua-Xia people in mainland China. I look at East Asia's topography and prehistory.

After giving a brief description of the Sima Qian's bipolar world of the Xiong-nu Turks in the Mongolian steppe versus the Han Chinese below the Great Wall, Chapter 3 describes the rise of the Xianbei people of the western Manchurian steppe, the trial performance of a proto-conquest Murong-Xianbei dynasty in the name of the Former Yan that had innovated the "dual system," and the advent of the Tuoba-Xianbei who were able to occupy North China without conquering the Tungusic people in the central and eastern Manchuria. The performance of Xianbei Yan gave a preview of the full-fledged conquest dynasty to be followed shortly thereafter. The Ye-mack Tungus Koguryeo (37 BCE- 668 CE) of central Manchuria became a proto-Macro-Tungusic state after 400 CE by co-opting the Mohe-Ruzhen Tungus of eastern Manchuria, and coexisted with the Tuoba-Xianbei conquest dynasty (386-534) of western Manchurian provenance in North China. I focus on the Xianbei people of western Manchuria and their interactions with the Xiong-nu Turks in the Mongolian steppe, the Han Chinese below the Great Wall, and the Tungusic people in central and eastern Manchuria.



1.2. (Top) 4th century Former Yan Tomb, Chao-yang, Daling River Basin; (Middle) Koguryeo, Tomb of Dancing, 4-5th century, Jian, Jilin; and (Bottom) Silla, Cheon-ma-chong, 5-6th century, Kyung-ju

¹The dynastic history of Korea is often summarized as Old Chosun (?-c.1045 - 108 BCE), Silla (57 BCE-935 CE) including the Three Kingdom period with Koguryeo (37 BCE-668 CE) and Paekche (18 BCE-660 CE) before unification, Koryeo (918-1392), and Chosun (1392-1910). Koryeo was named after Koguryeo, and Chosun after Old Chosun. It is interesting to observe that North Korea now calls itself Chosun and South Korea now calls itself "Great" Han (presumably named after the "Three" Han in southern peninsula that followed the Chin). Excluded from the above dynastic summary, apparently for the sake of simplicity, are Puyeo (4th century BCE-494 CE) and Parhae (698-926) in Manchuria, and the Kaya Federation (42-562) in the south of the Korean peninsula that was annexed by Silla in the mid-sixth century. The Puyeo refugees were absorbed by Koguryeo, the remnants of Koguryeo established the Parhae (Bohai) dynasty with the Mohe people, and the ruling clans of Parhae were welcomed by Koryeo when Parhae was destroyed by the Qidan Liao. According to the Nihongi myth, the present-day Japanese imperial clan must have reigned on the Japanese islands since 660 BCE. A down-to-earth dynastic history of Japan, however, may be organized into four eras: the Yamato Kingdom (390-1160), the Kamakura Shogunate (1185-1333), the Muromachi Shogunate (1336-1573), and the Tokugawa Shogunate (1600-1867).

Chapter 4 illuminates the Ye-maek Tungus in central Manchuria and the Korean peninsula, and then addresses the conflicts between the Xianbei people of Yan kingdoms in western Manchuria and the Ye-maek people of Chosun and Koguryeo in central Manchuria prior to the presence of the assertive Mohe-Ruzhen force in eastern Manchuria.¹ My interest in the Ye-maek people and their interactions with the Xianbei people encompasses the era before the advent of a powerful eastern Manchurian force.

I also try to reconstruct the relationship between Korea and Japan during 300-700 CE in the historical context of the whole of East Asia. Jared Diamond (1998) points out that "there is much archeological evidence that people and material objects passed between Japan and Korea in the period 300 to 700 CE. Japanese interpret this to mean that Japan conquered Korea and brought Korean slaves and artisans to Japan; Koreans believe instead that Korea conquered Japan and that the founders of the Japanese imperial family were Korean." In an article on the Fujinoki Sarcophagus, Edward Kidder, Jr. (1989), then professor of art and archeology at International Christian University, has indeed mentioned the "Japanese unwillingness to dig such tombs for fear of finding a Korean buried inside or evidence proving that the imperial line had Korean origins." I ask the reader to keep these statements in mind as I unfold my thesis.

The Paleolithic Ainu in the Japanese archipelago were bound to encounter the Malayo-Polynesians arriving through the sea route of Philippines-Taiwan-Ryukyu islands, giving rise together to the Neolithic Jōmon culture of hunting-fishing-gathering (c. 10,000-300 BCE). They were joined eventually by the people coming from the Korean peninsula, all of them together commencing the Bronze-Iron Yayoi era of rice cultivation (c. 300 BCE-300 CE). The early history of the Japanese islands reveals some conspicuous parallels with that of the British Isles at the other end of the Eurasian continent. During the 600-year Yayoi period, Korean influences penetrated to the Japanese islands as visibly as the influences of the Anglo-Saxon on Celtic Britain and, during the next 400-year Tomb period of 300-700 CE, changes came as swiftly and strongly as the Norman Conquest of England. Then the

parallel with the British Isles fades away. The Korean influences on the Japanese islands petered out thereafter, resulting in a brief period of active importation of Tang Chinese culture by the Yamato court followed by a prolonged period of isolation, producing a fairly unique indigenous culture through internal evolution. As a cultural periphery in an anthropological context, old outmoded habits and institutions have been tenaciously preserved in the Japanese islands, a spectacular example of which is, as Reischauer states, “the survival of the imperial family as the theoretical source of all political authority for a millennium after it had lost all real political power.”²

Ever since Egami Namio presented his theory of the continental origin of the founders of the Yamato kingdom in the Japanese islands, a large number of books and articles either refuting, disputing, accepting, or refining his idea have been published for English-speaking readers. Yet despite the crucial role of Korea and the Korean people in Egami’s *Theory of Horseriding People*, every one of those publications except mine (1988, 1994) was written either by a Japanese or a Western scholar, never by a Korean scholar. It is time for the English-speaking readers to hear, once again from me, a Korean perspective on the origin of the Japanese people and the Yamato kingdom, and the roots of the Japanese imperial family.

Chapter 5 builds a model for the origin of the Yamato kingdom in the Japanese islands. I contend that the conquest of Japanese islands by the Paekche people from the Korean peninsula occurred sometime between 370-390, Oujin (Homuda) ascended to the throne as the founder of the Yamato kingdom in 390, and there must have been some time lag between the commencement of the conquest and the burial of the Paekche conquerors in gigantic tombs with horse trappings. The evolution of the Yamato kingdom is seen as an integral part of the general history of East Asia.

Chapters 6 to 9 present the suggestive records and traces for the origin of the Yamato kingdom and the roots of the imperial family. An earlier version of these chapters was presented at the Society for the History of Korean Law on May 3, 2003 at Seoul University with the title of “The Origin

² Fairbank, Reischauer and Craig (1973: 325).



1.3. 4-5th century Kaya Clay Armored Cavalry Soldier with Horn Chalice, Deok-san-ri, Kim-hae, Korea



1.4. Haniwa Clay Horse, Late Tomb Period, Japanese Islands

³ See K. W. B., ed., "Climate Variations and Change," *The New Encyclopedia Britannica* (Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica, 1986), Vol. 16, p. 534; P. A. Mayewski and F. White, *The Ice Chronicles: the Quest to Understand Global Climate Change* (Hanover: University Press of New England, 2002), p. 121; and H. H. Lamb, *Climate, History and the Modern World* (London: Routledge, 1995), p. 150.

⁴ See Fagan (2004: 200-206).

⁵ Another drought period of maximum intensity occurred around 800 CE. See Lamb (1995: 157, 159, 168). The decline and fall of the Tang dynasty in mainland China, the Silla dynasty in the Korean peninsula, and the Yamato Court in the Japanese islands all began sometime around 800 CE. By the late tenth century, however, strong new dynasties began to emerge and consolidate all over these regions.



1.5. Koguryeo Clay Horses
Cheol-ryeong, Korean Peninsula

of the Yamato Kingdom and the Roots of the Japanese Imperial Family: A Korean Perspective.” The historical facts presented in these chapters should serve to convince readers of the plausibility of my model for the origin of the Yamato Kingdom in the Japanese islands.

Chapters 10 and 11 apply my model to trace the origin of the Japanese people and the Japanese language. These chapters were published in an article form in the *Korean Studies*, Volume 29, 2005 with the title of “Yayoi Wave, Kofun Wave, and Timing: the Formation of the Japanese People and Japanese Language.”

About 400 BCE, mountain glaciers started to re-advance, with cooler conditions persisting until 300 CE.³ The beginning of a Little Ice Age coincides with the great Celtic migrations in the west end of the Eurasian continent and the Warring States period in the east end. In 390 BCE, the fierce Celtic warriors known as Gauls had besieged Rome itself.⁴ The migration of rice farmers from the southern Korean peninsula into the Japanese islands and the commencement of the rice-cultivating Yayoi period (c. 300 BCE-300 CE) had coincided with the beginning of a Little Ice Age.

The Little Ice Age produced the heyday of the Roman Empire located in the warm Mediterranean zone and the Han Chinese Empires in mainland China. There followed a drought period of maximum intensity in the Mediterranean, North Africa and far to the east into Asia around 300-400 CE.⁵ The period of 300-400 CE coincides with the severe droughts in the Eurasian steppes that could have triggered a chain reaction that resulted in the invasion of the Huns and Germanic folk migrations in the west end, and the Five Barbarians and Sixteen States period in the east end. I contend that the establishment of the Yamato kingdom by the Paekche people from the Korean peninsula and the commencement of the Late Tomb Period (c. 375-675 CE) on the Japanese islands coincided with a period of global drought of maximum intensity.

Chapter 12 highlights the confrontation between the proto-Macro-Tugusic state, Koguryeo, and the unified China, Sui and Tang, on the continent, as well as the process of creating a new history by the Yamato court in the Japanese islands. The union of the Ye-maek Tungus in central

Manchuria and the Mohe-Ruzhen Tungus in eastern Manchuria after 400 CE produced the Macro-Tungusic Koguryeo (c. 400-668) and Parhae (689-926). The proto-Macro-Tungusic Koguryeo, occupying Manchuria and the northern half of the Korean peninsula, co-opted the Mohe warriors and confronted the Sui (581-618) and Tang (618-907) in mainland China, generating a diastrophism. The full-fledged Macro-Tungusic Parhae arose in the aftermath of the Koguryeo's destruction, and coexisted with Tang until the downfall of both dynasties (in 926 and 907, respectively). By uniting with the Ye-maek Tungus of central Manchuria, the Mohe-Ruzhen Tungus of eastern Manchuria were able to establish a dynasty (in the name of Parhae) for the first time in their ethnic history,

Chapter 13 describes the process of the Oidan Liao (916-1125) of Xianbei provenance in western Manchuria and the Mohe-Ruzhen Kin (1115-1234) of eastern Manchuria unifying Manchuria before occupying North China. The Qidan-Xianbei established a proto-Xianbei-Tungus Manchurian state, Liao, before occupying North China. The Mohe-Ruzhen Kin replaced the Liao, and established a full-fledged Manchurian state of Pan-Xianbei-Tungus before conquering North China. Hegemonic issue apart, the Liao and Kin dynasties represent the union of the Xianbei and the entire Tungus for the first time in their ethnic history.

Chapter 14 presents the last phase of tripolar East Asia (1206-1796) with the Mongol Yuan, the Han Chinese Ming, and the Manchu Qing entering the stage in sequence over a 700-year period. The Mongolian nomads destroyed the Manchurian conquest dynasty, Kin (1115-1234), in North China and co-opted the Turks to rule over "All under Heaven." The Manchurian woodsmen destroyed the Han Chinese Ming (1368-1644) and established the Qing empire (1616-1911), co-opting the Mongols to rule over the East Asian continent.

When the rulers of Koryeo (918-1392) and Chosun (1392-1910) in the Korean Peninsula maintained the strategy of "Yielding to the Stronger," be it the Qidans, the Ruzhens, the Mongols or the Han Chinese, the Korean dynasty could maintain its independent nationhood free from the ravages of warfare. When the rulers of the Korean peninsula prematurely relinquished their neutral stance or stood up against the



1.6. Sword excavated from the tomb of Silla King Mi-chu (r. 261-84)



1.7. (Top) Xinjiang Uighur Zizhigu, Urumqi, 4-5th century Tomb Painting; (Middle) Xianbei Former Yan Tomb, Chao-yang, Daling River Basin; and (Bottom) Koguryeo, Ko-san-dong Tomb, 4-5th century, Pyung-yang

obvious. Stronger, however, the Koreans suffered wholesale destruction until they, voluntarily or involuntarily, changed their stance. A Manchurian force could not leave standing the threat to their rear posed by the Koreans before proceeding with their campaign against mainland China. The Koreans had to be either neutralized or subdued.

Chapter 15 marks the clear end of my tripolar framework of analysis by describing briefly the process whereby the People's Republic of China (PRC) inherited the people and territory of the whole of Qing Empire (1616-1911), and the Korean War broke out in June 1950 immediately after the establishment of the PRC in September 1949, followed by the bipolar Cold War era. The first foreign excursion of the Chinese army, with the support of the Soviet Union after the unification of mainland China, was the Korean War (1950-3), to secure a buffer between the U.S.-Japan and the Chinese Manchurian frontier, and to ensure that Manchuria was bordered by a friendly state. The Korean War has firmly consolidated the multi-ethnic PRC. One could then observe a new East Asia emerging from the afflictions of both World War II and the Korean War, and its evolution in the unipolar globalized world following the demise of Soviet Union.

It is evident that the tripolar framework of analysis does not fit the East Asian situation since, say, the beginning of the nineteenth century. Obviously, the analysis of modern East Asian history requires a more suitable model. A newly conceptualized look at East Asia's long history enables the formulation of a correct model that accounts for the causalities in modern East Asia within the globalized world, and predicts their future trends that inevitably affect the entire human race.

Among the Manchurian people, only the Ye-maek Tungus of central Manchuria, the ethnic ancestors of modern Korean people, failed to establish a conquest dynasty in China. During the first half of the last two millennia, they were pressured by the Xianbei of the west and the Mohe-Ruzhen of the east to move their seat from the Song-hua plain down to the mountainous Hun-Yalu River valleys, and then further south to join their Ye-maek cousins who had settled in the Korean peninsula long ago. Perhaps a failure turned into a blessing. At least the people in the Korean peninsula could

maintain their dynastic identity in the presence of the Mongol Yuan and Manchu Qing, and continue to maintain an independent polity as of the twenty-first century, while all those once successful Manchurian conquerors, including those Ye-maek Tungus who had remained in Manchuria and assimilated into the Manchus, came to be absorbed into what is now the People's Republic of China.

Janhunen (1996: 15-16) makes a cynical comment that, although Korea had never seriously considered a conquest of China, Japan played its Manchurian role so well that it established the short-lived Manzhou-guo puppet state (1932-45), headed by the last Qing emperor, and even launched a full-scale conquest of China proper.⁶ He might also have mentioned the bombast of Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1536-98), invading Korea to conquer Ming China. According to Fairbank and Goldman (1992: 312), “the Japanese historians saw” the full-fledged Japanese invasion of mainland China from 1937 to 1945 as “Japan following in the footsteps of the Manchu conquerors of 1644. ... But the times had changed.” The Japanese historians should have recognized the fact that a tripolar East Asia had long since ceased to exist.

I am still haunted by the comment of Jared Diamond (1998): “Like Arabs and Jews, Korean and Japanese are joined by blood yet locked in traditional enmity. But enmity is mutually destructive, in East Asia as in the Middle East. As reluctant as Japanese and Koreans are to admit it, they are like twin brothers who shared their formative years. The political future of East Asia depends in large part on their success in rediscovering those ancient bonds between them.”

⁶ Janhunen (1996: vii) states that: “Much later I realized that both Korea and Japan are, indeed, intimately connected with Manchuria not only by their recent historical fates, but also as far as their most remote past and ethnic ‘origins’ are concerned.” In his study of the ethnic groups of North and East Asia and their languages, Janhunen treats Korea and Japan as essential parts of Manchuria.



1.8. Horse-shaped Bronze Buckles excavated at the Cheon-an and Yung-cheon area, Korean Peninsula.

