

THE GRAND STRATEGY OF THE HAN EMPIRE
IN THE SECOND CENTURY B.C.

by

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In memory of my grandfather

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ABSTRACT

In the dissertation I have attempted to discover the ideal strategy of the weak acquisitive state. My aim is to illuminate, as best I can, the ideal plan that if faithfully adhered to will deliver up to the aspiring state major gain, whether of new territory or tighter rule. The strategic statecraft of the Former Han Dynasty (209-106 B.C.) is examined in a way that reveals the ideal in the real. The ideal is craft and circumvention so subtle and deceitful that entire nations can be swallowed whole without the loss of a single life, and vast lands taken intact without the expense of even a penny. The real is one of the most astounding feats of strength that the world has ever seen.

The weak acquisitive state, ideally led, will never use force to get its way. It will, so to speak, never act: the party that will act is the enemy, and the enemy will come to it, join the cause and help in the next advance. To conjure up this magician's trick, the acquisitive state will strike when and only when the prospects for political warfare are at their peak. Patience guides its aggrandizement: when the enemy is out of moral balance, when it is in some way too compassionate or too harsh, the attack begins. In the attack, the strength of the enemy is avoided, and his precise weakness is exploited. The acquisitive state of ideal strategy always deceives the enemy. It understates goals, and advances along paths least thought vulnerable and least defended. Finally, it is seemingly moral and magnanimous in victory, and shares the spoils. Indeed, the acquisitive is in moral balance at all times--or seems to be. Its expansion is predicated upon the negation of the moral imbalance of the enemy.

Giving birth to these broad findings are findings of a second order. I claim with confidence that both the conquest and consolidation of China by Former Han was the product of a long range plan, a plan whose pieces were so well bound together that we can aptly call it a grand strategy. This grand strategy was based upon moral-political warfare, indirect attack, and deception throughout; and delivered up a vast and enduring political

state--the centralized empire of Han. This conclusion of the second rank flies in the face of what is commonly believed today. For it is believed that there was no sophisticated strategy, nor any essential similarity between Han's conquest of China, and subsequent consolidation.

This thesis says that the grand strategy of Former Han, the same one that informed both conquest and consolidation, manifest itself in successive stratagems of comprehensive design. Each such stratagem, hereby labeled a "grand stratagem," informed, in turn, successive offensives launched inside China. Each grand stratagem guided the isolation of a main target out of the field of potential targets; the coordination, for offensive action, of all forces; and the protection of the state against third party attack. While the essence of all the grand stratagems remained the same, and obeyed the logic of the overarching grand strategy, the particulars of each did not. Each adapted the supple method of maneuver to exploit local condition and peculiar circumstance.

Six different offensives were launched by Former Han in its climb to direct rule over all of China. Hence the grand strategy of Han manifest six different grand stratagems. The object of each successive offensive increased in importance. The design of each grand stratagem increased in complexity.

The first three offensives took place in time of war (209-202 B.C.), as Ch'in, the short lived unitary regime of China, fell to pieces. Han sought by turns to establish a temporary base, gain a sure base and conquer China. It employed diplomatic bluff, temporary alliance and well timed betrayal in that order.

The last three offensives took place in the subsequent peace--really a twilight struggle of diplomatic war (202-106 B.C.). Han sought by turns to depose leaders who had brought victory in war, to remove a palace threat to the ruling house, and to disarm powerful local families. To accomplish these objects, it successively employed a diplomatic end run, cul-de-sac, and jigsaw envelopment. To isolate intended victims from the outer barbarian world, and to secure the state's frontiers, an unusual frontier strategy was crafted: in use (202-133 B.C.), deflective diplomacy; elusive defense; and strategic deployment of forces on precarious interior lines. The result? Virtually all China was centralized (106 B.C.) at minimal cost. Thus does the real of strategy approach the ideal.

Thesis Chairman: Hayward R. Alker, Jr.
Title: Professor of Political Science

THE GRAND STRATEGY OF THE HAN EMPIRE
IN THE SECOND CENTURY B.C.

With an Account of the Titanic Struggle
that Launched the Empire,
the Policy that Brought It Central Rule
and the Strategy that Kept the Barbarian at Bay

and Including
A Treatise on the Ideal Strategy of the Acquisitive State

and an Appendix
with a Compass
that Points the Way
to Further Research

and a Moral for Democracies

Beware the Machinations of the Tyrant
However Weak He May Seem to Be

Always Unite; Unite; Unite
The Leaders and the People

Never at No Time Ever
Be Too Compassionate or Too Harsh

"To present-day Western ears the word 'world-state' may sound visionary or chimerical. ... [Yet], a larger part of the human race has actually been living in a world-state during the larger part of the time that has passed so far since the dawn of civilizations. The two [bequeathers of world-states] ... were Augustus and Liu Pang [founder of Han]. Of the two, Augustus is, of course, by far the better known in the West, but that is only because the West is still parochial-minded. Augustus's achievement, great though it was, was not so great as Liu Pang's. Augustus's world-state lasted for less than seven centuries, even in its Levantine core, and for less than five centuries in its western fringes. Liu Pang's world-state lasted for twenty-one centuries."

--Arnold Toynbee

FEAT OF STRENGTH

AND

TALE OF ILL OMEN

From 209 to 106 B.C., the Dynasty of Former Han gathered up in central rule virtually all of ancient China: what remained were petty kingdoms, and they were but vassals and inferior. Here is a tale of conquest and consolidation that must take our breath away; the field of action embraces all the peoples and all the neighbors of a mighty civilization; the accomplishment was wrested from the most insurmountable of odds; a village clerk of lowly blood, no influential friends, no large and loyal army, no gold or wealth, takes whole the civilized world; his successors come to centralize the same world then taken; here is a despot David that slays Goliaths: the Goliath of a mad, chaotic far flung war; the Goliath of a huge and wanton occupying army; the Goliath of one of the most gifted, fearsome and truculent generals to emerge in all time; the Goliath of a mean and Herculean coalition; the Goliath of the most pervasive of intrigues in the palace home; the Goliath of a whole world opposed in deepest root to central rule; the Goliath of a great arc of hostile hungry foreign powers. Here is how the tyrannical and weak and lowly take everything in sight worth taking, and do so without harming in irrevocable fashion the things of this world they take.

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ABBREVIATIONS

The following abbreviations are used in the footnotes and in the text:

- Analects Arthur Waley. The Analects of Confucius, New York: Random House, 1938.
- CHC Dennis Twitchett and Michael Loewe, eds. The Cambridge History of China, Vol. I, The Ch'in and Han Empires 221 B.C.-A.D. 220, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986.
- De Groot J.J.M. De Groot. Chinesische Urkunden zur Geschichte Asiens, Erster Teil: Die Hunnen der Vorchristlichen Zeit; and Zweiter Teil: Die Westlande Chinas in Der Vorchristlichen Zeit, Berlin and Leipzig: Walter de Gruyten & Co, 1921-1926.
- HFHD Homer H. Dubs. History of the Former Han Dynasty, Vols. I, II, and III, Baltimore: Waverly Press, 1938-1955.
- HS Pan Ku's Han-shu.
References are to De Groot and to HFHD.
- Hsuntze Homer. H. Dubs. Hsuntze Works, London: Stephen Austin and Sons, Ltd., 1928.
- Lord Shang J.J.L. Duyvendak. The Book of Lord Shang, London: Stephen Austin & Sons, Ltd., 1928.
- MH Edouard Chavannes. Les Memoires Historiques de Se-Ma Ts'ien, Paris: Librairie D'Amerique et D'Orient, Adrien-Maisonneuve, 1967.
- Records Burton Watson. Records of Grand Historian of China, Vols. I and II, New York: Columbia University Press, 1961.
- RHA Michael Loewe. Records of Han Administration, Vols. I and II, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1967.
- SC Ssu-ma Ch'ien's Shih-chi.
References are to De Groot, MH and to Records.

- Sun Tzu Sun Tzu's Art of War
Reference to Samuel B. Griffith. Art of War,
Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1963.
- Swann Nancy Lee Swann. Food and Money in Ancient China,
Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1950.

CHRONOLOGY

The Ch'in Dynasty

The First Emperor 221-210 B.C. (Ch'in Shih-huang)

The Second Emperor 209-206 B.C.

The Former Han Dynasty¹

Emperor Kao-ti 206-195 B.C. (common name--Liu Pang)

Emperor Hui 194-188

Empress Lü 187-180

Emperor Wen 179-157

Emperor Ching 156-141

Emperor Wu 140-87

Emperor Chao 86-74

Emperor Hsuan 73-49

Emperor Yüan 48-33

Emperor Ch'eng 32-7

Emperor Ai 6-1

Emperor P'ing A.D. 1-5

Ju-tzu Ying 6-8

The Hsin Dynasty of Wang Mang, A.D. 9-23

The Later Han Dynasty

Emperor Kuang-wu A.D. 25-57

Emperor Ming 58-75

Emperor Chang 76-88

Emperor Ho 89-105

Emperor Shang 106

Emperor An 107-125

Emperor Shun 126-144

Emperor Ch'ung 145

Emperor Chih 146

Emperor Huan 147-167

Emperor Ling 168-188

Emperor Shao 189

Emperor Hsien 189-220

1. The above names for the Han Emperors are their posthumous titles.

Chapter One

INTRODUCTION

As we are a democratic people, the story of Han's rise to power may well deserve our careful study. We are, in a disconcerting way, like the victims of Han's expansion. To be sure, we govern ourselves, while they were governed by kings; we live in modern times, they in ancient, with all that that implies for differences in science, commerce and the arts. But deep down, we are, as they were, prone to make mistakes of character and "ethos." We the people, who rule ourselves by officials we elect, are known for our excesses of compassion and harshness; just as the victims of Han were known for theirs. It is a commonplace to know about the punitive peace imposed by the democracies of France and Britain upon the Kaiser's Germany after the First World War; it is widely known too about the catastrophic kindness shown the Nazis and Herr Hitler in the 1930s. This is but one episode of democratic excess, how difficult is it to think of more? Tyrants in our own time try to shrewdly manage for their own ungodly ends these excesses of compassion and harshness; tyrants in ancient China did too. Indeed, the tyrants of early Han did, in my opinion, manipulate according to a plan so exquisitely subtle in its crafting that we can glimpse in dim form an ideal model of expansion. We a democratic people prone to excesses of trust and anger would do well, I do believe, to review Han statecraft, and glimpse this model, and so arm ourselves that if a tyrant ever intrigues again against us on a broad important scale, he could not say as he plots our downfall, "The scheming is easy."

It is my thesis that the conquest of all China and its consolidation into empire by the Dynasty of Han in the second century B.C., more precisely from 209-106 B.C., was brought about by a long range plan based upon novel deceit and adaptive stratagem, a plan aptly called a grand strategy (see below). This grand strategy, informed by indirect attack and circumvention of the foe at every level of policy, delivered up a vast and enduring political state.

By no means is my interpretation of the history of early Han in a piece with the conventional wisdom today. It is true that Liu Pang is granted a reputation for shrewdness, and the warring parties which he led to the conquest of China in 202 B.C. are believed to have followed a plan of sorts. But the plan he fashioned is hardly as deep and sweeping as I would make it out.¹ What is more, no connection at all, or all but none, is seen between the action that brought Han up to supreme power over all of China, and that delivered unto Han central rule over all the empire nearly a century later. Finally, it is believed today that one action manifest in war won the empire, while an entirely different action manifest in peace centralized the empire won.² This last notion I find most revealing of all.

In so many words what modern commentators would have us believe today--indeed what commentators have had us believe down through the ages for two thousand years--is that Han's unheralded domination of ancient China, a domination that was relatively bloodless; that served up teeming multitudes and a vast civilization virtually intact to the will of successive emperors; that sustained subsequent expansion into "global" empire in the first century B.C.;³ that bequeathed to the diverse Chinese speaking peoples a sense

of identity and lively purpose that has not deserted them for two millennium even down to this very day; that is, in the opinion of Arnold Toynbee, who ought to know, the greatest political achievement that man has ever done, an achievement greater than even Augustus Caesar's--that all this, this cosmic occurrence in the long dynamic tempestuous crowded history of mankind, was, in the final analysis, the miraculous outcome of compromise and contentious accident and ad hoc planning. It was, in large part, this wide chasm between presumed cause and incredible effect that prompted this study.

Framework

A host of dedicated scholars have done much to bring down to us the history of early Han times. The annals that record these times are voluminous and rich (the Han-shu and Shih-chi); every one of them have been translated, with but a handful of minor exceptions. Edouard Chavannes, H.H. Dubs, Burton Watson and Nancy Swann have done excellent translations of the histories which deal with events inside China. These four historians, and J.J.M. De Groot, have also translated the history of early Han's frontier relations.⁴ Here retold in English, German and French, in beautiful prose, with helpful editorials interlaced throughout, is the official court account of Han's unification of China. These translations of the primary sources are reinforced, to a remarkable degree, by a spring of modern commentary that is steadily growing. Most notably, Yu Ying-shih, Owen Lattimore, Harold Wiens and Michael Loewe have examined Han frontier policy: A.F.P. Hulsewe, and Rafe de Crespigny have examined this subject too; Hans Bielenstein, A.F.P. Hulsewe and Michael Loewe have

examined Han bureaucracy; and Michael Loewe has examined the Han army. Crowning all these modern commentaries is the recently released Cambridge History of China, Volume I, The Ch'in and Han Empires 221 B.C.-A.D. 220. For the Former Han period Yu Ying-shih and Michael Loewe are the principal contributors.⁵

To this swelling and glittering literature, I add my own more modest effort. What I have attempted to do is to reexamine the histories, primary and secondary, in the after light of Political Science. I am, therefore, most concerned with the behavior of early Han that somehow typifies the behavior of states found elsewhere in time and place. To be more exact, I am most concerned with the generic decisions early Han made for war or peace. I piece together a narrative thread that permits me, and I hope the reader as well, to reconstruct the fundamental outlines of the counsels of war which the leaders of early Han kept--to enter into the leaders' tents before a campaign begins; to keep pace with them on horseback around the time of the fighting of an important battle; to follow them into the inner sanctums of the imperial court as they deliberate on weighty decisions diplomatic, strategic and tactical; and, when it is all over, to be able to say with greater ease, "Oh yes, that, perhaps, is how this state or that achieved its dominion, or outwitted its foes, or goaded its own peoples to put forth strong efforts."

By and large, the works that have preceded mine, are episodic in their focus: they are histories, in the accepted sense of the term. This is not to say that these preceding works forsake generalization, or the working of generalization into theory. Quite the contrary, deductions are made, and more than a few are astounding, but these

deductions which are made are confined to the unique features of the tale. Insights that might come from common features shared by other states and other leaders in similar circumstances are, for the most part, forsaken. In those rare instances in which deductions embrace the behavior of states other than Han, they only do so for the behavior of Chinese states that came shortly before Han (i.e. the Warring States).⁶ I have followed a different method.

But if my method differs from the historian's method, it is important to realize that my method is not common to all students of Political Science either. Many of these students deal with the highest of all realms of policy--the realm of fundamental policy. In this realm, the state's leadership, grimly aware of those deep-seated forces and ancient passions that propel the state, set political goals as best it can, goals which are compatible with the very essence--the political economy and philosophy--of the state. For instance, the ruling class of a country may decide for war to fill the blood lust of an ideology of hate.

By my approach, I take fundamental policy as given, or at any rate place it in the back of my mind, and focus instead upon one of two policies of next greater concern. One of these policies of next greater concern is called "organizational statecraft" by George Liska, one of the foremost students of statecraft in the round.⁷ Organizational statecraft is the way of administration. It includes the organization of all government bureaus; all plans to draw together the government and economy; and all the chosen and fashioned trappings of power. It follows that the content of the official ideology of the state--the way the order of the state is underpinned by broad based civic faith and civic religion--is a chief component of

organizational statecraft also. And so too are the ceremonies and rituals of statehood. Indeed the invocation of a shared past, and the symbols of consensus is an important part of organizational statecraft. As such, organizational statecraft, like fundamental policy, is not my main concern.

My main concern is, in the language of George Liska, strategic statecraft,⁸ the way of shielding from attack what one has got, and, if occasion demands it, taking hold of more. Strategic statecraft fits the concept B.H. Liddell Hart had in mind when he talked of "[fundamental] policy in execution." Here, observing that the state sets itself the task of attaining a certain object for peace, or for a better peace, I observe the way in which in war, or in the twilight struggle of diplomatic warfare in peace, it uses all the tools at its disposal to attain that object. Naturally this will include the military instrument, and will take us into an examination of strategy, the use of battles to attain an end; and tactics, the use of armies to fight the battles. But it will also embrace the call up of men to arms, and the use of propaganda. Furthermore, the tools of diplomacy, finance and commerce are considered too, for I would not define struggle so rigidly as to exclude hostilities that may take place without steel clashing.⁹

This then is the broad, yet subordinate province of strategic statecraft. As such, strategic statecraft is separate from organizational statecraft. For some theorists this is the end of the story: no further delineation of these two statecrafts, handmaids of fundamental policy, is needed. Fundamental policy sets one kind of object for organizational statecraft, a different kind for strategic statecraft. Indeed this is, for example, the position of a

disciple of Machiavelli. It is also the position of a planner for a totalitarian movement. Both these thinkers, while they certainly prefer very different policies and strategies, do agree on one thing. It is the job of strategic statecraft to direct the seizure of the state; it is then the job of organizational statecraft to administer the consolidation of what is seized. It follows that, in the eyes of the Machiavellian or Totalitarian, the politics and strategy of seizure bear little continuity or resemblance to the politics and strategy of consolidation.¹⁰ There is another possibility, however.

While the means assigned to strategic and organizational statecraft do differ, the ends assigned to them necessarily need not. Indeed it would be a mistake to assume that the former cannot do many of the tasks of the latter. There is no prior reasoning which says that strategic statecraft must be confined only to the conquest of states and to the prevention of hostile conquest. There is nothing in cement which says it cannot go beyond the seizure and protection of states: why could it not be charged, to some degree, with the task of consolidating states as well? Its role in the creation of states could be extensive indeed. Such, in fact, is the view of a theorist like Sun Tzu.¹¹ It is also, we will see, a view supported by my findings.

Whatever strategic statecraft's real capacity may be, there is an important term related to it, to which we must now turn. When strategic statecraft passes a certain threshold of sophistication, a special version springs up, what Liddell Hart, and others, commonly mean by the term grand strategy. Grand strategy, in the words of Liddell Hart, serves "to coordinate, and direct all the resources of

a nation, or band of nations...." And again, it serves "to regulate the distribution of power" within the war effort or across the diplomatic struggle.¹² The most telling words here are "coordinate" and "regulate." Another student in the Liddell Hart tradition makes this meaning even more clear. Edward Luttwak tells us that a state pursues a grand strategy when it "integrate[s]" the tools of strategic statecraft, that is when "the design of each [tool] reflects the logic of the whole" strategy.¹³ In other words, in order for a grand strategy to obtain, there must be a smooth relationship among parts and whole, or a rightful harmony between lesser sequences and total flow. There must be a thoughtful hierarchy of goals, an intricate articulation of forces. When cunning attains a certain consistency, grand strategy is in the works.

And there is this to consider too. Since my ultimate focus is upon an object that sometimes lies beyond war, that is, sometimes lies beyond violence committed in battle or beyond political war conducted in the shadows of war--since my ultimate focus is sometimes upon an object that lies in peace: my focus also encompasses the possibility of contradiction that can emerge between strategy and grand strategy. Victory in war may not lead to victory in peace.¹⁴

Grand strategy then, and the terms related to it, form the centerpiece of my study. But how do I measure these terms? Above all, how do I measure these terms in a way that lends universality to my work? In a piece with the tradition in which Liddell Hart worked, a tradition made crystal clear in his book Strategy, I measure these terms by focusing upon the moral factors, not the physical or cultural.¹⁵ In this way, I focus upon the critical elements

in the history of Han that more or less endure: the physical factors are in constant flux: technology is ever changing; the cultural factors are in constant flux too: the shared identity of a nation, tribe or people forever shapes itself this way and that; but the moral factors vary but little.

Says Liddell Hart, "human nature varies but slightly in its reaction to danger. Some men, by heredity, by environment, or by training, may be less sensitive than others, but the difference is one of degree, not fundamental." Down through the ages man exhibits an intrinsic psychology in the face of danger that varies but little.¹⁶ Here is one of the moral factors that I single out. With it I can measure grand strategy, and its related terms, in a universal way.

Another moral factor useful for the measurement of universal terms is every man's crude sense of justice. An innate sense of right and wrong seems to be in all of us, and in all our ancestors, and in all of theirs, a universal faculty. With this moral factor, as with the first one mentioned above, differences surely exist among men, but still, to borrow from Aristotle, there is an awareness of a golden mean of conduct.¹⁷ Men, after all, must believe in something to die for someone else. When that something is abused by extreme behavior, they will not die for a leader, but walk away from him, or turn in arms against him.

This focus upon the moral factor has another benefit. It is, in relation to the physical, generally conceded to be far and away the most decisive. Liddell Hart, for one, quotes the axiom of Napoleon, that "The moral is to the physical as three to one."¹⁸ The researcher who zeros in upon the moral factor is most likely then to measure the

effect not only of the factor that endures, but also that has the most to do with any given outcome of war or diplomatic struggle.

Reduce then the particular physical and cultural factors in the situation to their generic patterns, and one can develop a way of comparing man's intrinsic psychological reactions to these generic patterns over thousands of years, and at any place on the face of the earth. It follows that factors of supply, transport, numbers of forces and size and scope of the economy; as well as ideology and also civic worship are of only passing interest.

If the reader is to be perfectly clear about the general direction which this thesis takes, one last thing must still be settled. Does the term grand strategy, as used in the context of early Han's strategic statecraft, lend itself to exacting measurement? Can it be analyzed with the same precision that its counterpart is analyzed in the theory of games? or measured by the severe standards of an operational code?¹⁹ Or is the term of a different nature, highly refractory to analysis, the offspring of art not science, an airy subject that only can be defined in a literary way? The fact is that the latter thought applies; the term grand strategy as it appears in this thesis only lends itself to literary definition.²⁰

In the real world after all, grand strategy is a craft. Like the artist, the strategist shapes the resources at his disposal to attain an object which he holds in view. Those resources are infinite in their possibilities; their possible combinations are numbered like the pebbles on the beach. No formulae can capture all the possibilities; no limited matrix of coded symbols can say what is happening.

Where severe analysis fails, common language must be used. In a piece with the practice of Liddell Hart, and his disciples, I confine my analysis to everyday words alone.

Thus does B.H. Liddell Hart point the general way forward. He is, however, less helpful in pointing out the specific path to take. Liddell Hart developed a method that enabled him to ponder at length military strategy in all its timeless aspects; he merely dabbled with an understanding of grand strategy in all its aspects that endure. The place in the road where this thinker stopped could not be more significant.

Grand strategy is by far a more challenging subject than military strategy. Nor should this surprise, for the latter is beneath the former. Military strategy deals with capabilities; and with intentions of a lower order, i.e. the design behind a military plan of attack or defense; it has no place for intentions of a higher order. After all, when war occurs, the hostile higher order intent of the belligerents is clear. It is enough to know the murderous means at the command of the warring parties, to know how those means will be used as the hostile forces maneuver round each other. Grand strategy, by contrast, deals with capabilities and intentions of all orders. It is important to know the strength of states for sure; it is also important to know if states have decided for peace or war, and with which states they seek to league.²¹

Observing the greater challenge which is inherent in the study of grand strategy, it is to my advantage that the studies of Liddell Hart have been extended. Students in the Liddell Hart tradition have examined grand strategy in greater depth. Two such students who have important ideas

to offer me are Michael Handel and Edward Luttwak.

Luttwak has done a yeoman service in the realm of measuring broad capability. Such was the focus of his book, The Grand Strategy of the Roman Empire: From the First Century A.D. to the Third. Therein Luttwak sets for himself the daunting task of measuring military power in a way that applies to circumstances ancient and modern. This he would do by examining Rome's prearrangement of forces in the way of security systems: he focuses upon the relationship between diplomacy, troop deployments and fixed defenses (forts, roads, walls and the like), and the effect of this relationship on the enemy's mind.²²

Handel has done pathbreaking work where the intentions of the state are concerned. He reveals this work in his book, The Diplomacy of Surprise: Hitler, Nixon, Sadat. For my purposes, he has three important things to offer: first, he classifies all types of diplomatic surprises; secondly, he compares the value of diplomatic and military surprise. Thirdly, and this is of extreme importance, he examines the conditions whereby major diplomatic surprises may flourish.²³

These then are two thinkers in the Liddell Hart tradition, with ideas about grand strategy upon which I can build. Handel's work is somewhat less complete than Luttwak's, and offers more opportunity for filling out. Handel, because of his choice of issues, seems to lack a central focus. He examines all types of diplomatic surprises (surprises done by the hand of one state and surprises done by the hands of two states or more), and therefore must examine several cases; he jumps back and forth between cases; he never quite pushes his conclusions

about grand strategy deep enough. And how can he? he has his hands full.

For all that, a number of stimulating observations are made by Handel; but two stand out the most, warrant confirmation, and cry out for broader explication. It is observed that for those who would mount a diplomatic surprise, the attainment of moral ascendancy is a supreme precondition. Yet moral ascendancy is defined in terms that are strictly peculiar. For instance, when considering the moral ascendancy which Hitler enjoyed in the minds of the democratic statesmen of 1930s Europe, it is simply said that as long as Hitler confines his *fait accomplis* to German speaking provinces he is deemed by the British and French to act with cause. It is also observed that while generals and admirals enlist surprise at every opportunity, diplomats enlist surprise as "a tactic of last resort."²⁴ To be sure, much is said why diplomats treat surprise thus, but not enough is said, I believe, to tell us exactly how surprise fits into grand strategy. Where the study of grand strategy is concerned, Handel's work is perhaps most useful--indeed highly useful--in setting the boundaries inside of which the answers must be found.

Luttwak's work, in contrast to Handel's, gives off the shine of the finished product. Thus are all of the common types of security systems examined in comprehensive fashion, and the military power generated by each ranked and measured in a generic way. This ranking and measuring is accomplished as follows. The force "input" for a particular system is compared to the power "output." The cost of system upkeep is priced by literary definition; that fraction of the legions in the Roman army that is available for armed suasion is duly noted; and the perception of Roman

might so induced in the minds of foreign peoples is inferred.²⁵

Although Luttwak's findings make up a coherent whole, his methods cannot be applied with direct ease to my own work. Luttwak was examining the strategic statecraft of an empire on the strategic defensive. His subject was not an "acquisitive" state, a state which, "inherently unsatisfied," is "primarily concerned with conquest," or the consolidation of indirectly held lands. Instead, his subject was a "conservative" state, which, content with its existing territory, is "primarily concerned to preserve its security and maintain its way of life," and which although it might still attack and perhaps even expand from time to time so as to keep its neighbors off balance is not aiming for sweeping conquests--only for shades of survival.²⁶ Being that it remains on the defensive, it has the time and the inclination to arrange elaborate defenses and prepare for long drawn out struggles. These arrangements, manifest in fixed defenses or in the lasting subordination of small states to the stronger conservative one, are, in the case of Rome, well preserved, and have been abundantly uncovered by the translator's pen, or the archaeologists' pick and ax.

The student of the grand strategy of the acquisitive state must solve a different problem, and as I see it, it can be a much greater one. He too must find evidence of a prearrangement of forces, if his theory is to receive necessary support and his results are to stand some chance of wider application. But he must do more than that. He must also find adequate evidence of movements en route to victory. The acquisitive state, after all, is not holding on, but marching forward. The element of long-term stasis, inherent in a defensive system, is missing. Instead, there

is a vibrant dynamism and momentous advance. What matters then is to discover and trace the mass and direction of movements en route to victory. Once and only once this information is in hand, is it then possible to infer the plan that may have informed the movements. Thus for the student of the grand strategy of the acquisitive state, the primary focus must be upon (1) stages in advance, not upon parts related to a security systems' whole; and (2) upon the ever changing articulation of forces in the course of the struggle.

All this is not to say that Luttwak's method of measuring military power is of no value to me. Quite the contrary, his method is of value; and I do make use of it, that is, when I want to stop and freeze the action, and measure military power at a given moment in time. But to gain some sense of the plan that may have informed ongoing offensives, additional tools must be made use of. These tools are the age-old terms used in the study of maneuver warfare.

Articulation of forces--maneuver of armies and diplomatic assets--is hereby codified for consistent use. Thus it is said that all maneuver is a blend of two primary elements, "mass" and "direction." Each of these elements, in turn, is a blend of two others. Mass, or the distribution of forces before the struggle, can involve concentration or dispersion. Direction, connotes "flank attack" if the opponent's positions are turned; "central attack" if the maneuver takes place along interior lines.²⁷ Thus has maneuver held its own in an infinite variety of ways on countless battlefields and during innumerable political campaigns.²⁸

Something should now be said about my choice of history. First of all, in a piece with Luttwak, and in contrast to Handel, I would draw my propositions from the study of one case, not of several. The manuals of rhetoric are quite explicit about decisions of this kind. Either pick three examples (or more if the patience of the audience permits), and move with speed; or pick one, and dwell upon it. Handel had not a single case to dwell upon, and so he wisely sampled from three. All the cases of diplomatic surprise that are better known in the West--familiarity seemed to guide Handel in his choice--were but fleeting episodes in the careers of states, e.g. the use of diplomatic surprise by Nazi Germany has been the longest to date at six years. Luttwak, on the other hand, had, in the history of Imperial Rome, a rich abundant prolific case with which to work. He too was well advised to do what he did, and take one case, and take no more. As I see it, the history of early Han may well be like the history of august Rome, delicious in its meaning, foreboding in its awesome relevance.

Studied from all sides, and at an unhurried pace, and with due care given to the sources, the history of early Han may offer more than a century of action rich in lessons for the student of strategic statecraft. It may offer lessons that can be had from the record of momentous deeds done in time of war; and lessons--from the record of no less momentous deeds done in time of peace. Indeed, it may offer lessons that can be learned from vital and bold actions taken in diverse and urgent conditions of war and peace. In time of war, a time we shall see spanned the years 209-202 B.C., the emerging Dynasty of Han operated in turn, (1) as one of countless isolated rebel powers fighting a tottering empire; (2) as a rebel power subordinate to a greater one;

and (3) as an independent rebel power fighting for its very life and mastery of all the Chinese peoples. In time of peace, I have in mind now the years 202-106 B.C., the victorious Dynasty of Han operated against (1) a wide array of internal foes who were unsure of native support, and quick to take offense; (2) an even wider array of internal foes who were, in this case, sure of native support and well dug in; and (3) a swarm of domestic foes who enjoyed support that ebbed and flowed. On top of all this, in time of peace, from 202-133 B.C., the Dynasty also had to make the marches safe, and keep at bay a dangerous ring of foreign foes who, like hungry wolves, pressed upon its borders from every side but the eastern coast.

All right then, so the case of early Han is a play with many acts, and the acts are each one different. But why select this case? The reason is that this case, it seems to me, illustrates, in fact exemplifies, the ways of the acquisitive state that would stake its rise upon the wings of ongoing deceit and long-range stratagem. Such states that might exemplify are very few. Moreover, most cases that do qualify, are not complete; a state may execute the beginnings of a grand strategy of maneuver, but for one reason or another, break off the effort, and leave the work unfinished. For instance, Philip of Macedon would shrewdly hasten by diplomatic means the decline of the mainland empire of Athens in the fourth century B.C. But Philip's son, Alexander, soon thereafter ascended the throne, and had other ideas. The main arena for Alexander was Asia, mainland Greece was a sideshow: diplomatic envelopment of Athens was not followed by consolidation, but rather by studied neglect--a holding action was put in place to secure Macedon's southern, Greek flank, while the main thrust of Macedonian ambition was directed elsewhere, towards hither

Asia and Persia. In our own century, we have seen aggression trample the path of indirection, and then veer off: in the policy of Hitler's Germany we behold a leader who was ultimately more impatient than guileful. Hence the great advantage, I think, of early Han. Here is, first, a little band, and then a state that not only set out on the long climb to world mastery by indirect means, a rare enough event in itself, but one which also stayed the course of indirection until the pinnacle was reached.

The Sources

Enough said about the selection of the case, the case itself, and methodology both borrowed and derived. What of the translated Chinese language sources themselves? What of the quality for my purposes of the voluminous annals which purport to tell the tale of the Former Han Dynasty?

For my purposes, the annals for the early Han period which have been translated do say enough. Moreover, virtually all the annals (Shih-chi and Han-shu) have been translated; critics can point to very few blind spots in the translations.²⁹ And, says the CHC, "it is probable that a greater proportion of the primary source material is available in translation for Ch'in and Han than for any other corresponding period of imperial China."³⁰ Indeed so much information is on hand, that it is possible to discern patterns in Han's movements on the home front inside China. These patterns, in turn, are repeated so often, in so many different settings and distinctive circumstances and diverse theaters of war, that it is possible to infer the existence and depict the details of multiple offensives, offensives which must have been planned out far in advance; offensives

which share common stages.

There is more. The translations of the Shih-chi (SC) and Han-shu (HS) offer useful testimony in their own fashion. For the inaugural period under examination, competing counsels of war laying out alternative courses of action and possible deployments of forces are recorded in mock speeches.³¹ As such, valuable information can be gleaned up to a point--the same kind of information that can be gleaned from a work by Thucydides or Tacitus. Then in the history that follows the inaugural period, the mock counsels appear less often; only the patterns remain. But the complementary nature of the events and the indirect testimony for the first period provides a strong base line upon which to judge the facts minus the indirect testimony of the latter periods. The upshot is that there is enough detail to support the weight of theory that, in the Liddell Hart tradition, would span the first century and fifteen years of the Dynasty's existence.

But it is one thing to gather detail, and another to gather fact. What follows must be said. Virtually everything we know in written form of the early Han Period has come down to us from the brush of one man alone. That man was Ssu-ma Ch'ien, author of the SC.³² (The HS, begun by Pan Piao and completed by Pan Ku, is based heavily upon the SC and antedates its by a century or more.³³) What is more, the history of Ssu-ma Ch'ien was recorded at the end of the period herein taken for study, that would be c. 110-90 B.C., a time in which the Han Emperor Wu-ti held sway. There is this to note too. It takes no special training to realize that Ssu-ma Ch'ien despised his reigning sovereign intensely, and contrasted him harshly with almost all emperors who went before him, above all, with the first

emperor, and founder of the Dynasty, Liu Pang.³⁴ Along what a narrow precipice indeed must the modern commentator wind his way to the mountaintop of truth!

For all that, I feel that much in the way of truth need not be presumed lost. To be sure, the lack for most of the history of the fresh account of an eye-witness or two is disquieting; and certainly little comfort can be taken in the sorry fact that the definitive history of a mighty race and its portentous strife issues from the mind of one man alone. But let us not forget that the history of the ancient Greeks, of the fifth century B.C., and the gripping tale of their civil wars fought on the Pelopponesus, and beyond, issues from the pen of one man alone too--to name but one other precedent--and yet we count ourselves at little loss. Indeed with respect to this one precedent, we count ourselves blessed, and not cursed, for that one man who recorded that history and told the crucial tale, had the fabled gifts and vista eyes of Thucydides himself. Ssu-ma Ch'ien is, in my opinion, an Asiatic Thucydides.

There is more to recommend the extant accounts of Han. Says the CHC, "... the very size and nature of the ... Standard Histories, the Shih-chi and Han shu for Former Han, ... may allow some scope for alleviating these difficulties [of general bias]. [Neither] of the [two] works derive from a single author or compiler; the different groups of chapters were drawn up to satisfy different purposes; and internal consistency between the different parts of these works can be of considerable value in assessing their accuracy or validity."³⁵

To those who say Ssu-ma Ch'ien distorted the record to vilify Wu-ti,³⁶ I say consider this. Those rulers whom

Ssu-ma Ch'ien singles out for praise built the Dynasty up from nothing; and brought peace and real tranquillity to a land that had know none for century after century. Wu-ti hurled a healthy state into the jungles of southeast Asia, and the wastes of the unending northern steppe; by his fanatical invasions, he all but condemned his charge to a painful death at the end of his lifetime (104-89 B.C.).³⁷ What is more, for all of Ssu-ma Ch'ien's allegedly inflated opinions about the merits of certain rulers, he seems as willing to record their defeats, humiliations and retreats--and the actual circumstances in which they occurred--as he is willing to celebrate their triumphs. For instance, the SC records in gruesome detail Liu Pang's near fatal defeat at P'eng-ch'eng in 205 B.C. With a vividness that recalls the mortification of Napoleon's flight from Russia, it is admitted that Liu Pang fled his defeated army, and sought to save himself at the head of twenty yeomen of horse! It is also not left unsaid that Liu Pang outnumbered his opponent on the morrow of the fatal day eighteen to one!³⁸ Finally, a careful examination of the grand strategy of Wu-ti's predecessors will I believe and intend to show confirm Ssu-ma Ch'ien's good judgment. For here are the outlines of a grand strategy so subtle in its crafting that it can have but few, if any, equals in the long annals of war and peace. But let us leave that for the pages to come.

I have said nothing yet about the problem of depicting not internal strategy, but frontier strategy. By no means are the extant remains of early Han's military infrastructure as good as Roman remains, and for making a proper analysis this is a problem. On top of that, the annals view foreign relations strictly through Chinese eyes. The peoples with whom Han then had contact did not leave written records.³⁹ To say that frontier strategy is not too

important, being a secondary concern for Han, does not close this gap, although it does lessen the impact. Fortunately, we now know a good deal about the typical movements of the nomads who clashed with Han. Thomas J. Barfield has made the greatest contribution to our understanding.⁴⁰ He based part of his contribution upon our general knowledge of Eurasian nomads, which is considerable. Fortunately too, we now know a good deal about all kinds of ancient frontier defenses in the West. Some of these defenses were erected to deal with the kinds of threats which Han faced. By combining this generic knowledge about frontier defenses with the contributions of Barfield, and others, it is possible to frame the salient features of Han frontier policy.⁴¹ The annals' accounts of Han actions on the frontiers are rich enough to permit this.

One last thing about the merits of the sources, this where both internal and foreign relations are concerned. Quantitative information is provided only occasionally or sporadically. For example, we have figures for only two census A.D. 2 and A.D. 140), and such figures must be handled with care. Even more troublesome are the figures quoted about the size of armies. In most cases, rounded numbers are used, and it is widely believed that even the rounded numbers are tampered with for rhetorical and propaganda purposes.⁴² All this being said, the reader is reminded of what was said above. In a piece with the Liddell Hart tradition, the study below does not rely heavily upon military figures either relative or absolute. Instead, the moral dimension is the primary focus of theory, of Han internal policy, and foreign policy.

Theory and Example

But what is that frontier policy? what is that internal policy? what is the theory? Having set out along the middle road of theory, which lies between the low road of Sinological history and the high road of fundamental policy, I have discovered, I think, a vast province of plausibility, overlooked to date. A crucial, but elusive red thread seems to run throughout the account of early Han. That red thread implies the existence of a definite grand strategy and embraces a style of policy, a logic of war and peace, common to the hitherto thought compartmentalized histories of the founding of the state (a time of war) and the consolidation of the state (a time of peace).⁴³

It was understood that victory would have to be had without fighting, or at least no great deal of fighting. For to win by fighting was to consume loyal forces; consume enemy forces that could help in the future; and so antagonize captured forces that they would pine away in prison, rather than accept a place in the new order and help in the next advance. Thus offensives were only launched when the times made it possible to win without fighting. That is to say, offensives were only launched when there was a pleasant prospect for the outcome of political war. It goes without saying that recourse to force was only used as a last resort. Political warfare, manifest in daring trickery, was the tool of choice. Bribes, propaganda, the secret deeds of secret agents, the sweet talk of dissembling scholars, and other devices of base and dark design, were unleashed against the vital social bonds that held together a state, its army, and its officialdom.

Offensives were launched when and only when target

states were morally weak, and out of joint. These would be times when the relations in the target state between sovereign and subjects, general and troops, ministers and minions, local chiefs and local people, would be unsteady and unhealthy. This disquietude had been incited at home by moral imbalance: either the target sovereign had been too compassionate or too harsh. Prospects for exploitation and manipulation of the very bonds that held the state together would be high, and so the Dynasty would strike.

The attack itself would target and exploit the precise weakness in the enemy state. The target would be shaped to the attacker's liking. Critical bonds that had been loosened would be loosened more; divisions would be widened. The object was to so isolate powerful groups and influential individuals in the target state, that when they realized the magnitude and full extent of the vice closing in upon them, the forces of the Dynasty would have become overwhelmingly superior, and any resistance offered could be easily crushed. Force thus delivered the final kick to an enemy that was already on the ground; force had the task of mopping up.

Deception was always enlisted in attack. The aims of the attack, and the methods of its execution were concealed. Diversions, bluffs, misleading information, threats mounted from a variety of angles, all these things, and more, were put to work.

By no means did the attacker treat badly those peoples it had conquered. To do that would have but jeopardized the entire offensive. Instead the attacker treated the vanquished to the right proportion of compassion and harshness: shared the spoils of victory and was magnanimous;

did what it took to maintain order; destroyed those who would pose a threat. The attacker negated the moral imbalance which he encountered. Perforce, he kept himself in moral balance (or seemed to) throughout the attack. Notably too, he uncovered new layers in the social order of the vanquished, and gave them life and incorporated--by no means eradicated--their ways.

When the times were not auspicious for the conduct of political warfare, the attacker stayed patiently on the defensive, and shaped for himself a position of "undefeatability."⁴⁴ A powerful and deceptive strategic position would be found, which would discourage military attack; and permit its repulse if it did materialize. Also, so that the Dynasty could not itself fall victim to political attack, that form of warfare which it knew to be most effective, it kept itself while on the defensive in good moral harmony. Thus did the Dynasty keep itself in moral balance at all times--or seem to. It made no difference whether the Dynasty was on the attack or defense.

Finally, from the first day the future founder of the Dynasty set out to find his destiny, to the last day that the empire consolidated its sway in China, an attack would be launched on one plane, and one or more defensive positions would be staked out on one or more other planes. Moreover, the object of attack was always weaker than the enemy(s) against which a defense(s) was prepared.

Here then is the outlines of Han's political strategy. As such, it was informed through and through by political maneuver. The Dynasty turned away from political strength, and fell upon political weakness; relied upon deception both during attack and while waiting to attack; and always

stressed the intangible--spies and the like, and the ultimate intangible of all, moral influence.

On those occasions when fighting was unavoidable, military strategy was also executed in a piece with the maneuver style. Thus the dynasty consistently avoided the military strength of the enemy and struck hard at his military weakness; almost always deceived, mislead and mystified; and emphasized the intangible, not the tangible in its fighting (e.g. stressed in its fighting speed and elusiveness, not shock power and fire power). In this way, the cohesion of the enemy's army could be disrupted and his will to resist broken--the enemy could be disarmed and captured whole; he would not be destroyed. Of equal importance, the dynasty's forces would not be attrited, they could be conserved for further action.

The Dynasty thus made use of political and military maneuver. It waged grand strategic maneuver. The effect was to multiply in the mind of the enemy the meager forces it had; and more importantly to mask its ultimate intentions. Thus, it will be shown that a poor village clerk could grow to become the emperor of the world, and his successors could gather up in central rule all the civilized world--all this being done without the many, victims and followers alike, being any the wiser, for the world judged what happened as natural and preordained.

The supreme importance which the acquisitive state places upon the maintenance of moral balance extends beyond the importance which the conservative state places upon it. In the latter case, the state survives if it merely denies victory to its opponents: it suffices to preserve harmony between leader and led and to occupy a strong defensive

position. In the former case, it must not only deny victory to the enemy, but gain victory itself: that is to say, take the enemy intact. The acquisitive state must therefore time its advances to coincide with moral weaknesses in neighboring states. Both states emphasize the conservation of force and the use of political warfare, however.

The essence of the early Han's approach is well illustrated by the fate of Han Hsin, the best tactician and general (says the SC) to serve the early Dynasty.⁴⁵ Han Hsin had been a mighty tool of victory in the civil war, and had done much to offer to the dynasty control, either direct or indirect, over China proper (202 B.C.). For his reward, Han Hsin, like a number of other deputies, was made lord of a wealthy kingdom in eastern China (Ch'u). With the return of peace, Han Hsin's use was all but at an end; worse, Han Hsin's ambition, always brewing, must soon over spill its proper bounds. Even so, Liu Pang did not immediately fall upon Han Hsin, and try to strip him of his kingdom. Instead, Liu Pang, who was then lodged in the strong hold of the "Land within the Passes" (in western China), stayed put; treated all his enthroned deputies kindly; and ran the risk that his able general would spark a wide rebellion.

Word of wicked scheming (rumors of the conduct of unusual military exercises and the coming and going of known conspirators) came out of Han Hsin's kingdom in 201 B.C. (All other deputies made kings did not join in with Han Hsin.) At last Liu Pang would act. However, Liu Pang's response was not to mobilize a large army and with vengeful colors flying send it east to capture Han Hsin. Instead, Liu Pang acted in another vein. Under the guise of calling a special court ceremony, and ostensibly making a pleasure tour of his eastern provinces, he traveled with moderate

escort to the border of Han Hsin's kingdom, and publicly prepared to receive his general as was his filial fashion (Han Hsin's promotion to general some five years earlier had been attended with elaborate Confucian ceremony as the future emperor of Han struck up a filial father-son relationship.) The risk that Liu Pang courted in exchange for deception was personal and dynastic: Liu Pang had ventured far behind client states lines; of the two men, Han Hsin was by far the better general, a mismatch in no way evened by the size of Liu Pang's army.

The outcome of Liu Pang's intervention was this. Han Hsin took the bait offered him, left his own army behind, and, with the mere wave of the emperor's hand, was disarmed, and led away a prisoner. As for Han Hsin's army, they surrendered, shaken were they by news of their leader's subtle capture. With the most deadly threat to the House of Liu now removed, and with proof of sedition plain for all to see, one would expect Liu Pang to mete out harsh punishment. But this did not happen. Instead, out of an army full of rebels, only Han Hsin was punished. Moreover, the punishment which Han Hsin received was light indeed. He was demoted to marquis and brought back to the capital, and told to set up a splendid household there.

"Your majesty cannot command soldiers, but you are good at commanding generals. That is why I became your prisoner"⁴⁶ Thus would the SC have Han Hsin speak to the victor sometime after capture, eloquent testimony to the brilliance of the latter's stratagem.

Here manifest in full is the essence of the grand strategy of Han. First we note the imposing strong hold, moral and strategic, which Liu Pang occupies before the

campaign begins. Then we note the timing of Liu Pang's attack. It occurs after the victim falls out of harmony with his kingly neighbors, men whose lives and stations depend first on loyalty shown empire, and secondly by any action which they take together, not apart. With what better pretext, in the eyes of his creatures, could the master Liu Pang be armed with.

The attack itself furnishes a textbook case of political warfare and offensive maneuver. Through artful manipulation, moral (playing on Han Hsin's excessive trust) and strategic (the innocuous size of Liu Pang's army of intervention), Liu Pang targets the precise weakness in Han Hsin's camp, which is Han Hsin himself; casts a cloak of secrecy over his hostile intent; separates Han Hsin from his own soldiers by political ruse; and thus without fighting renders rebellion rudder less and ineffective, for deprived of the genius of its leader the army of Han Hsin feels itself disarmed and no match for Liu Pang.

Pursuit after victory fits the aforementioned proposition too. See how, having disarmed the foe, Liu Pang punishes the author of rebellion, but not severely, surely out of studied recognition of his earlier assistance; pardons those who agree at once to change sides; so weaves into the fabric of empire a new local thread of the eastern social order (the kingdom of Ch'u minus its head, Han Hsin), and so too is magnanimous in victory. So it was that Han Hsin's kingdom and army was "taken intact"--without loss of blood.

Finally, observe the larger sequence of events of which the attack on Han Hsin forms but a fleeting episode, and so observe that the strong potential foe today is avoided,

while the weak are targeted; and that defeat of the strong is deferred to a day when the attacker himself is stronger. When first we meet Han Hsin, he is the right hand man of Liu Pang, and boldly assists in the conquest of China. At that time, Liu Pang through ceremony and the delegation of authority in effect throws up a defense against Han Hsin, the greatest threat to the Dynasty at that time owing to his talents and proximity to power. Liu Pang and Han Hsin, meanwhile, go about the business of defeating their civil war foes. Once the civil war is over, Han Hsin becomes a target, but the local society which he oversees is not made a target. They, we shall see later, become a target for another time.

Thus the isolated episode of the defeat of Han Hsin may confirm in a certain way belief in a Han grand strategy based upon maneuver. But without a more careful examination of the broader context in which early Han conducted policy, there can be no broader confirmation, or opportunity for refutation. For that broader proof to obtain, we must return to the broader history of early Han.

The Work Ahead

How is the broader study laid out? The details of early Han history are examined in chronological order, I mean, where Han's actions inside China are concerned. Then the film of chronology is rewound again, and again played out, this time where Han's defense of the borders are concerned. Each time this process occurs the search for grand strategic maneuver goes on, and the central proposition of this study is subjected to scrutiny. The study of Han's offensive inside China ends with an

assessment of the tactical organization of Liu Pang's rebels. The study of Han's border defense ends with an assessment of the imperial army's tactical organization, and strategic deployment. Both assessments must turn up findings that say Han's force posture consistently supported a maneuver policy, if my central proposition is to prevail.

Here is what I expect to show. The grand strategy of early Han encompassed in succession six grand stratagems, which informed, in turn, six successive offensives launched inside China. We can talk about grand stratagems, and a grand strategy overarching them all, because the diplomacy, armies, and fortifications of Han were dedicated to the fulfillment of comprehensive objectives; and that dedication involved cleverly contrived schemes made up of integrated tricks and maneuvers, schemes which harmonized at one and the same time the use of all assets for the isolation of the main target, for offensive action, and for the protection of the state against attack by third parties.

In time of war (209-202 B.C.), three of the six offensives were launched. Successive objects included establishment of a temporary base, seizure of a sure base and definitive conquest of China. In time of peace (202-106 B.C.)--I use the term peace loosely--the last three offensives were launched; and the successive objects included: first, deposal of powerful men of the war coalition; secondly, overthrow of the blood line of the first empress (she was not born Liu). Thirdly, counteraction of the top local elite throughout the empire.

While the first two offensives were underway (209-206 B.C.), the forces of Han avoided the concentrated strength of the dreaded empire of Ch'in (Ch'in had unified China in

221 B.C.). During the third offensive (206-202 B.C.), the forces of Han avoided the greatest army of the day led by a rebel general by name of Hsiang Yü. While the last three offensives were underway, and during most of the time in which consolidation took place (202-133 B.C.), the defense of China's frontiers proceeded apace, and it was the object of that defense to keep at bay all barbarian powers; and to do so at affordable cost, and almost strictly with the use of one and the same army that held China down, and brought it closer and closer to comprehensive central rule.

By no means shall we find the precise content of any two grand stratagems to be the same. Rather, the use of diplomacy and force varied from grand stratagem to grand stratagem. This variation reflected the varying demands of different missions, and the varying need to tailor weapons, forces and diplomacy for different jobs.

During the war that founded the empire, isolation of the primary target and protection against third party attack was achieved by the use of these political maneuvers-- diplomatic bluff, temporary alliance and well timed betrayal, in that order. In the same order, an order which corresponds to the first three offensives, use was also made of these subordinate military maneuvers--tactical encirclement, strategic flank march and strategic double pincer. (A number of lesser military maneuvers found use also.) It should also be mentioned that Han advanced towards its goals by way of a meandering path that ran through the geographic periphery of the Chinese world.

Grand stratagems became more complex during the struggle in peace that consolidated the empire. On the eve of victory in the civil war, the empire granted vassal

states in rich eastern China to its coalition leaders; then outflanked by diplomatic means the group of vassal kings as a whole, and finished up by deposing with preponderant strength each king in turn. Thus ended the fourth offensive, and first in peacetime. In the fifth offensive, and second in peacetime, a palace intrigue of formidable strength, mounted by the first empress no less, was encircled at some distance by taking a step backward in the struggle against the vassal east--all client state kings were made eligible to ascend the imperial throne, and thus were tightly bound to the central government. Eventually the palace intrigue was stamped out when, as predicted, the intriguers expanded too fast into the diplomatic cul-de-sac formed by the second group of client state kings appointed in the east. The sixth and final offensive began with a return to the approximate limits of the empire's initial divide. The client state world of the east was then done in by a protracted diplomatic war which was built upon central attack and dispersion of force. The assiduous cultivation of public relations, and the periodic cast of promises eternal, were companions of offensives four, five and six.

The protracted defense of the frontiers, started after the end of civil war, went this way. At the empire-wide level, one imperial army did the work of three in the context of a tripartite security system. As such, this unusual system was built upon the unusual division of China (imperial core in the West, deep field of client states in the East). At external theater levels, both in the north and in the south, subsidies and a conciliatory diplomacy were combined with an elusive defense to keep major barbarian powers at bay. With the frontiers thus secured, the empire could stretch its hand forth and consolidate the East. The result was that all China was centralized with

little fighting and a relatively small army. All-under-Heaven was taken relatively intact. With pride down to this very day the people of the mainland call themselves Han Chinese.

FOOTNOTES

Introduction

Text: pp. 20-53

1. See for instance Dubs, HFHD, Vol. I, pp. 12-13 and 22-23.
2. Typical is Joseph Needham, Science and Civilization in China (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1954), pp. 102-103.
3. By the year 51 B.C., the empire of Han ruled directly or indirectly the whole Asian mainland east of the Kirghiz steppe, and the central Tibetan plateau with the exception of weak lands in what is today southern Vietnam and South Korea. All but completely cut off from the Roman and Parthian Empires by vast steppes and the Pamir mountains, and sundered from the many kingdoms of India by the Himalayas, Han did, in effect, hold undisputed sway in its own world.
4. This is a good time to refer the reader to the list of titles that have been abbreviated. See Abbreviations, p. iii. Thus for example Chavannes is MH; Dubs, HFHD; Watson, Records or SC; Swann, Swann.
5. For these entries and many others see List of Works Consulted.
6. Some of the most interesting, and pathbreaking, work of Michael Loewe is the prime example. Dr. Loewe has compared Han statecraft to the earlier statecrafts of Ch'in and the eastern feudal states. See his Crisis and Conflict in Han China, (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1974) and "The Former Han Dynasty," Chapter 2, in CHC.
7. George Liska, Imperial America (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1967).
8. Ibid.
9. I have borrowed my concept of grand strategy from B.H. Liddell Hart, Strategy, (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1967), pp. 335-336.
10. See Leo Strauss, Thoughts on Machiavelli (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958); and Carl I. Friedrich, Zbigniew K. Brezinski Totalitarian Dictatorship and

Autocracy (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1956), especially pp. 130-138 and Hannah Arendt, The Origins of Totalitarianism (Cleveland: Meridian Books, 1969) especially pp. 392-437.

11. The dictum to share the spoils of victory, implies a wider role for strategic statecraft. Sun Tzu II. 17-20, pp. 75-76.

12. B.H. Liddell Hart, Strategy, (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1967), pp. 335-336.

13. Edward Luttwak, The Grand Strategy of the Roman Empire: From the First Century A.D. to the Third (Baltimore, The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), p. 4.

14. Op. cit., p. 366.

15. For a discussion of Liddell Hart's methodology, see Ibid., pp. 24-25.

16. Ibid., p. 24.

17. Bertrand Russell, A History of Western Philosophy (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1972), pp. 172-173.

18. B.H. Liddell Hart, Strategy, (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1967), p. 24.

19. For a summary of the literature on "Operational Codes," see Stephen G. Walker, "Operational Codes and Content Analysis: The Case of Henry Kissinger," Different Text Analysis Procedures for the Study of Decision Making (Amsterdam: Sociometric Research Foundation, 1986), pp. 13-27. The best introduction to Game Theory is probably Thomas Schelling, Arms and Influence (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966).

20. To quote from a handbook of rhetoric, "Definitions outside of [physical] science are not so brief, so plain or so precise in classification." Definitions of a literary kind are made as follows. "Give a typical instance (species); mention the constituents of anything (parts); tell what a thing is not and then what it is (contrast); explain a thing by what it does (effect); show what a thing is like (metaphor, comparison)." Francis P. Donnelly, S.J., Model English Book II The Qualities of Style (New York: Allyn and Bacon, 1919), p. 105.

21. Michael I. Handel, The Diplomacy of Surprise: Hitler, Nixon, Sadat, (Cambridge, MA: Center for International Affairs, Harvard University, 1981), p. 18.

22. For a discussion of Luttwak's methodology, see Edward Luttwak, The Grand Strategy of the Roman Empire: From the First Century A.D. to the Third (Baltimore, The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), p. 4.
23. Michael I. Handel, The Diplomacy of Surprise: Hitler, Nixon, Sadat, (Cambridge, MA: Center for International Affairs, Harvard University, 1981), pp. 1-30.
24. Ibid., p. 355
25. See Luttwak, Op. cit., pp. 192-200
26. The terms "acquisitive" state and "conservative" state are Liddell Hart's. B.H. Liddell Hart, Strategy, (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1967), p. 368.
27. The terms "mass" and "direction," and the terms associated with them in turn, have been lifted from Charles Andrew Willoughby, Maneuver in War (Harrisburg, Pennsylvania: Military Service Publishing Co., 1939), pp. 40-41, 51-65, 66-67, 87-92. For other ideas about maneuver, and terms coined to describe it, see Edward N. Luttwak, "The Operational Level of War," International Security, V, No. 3, 61-79.
28. Sun Tzu VI.12 (Griffith, Art of War, pp. 91-92).
29. This from Twitchett and Loewe, CHC, p. 11. "For a list of the Shih-chi that have appeared in translation, see Timoteus Pokora, in Chavannes, Memoires historiques, Vol. VI, pp. 113f. No comparable list has been published for the Han shu or Hou-Han shu.
30. Ibid., pp. 10-11.
31. Watson, Records, Vol. I, p. 5-6 on the role of the speeches, and on the preference of Chinese historians for direct discourse.
32. Ssu-ma Ch'ien was the son of Ssu-ma T'an. Both held the post of grand historian at court. The former from 141-110 B.C., the latter from 110-90 B.C. The official duties of the grand historian seem to have been connected with astrology and divination; neither Ssu-ma Ch'ien nor his father were commissioned to write. However, Ssu-ma T'an on his own initiative prepared to write a general history of China: he bequeathed his object and his notes to his son. For a discussion of Ssu-ma Ch'ien and his work see Watson, Records, Vol. I, pp. 3-9.

33. Some have argued that parts of the SC were based upon the HS. This would comprise original chapters of the SC "which had disappeared at an early date and which had been replaced by extant versions, compiled on the basis of the corresponding parts of the" HS. Twitchett and Loewe, CHC, p. 4.

34. There is no question that Liu Pang is the hero of the account of early Han in the SC. Watson, Records, Vol. I, p. 7.

35. Twitchett and Loewe, CHC, p. 3.

36. See Chavannes, "... on a dit qu'il [Ssu-ma Ch'ien] avait écrit un livre [SC] satirique. Il est certain qu'on découvre dans son ouvrage de nombreuses attaques contre l'empereur Ou [Han Wu-ti]." MH, Chapitre Premier, LII.

37. The year 104 B.C. was a time of special celebrations, marking the end of the Dynasty's first century of existence. Optimism about the future and pride in the accomplishments of the Dynasty were very high. After this date, that optimism began to dramatically wane: the evil consequences of waging war in all quarters could no longer be ignored. See Michael Loewe, Crisis and Conflict in Han China (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1974), pp. 17-36.

38. SC 7, Watson, Records, p. 61.

39. Twitchett and Loewe, CHC, p. 5.

40. For Thomas J. Barfield's most up to date work see "The Hsiung-nu Imperial Confederacy: Organization and Foreign Policy," Journal of Asiatic Studies, XLI, 1, November 1981, pp. 45-61.

41. The great source of extant remains of early Han's military infrastructure comprise one, scattered outposts along the Edsin Gol near Chu-yen in what is today north Kansu (?), and two, at the same sites, multiple wooden strips that served as administrative-military documents. For the purposes of this thesis, this evidence, such as it is, is of limited value, dating as it does from 100 B.C.-A.D. 100. For a discussion about all available archaeological evidence of defense works in the Han Period see Loewe, RHA, Vol. I, pp. 1-15. And for a discussion of all available evidence about military operations for the Han Period, written as well as archaeological, see Michael Loewe, Military Operations in the Han Period (London: China Society Occasional Papers, No. 12, 1961), pp. v-vii.

42. Op. cit., p. 5. A longer discussion about the bias

inherent in Han figures is Lien-Sheng Yang, "Numbers and Units in Chinese Economic History," Studies in Chinese Institutional History (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1961), pp. 75-84.

43. For the best summary of this argument see Twitchett and Loewe, CHC, pp. 103-110.

44. This term comes from Chong-Pin Lin, China's Nuclear Weapons Strategy (Lexington, MA: Lexington Books, 1988), p. 20.

45. The best account of Han Hsin's career can be found in his official biography, that is, SC 92.

46. SC 92 (Watson, Records, Vol. I, p. 230).

PART ONE

THE CONQUEST OF CHINA AND ESTABLISHMENT OF EMPIRE

(209-202 B.C.)

Chapter Two

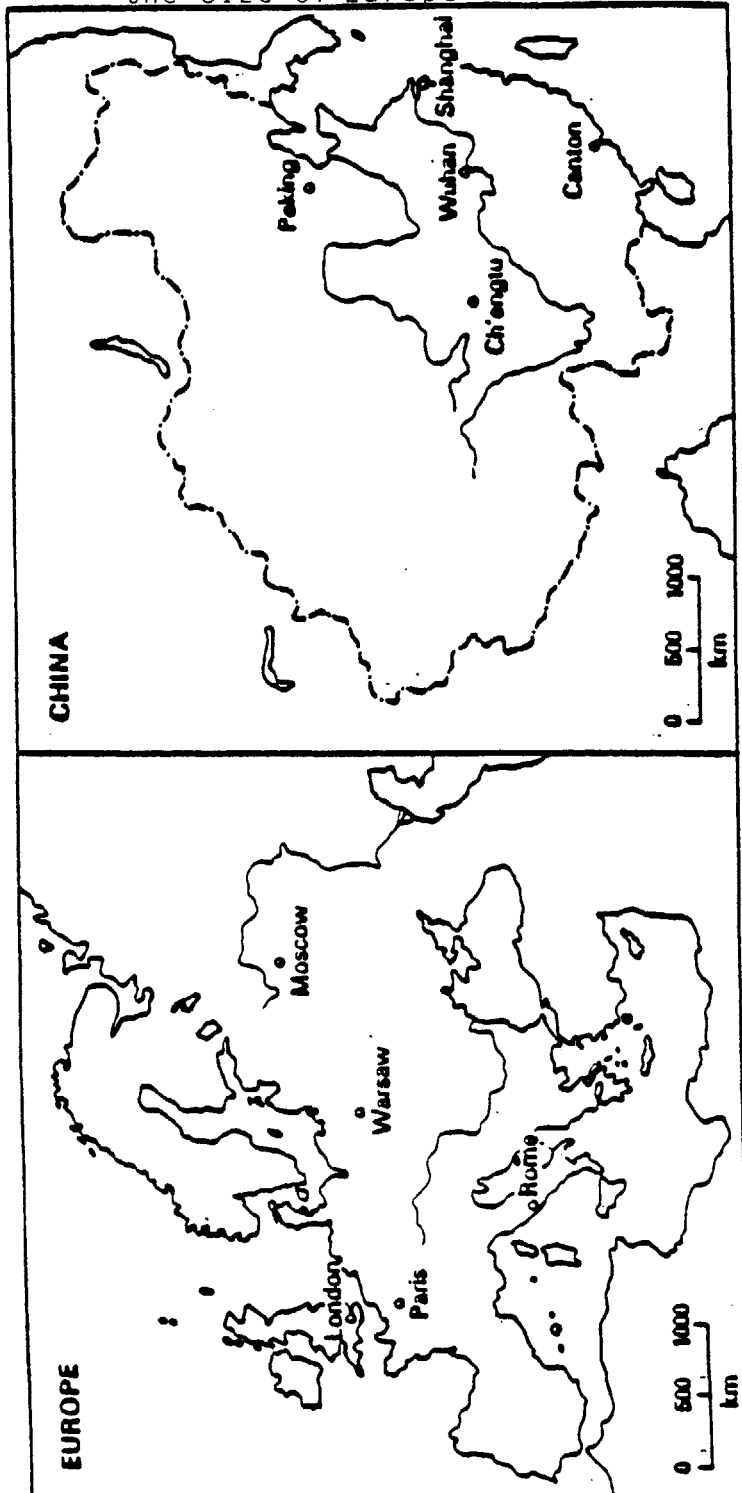
THREE CAMPAIGNS OF CONQUEST: THREE GRAND STRATAGEMS

The achievement of Liu Pang was larger than life. All were against him, yet all became his. Born a humble commoner, when noble blood was paramount to rule; ranked a mere village commissar in the empire (Ch'in) he was destined to overthrow, when other rebel leaders began at the head of armies and whole provinces; starting with a small, rag-tag army, when his rivals and enemies boasted armies in the hundreds of thousands; he would, after seven years of fighting, come to lord over all China: come to destroy all his rivals: come to bring peace and tranquility to a land that had known none for 500 years. With so much created out of nothing, surely a god must have been at work. See Maps 1, 2 and 3. Thus did Liu Pang go down in Chinese annals enshrined in myth; thus was the first lasting unification of China attributed to divine intervention.¹

The ancients may accept the workings of gods as cause of their first unity; modern man does not, so what was the cause which we can understand? Whatever it was, it was not the product of tactical genius, of mere cunning on the battlefield. By all accounts, Liu Pang was no Julius Caesar, or Alexander the Great or an ancient day Douglas MacArthur. Quite the contrary, the annals attest to his mediocre skills, that is, where leading men in battle was concerned.² There were at least a half dozen generals locked in struggle with him for the supreme prize of China with greater skills than his. There was the first leader of rebel Ch'u, Hsiang Liang; Sung I, a widely acclaimed "Sun

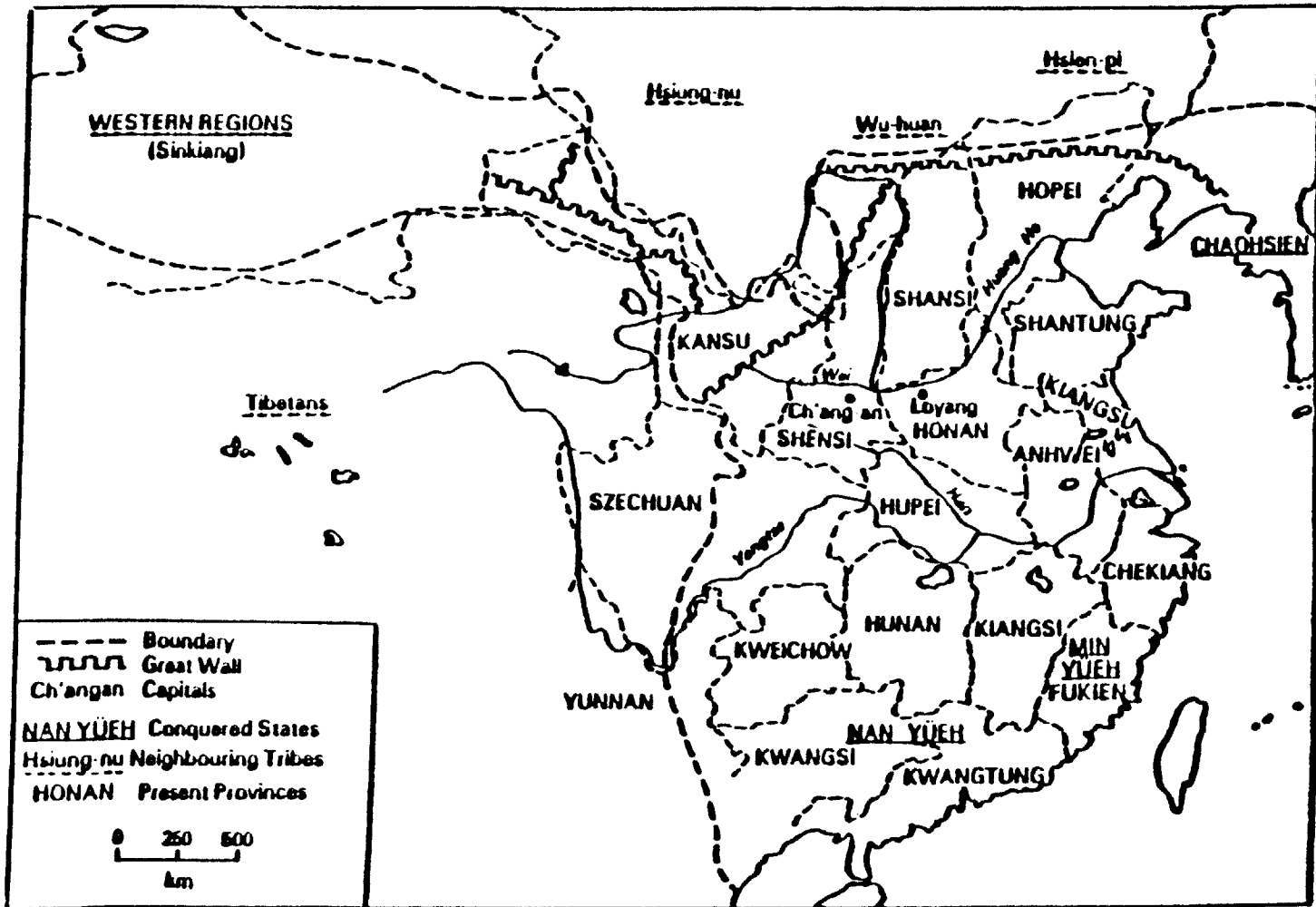
Map 1

The Size of China Compared to
the Size of Europe



From Rodzinski, A History of China,
p. 3.

From Rodzinski, A History of China, p. 54.

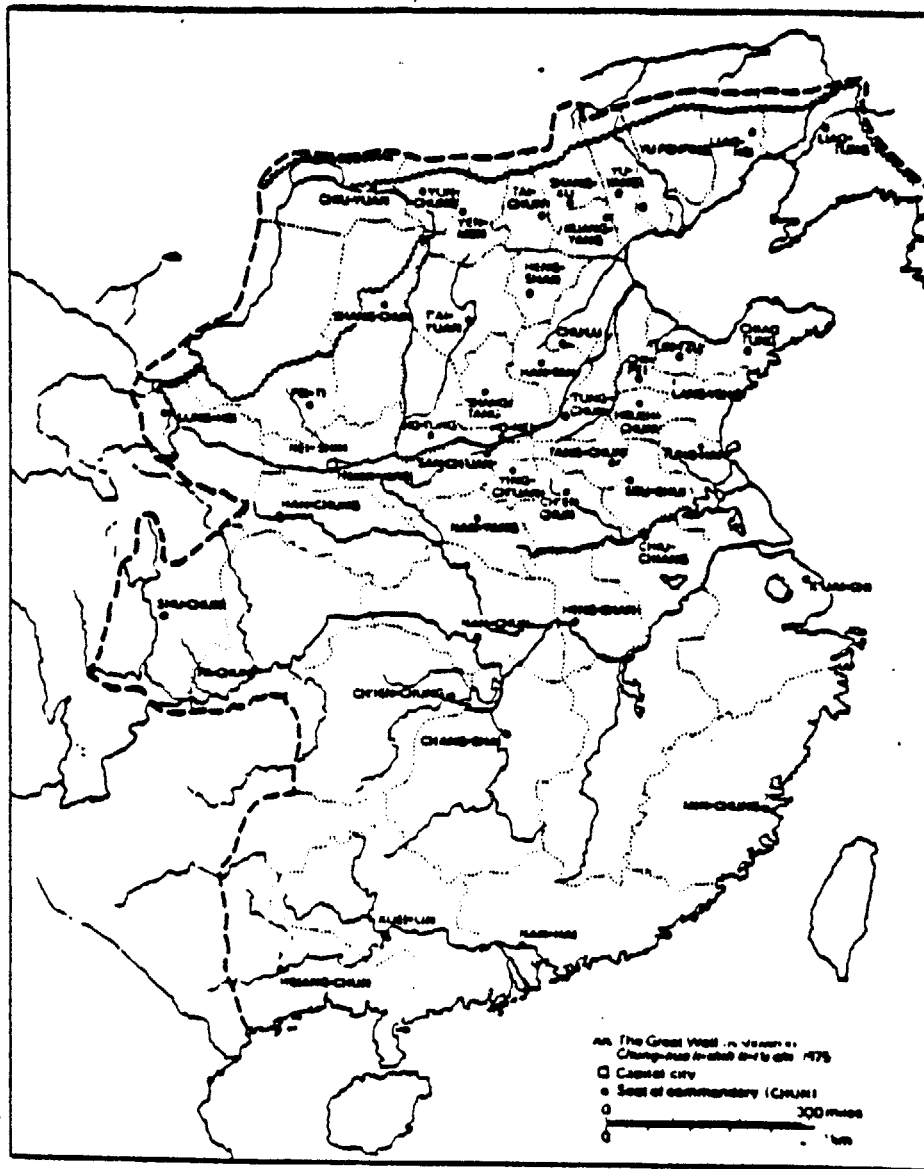


Provinces of Modern China

Map 2

Map 3

The Empire of Ch'in



From CHC, p.41.

Tzuian" commander; and Chang Han, the supreme commander of all Ch'in forces in the East; and Hsiang Yü, Liu Pang's greatest rival of all, who, by his own count fought 70 battles and won 70. Where these men attained great success on the field of battle, Liu Pang attained only meager marks: in fact, there were even times when the troops under Liu Pang's personal command suffered ignominious defeat--such was the fate of his army at P'eng-ch'eng (205 B.C.), and at P'ing-ch'eng (201 B.C.). Nor did Liu Pang owe his success, in a decisive way, upon the alliances he struck with generals who were good. Three generals with outstanding minds, sharpened for conducting battles, P'eng Yüeh, Ch'ing Pu and Han Hsin would come to join Liu Pang's ranks; yet none would be on hand when Liu Pang was fighting the forces of Ch'in in the West; and rarely would they engage Hsiang Yü, in a direct way, when Liu Pang was fighting his great rival claimant in the East.³

Not the possessor of sheer tactical skill, it is natural to attribute Liu Pang's success to modern man's version of divine intervention--to attribute his success to luck. After all, war being seen in the main to the modern civilized man who is above such stuff as a kaleidoscope of hatreds, as a whirl of passions, where there is no strong man on horseback with the vision of a general to account for the triumph there must be, instead, the invisible hands of the Fates and Lady Luck. A cursory glance at the history of the times, reinforces with strength this reflex supposition.

The salient steps which the empire of Han took to defeat its civil war rivals, and then to centralize all China have all been recorded in the annals. During the civil war, the founder of the Dynasty engaged in a seesaw struggle, first with the armies of Ch'in, and then with the

armies of his great rebel rival, Hsiang Yü. Whether Liu Pang was closing in on a major objective held by Ch'in or, later, taking the war to the heartland of Hsiang Yü's empire, the main army of Han would advance, then retreat, even at times zigzagging back and forth across the North China Plain. These struggles were also punctuated by a number of short-lived negotiated settlements, the apparent outcomes of desperate compromises.

It is misleading, however, to believe that its advances were the offspring of chance or its pauses compromises. First of all, those pauses in Han's advance that saw fresh formalized divisions of China may have been compromises at face value, but beneath the surface they signaled a withdrawal into a new defensive stance of great strength, while paradoxically assuring that the initiative was retained. Typical of a "compromise" reached during the civil war was the one reached by Liu Pang in 206 B.C., shortly after his first conquest of metropolitan Ch'in. Liu Pang and Hsiang Yü ostensibly divided the spoils of northwestern China between themselves: in reality, Liu Pang had withdrawn into an invulnerable position: Hsiang Yü could not have attacked him, a loyal supporter, without incensing other supporters. What is more, despite the meager army at Liu Pang's disposal (it was at this point that he was granted kingship over Han-chung), he did retain freedom of action. Hsiang Yü faced severe sedition on the far side of China, and instantly became too involved to watch Liu Pang's every move in the remote West.⁴

Han's marches forward that intervened between these marches backward were not at bottom accidental; the very unpredictability of the moves, which suggests the absence of design, was, in fact, the very key to offensive design. For

instance, during the later stages of the civil war, the seesaw movement that marked Han operations was a rational and clever consequence of a deliberate effort to avoid Hsiang Yü's strength, and exploit his weakness.⁵ Hsiang Yü was brilliant and fearless as a general, but also fiercely jealous as a leader: he would not delegate authority where he had to. Han thus avoided contact with the armies that he led, and pressed the others. One modern commentator agrees with this assessment.⁶

Seen in the broad, and not piecemeal, as modern commentators are wont to, the actions of the early Dynasty do reveal a definite pattern, a pattern that bears the paradoxical stamp of maneuver on all planes. Deceptive all encompassing schemes of defense gave way to deceptive all encompassing schemes of attack in three successive campaigns: from 209-202 B.C., more and more allies were made out of the victims of first Ch'in's and then Hsiang Yü's capricious and unbalanced ways.

What emerges is a far-flung method which subordinated the importance of battle. When on the attack, Liu Pang did not so much seek "the decisive battle;" he prepared long in advance to win without battle, or at least without bloody battle. When faced with the choice between having to fight in a protracted way in order to advance, he chose instead to halt, and did not fight. Above all, he subordinated the clash of armies to the movement of armies: subordinated tactics to strategy; and subordinated victory in the field to the peace that would follow the victory: subordinated strategy to policy. Thus, for mere mortals uninitiated in the arts of strategy, did he appear as a god, or a man with the vision of a god.

FOOTNOTES

Three Campaigns of Conquest: Three Grand Stratagems
Text: pp. 59-65

1. Liu Pang's divine connections are stated in his eulogy. HS 1B: 26a (Dubs, HFHD, Vol. I, p. 150). For the development of Liu Pang's myth see Dubs, HFHD, Vol. I, p. 23.
2. Ibid., pp. 12-13.
3. The best summary of the events and major personalities of the civil war can be found in Ibid., pp. 2-9.
4. SC 8 (Watson, Records, Vol. I, pp. 91-95).
5. For an account of this military campaign see Ibid., SC 8 (pp. 95-105).
6. Dubs, HFHD, Vol. I, p. 12.

Chapter Three

The First Campaign of Conquest

DIPLOMATIC BLUFF AND EXPLOITATION

OF STRATEGIC INSIGNIFICANCE:

The Creation of the First Base (209-207 B.C.)

Liu Pang's rise to power during the civil war (209-202 B.C.) falls into three great acts. In the first act (209 B.C.), Liu Pang proclaimed himself a rebel, gathered round a following and staked out of spreading anarchy a temporary base. In the second act (208-206 B.C.), he sought assistance in alliance, and safety in numbers. Twice he would lower his army and ambition to the will of others; twice would ride their rebel power towards the seizure of a sure base. In the third act (206-202 B.C.), he severed all ties that bond him, became his own man and king and marched to the conquest of China alone.

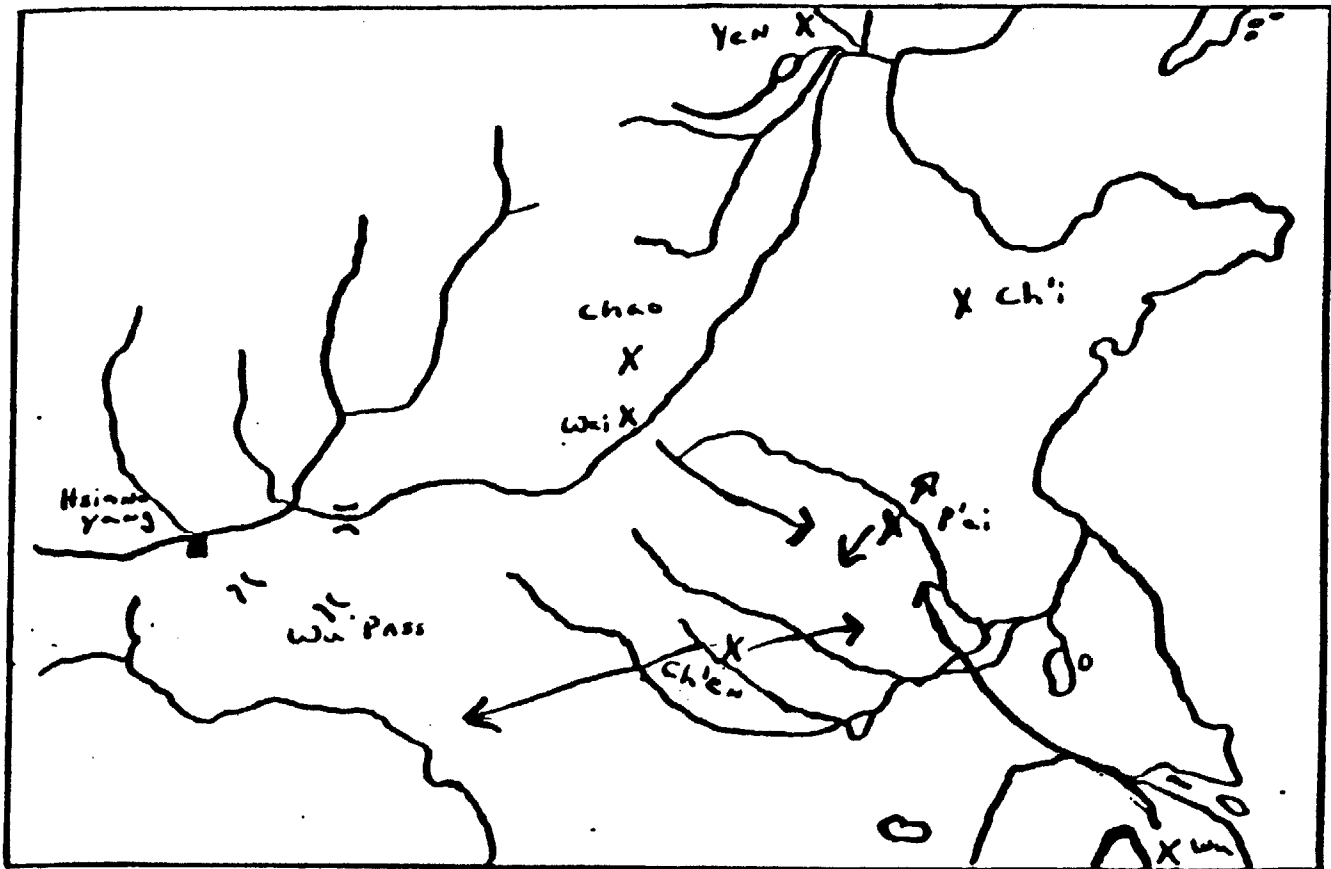
The First Campaign

The start of the first campaign of the rising dynasty of Han coincides with the appearance of Liu Pang in the annals in 209 B.C. Within one year this campaign will be over (January 208 B.C.).¹ During 209 B.C. the political order of China was subjected to the throes of massive upheaval. The vaunted empire of Ch'in, undisputed master

for twelve years over all of teeming China, was being shaken to its very roots, and torn to pieces. Rebellions were breaking out all over eastern China, there were six big ones in 209 B.C., if the SC is any guide: war lordism was growing rampant. See Map 4. Creation of his own principality in central eastern China thus seemed to Liu Pang to be the thing to do, just as it seemed the thing to do to countless others in the east.

Little is known about Liu Pang, the early revolutionary. The circumstances whereby he came to defy Ch'in are known, however. A village clerk in a humble provincial bureau, he was leading a construction gang to the west; the gang deserted; so he deserted too, fearful of what failure would bring him.

More importantly, the story of how Liu Pang conquered his home town of P'ei is known too. One of the first major rebellions broke out in Chi, not far from P'ei, sparked by a noble by the name of Ch'en She. The Ch'in magistrate of P'ei sought allegiance with Ch'en She only to change his mind, and lock himself up in the town. At this time, Liu Pang had returned to the vicinity of P'ei and had gathered around himself a modest following. Certain officials of the magistrate, like Hsiao Ho and Ts'ao Ts'an, men who would later serve Liu Pang with distinction, instigated Liu Pang to attack the town. Liu Pang obliged them, and devised a simple strategem. First he surrounded the town with his modest band, then he promised to protect everyone inside who joined the rebellion. The tactic worked, most of the town citizenry turned against the magistrate, and the town fell with little bloodshed. Once in possession of P'ei, Liu Pang convened a caucus. He invited the town fathers to elect a new leader. Humble in his deportment, Liu Pang himself



X = center of Revolt
 → = Rebel Advance
 Hsien-yang = ■ = Ch'in Imperial Capital

The Revolts of 209 B.C.

Map 4

declined the office three times. Finally, in the face of even greater clamoring, Liu Pang accepted. We are told that he took what no one else wanted. All other candidates feared what would befall them should the rebellion fail.

To the extent that Liu Pang's way of seizing P'ei was typical of his offensive method in the first year of his uprising--and the reputation he developed implies that it was so (see the next chapter)--it can be said that he put a premium on political warfare and moral maneuver. To begin with, Liu Pang went on the attack only when the prospects for political warfare were good. Liu Pang attacked only after his intended victim, the magistrate of P'ei, had fallen out of moral balance, unequivocally siding with the cruel and hated empire of Ch'in, and so dashing the hopes and treating harshly the townsfolk of P'ei.

Note too that Liu Pang attacked the precise weakness in the enemy camp. That weakness involved the shoddy relations between the magistrate of P'ei and the folk of the town. In choosing not to attack or throw up a siege, Liu Pang denied the magistrate cause to rally his citizens, and thus convert weakness into strength. By surrounding the town, declaring for the rebels, and offering to save all who gave up the empire, Liu Pang outflanked the magistrate in the mind of his people. He took the magistrate by surprise, and it was total. It must have been beyond the imagination of the magistrate to believe that anyone would be so bold as to strike an undeniable blow against the empire, and assault him behind stonewalls and so leave behind a clear trail of treasonous evidence. How else explain the magistrate's decision to shut himself in and forfeit room for maneuver. By doing so he merely thrust himself into the doubtful arms of his disgruntled subjects.

The surprise Liu Pang used was diplomatic, and its object was to shock into action. The boldness and audacity of Liu Pang's stand against the magistrate must have convinced all trapped within the town that a great rebel host was in their midst. Better to make one's peace with these rebels, then hold out for the army of the empire whenever that might be. What is more, the cause of Liu Pang was just, was it not, while the cause of the magistrate was evil. The physical encirclement of P'ei forced the people of the town to come to terms with the cause which they perceived to be superior. Here too was deception to go along with surprise. In reality, however righteous Liu Pang's purpose, his forces were but one hundred in number, they counted on no upcoming reinforcements, nor were they in league with any other rebel forces. But the audacity of Liu Pang spoke otherwise. Through audacity which begot deception the divided forces of rebellion everywhere were made to appear united and focused.

When the people of the city deserted the magistrate, the culminating point of the maneuver was reached: Liu Pang's military power, which was inferior in relation to the city as a whole, was made superior at the point of attack (the magistrate's inner circle): victory became automatic before force had to be used.

Some may object that Liu Pang took too great a risk, not with respect to the magistrate, but with respect to the empire. But an examination of the circumstances of rebellion in that quarter of China shows that this is not true. Liu Pang must have reasoned that it was his good fortune to enjoy this combination of circumstances: one, that there were many rebellions all about, and two, that his

own endeavor was modest indeed in comparison to other rebel deeds--certainly too modest to call down an immediate imperial respite. When the empire did strike back, he would have time to get himself ready.

In effect, at the political level, Liu Pang relied upon bluff to exploit the social weakness of the enemy. Moral ascendancy so attained, Liu Pang fashioned the tactical means to drive his ascendancy home. Isolation of the enemy was already provided by favorable circumstances. Protection from third party attack was provided by the same circumstances.

Liu Pang's "pursuit" after victory, his exploitation of the victory, was generous, indeed quite magnanimous. In not seizing the keys of the city, after overthrowing the magistrate, Liu Pang yielded to the will of the populace. He also ran the risk that the city would select someone else to lead them. The risk was a good one to take however. The uncertainty that the rebellion would at length succeed against Ch'in put fear into all other contenders for power. Had Liu Pang seized power outright, he would have had to have massacred some of the populace to intimidate the others; Liu Pang lacked legitimate credentials to rule. Once in power, Liu Pang's leniency only bound him to the populace even more. This way, Liu Pang made the most out of victory, he took the city intact: for he kept himself in moral balance and was harsh and compassionate in right proportion (the many who surrendered gained a share in the new order, the few who fought on to the end were put to death).

After capturing P'ei, Liu Pang energetically expanded his fledgling base in central-east China.² He stormed and

occupied a handful of neighboring fortified towns (viz Hu-ling, Fang-yu and Feng). There is not enough evidence to comment upon the righteousness of Liu Pang's conduct. Also, there must have been a certain amount of diplomacy conducted at this petty level, of which we know nothing. It is doubtful, however, that there was a need for diplomacy on a larger scale. Liu Pang's power must have been too modest yet to attract the attention of the field army of the empire of Ch'in or of the armies of the major rebel states. The insignificance of Liu Pang's base surely veiled his intentions from predators the likes of these. It did not veil his intentions from neighboring provincial garrisons of the empire, however. Ch'in's overseer in the province of Ssu River surrounded Feng for two days before being repulsed. Liu Pang's forces also fought and defeated the Ch'in magistrate of the Ssu River. Soon thereafter, anonymity would desert Liu Pang, and it was time for him to draw up a new strategy.

FOOTNOTES

First Campaign of Conquest
Text: pp. 67-73

1. For an account of this episode see SC 8 (Watson, Records, Vol. I, pp. 80-83).

2. For an account of this episode see Ibid., SC 8 (pp. 83-85) and Ibid., SC 7 (pp. 42-43).

Chapter Four

The Second Campaign of Conquest

TEMPORARY ALLIANCE AND THE STRATEGIC FLANK MARCH:

The Quest for a Sure Base (207-206 B.C.)

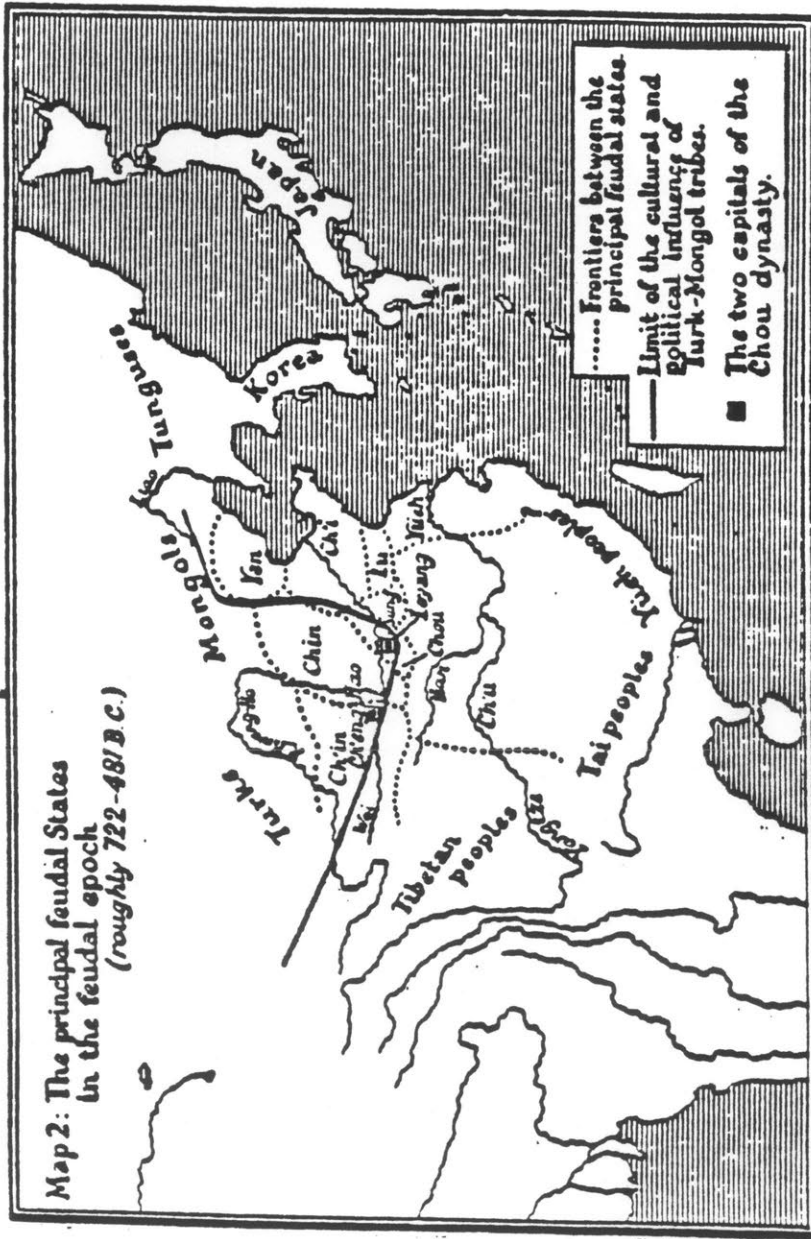
Liu Pang gave up his independence in January 208 B.C., and leagued instead with stronger rebels for the next eighteen months. This period of eighteen months constitutes the second campaign in the civil war. Successive leagues were struck with Tung-yang, based at Liu; and with Ch'u, based at P'eng-ch'eng.¹ (Both Liu and P'eng-ch'eng would lie in western Kiangsu on the modern map.) As a junior partner in these leagues, Liu Pang did what his senior partners had him do. As such, Liu Pang was a model follower who played his part in desperate and victorious battles alike, and who fulfilled all his directives with dispatch and to the letter. Most notable in this respect was his treatment of prisoners and fallen cities. Unlike some of his rebel colleagues, Liu Pang did not exploit the vanquished for sport, or revenge or his own peculiar ends. Indeed at the end of much adventure, Liu Pang would find himself governor general of the homeland of Ch'in itself, with all its fabulous riches, stolen treasures and multitudes of fresh recruits, and yet he would keep everything as he found it, a sacred trust carefully guarded for his rebel leaders. Some may find in his behavior a man who had no eye for bigger things, and who had sold the future and all initiative. In reality, nothing could be

farther from the truth. The signs are there that Liu Pang was for reasons strategic and compelling finding refuge with others, while at the same making sure that his interests were advancing. The ancient strategy of playing two strong hands against each other was seeing new and timely use.

Under ideal circumstances, a fighting power will cling tenaciously to its own ascending star, and never reduce its freedom of action. Such circumstances typically obtain when the power occupies a diplomatic position peripheral to the field of contention. From the periphery, the power can take more easily what it will of the struggle, coupling and decoupling from combinations as it likes. Throughout the unprecedented and momentous days of 209 B.C. this happy situation obtained for Liu Pang--despite the fact that he very definitely resided in the storm zone of rebellion. See Maps 5 and 6. The modesty of his holdings effectively hid him from the empire, beset as it was by great bonfires blazing elsewhere; nor did other rebel powers of appreciable strength judge Liu Pang's holdings anything special to devour. By the new year 208 B.C. all was different. Liu Pang's power had finally crossed over the threshold of visibility. First a rebel power ogled his new found wealth; then as he repelled that menace and grew in stature still some more, the army of the empire took suspicious notice.

Under the new circumstances that obtained, Liu Pang was alive to the twists and turns of chance, and properly supple in the attainment of his ambition. By 208 B.C., the conditions permitting Liu Pang freedom of action as an independent bandit were no more. He was wise then to restrain his ambition, subordinate his command to a larger protector, and so convert, by means of diplomacy, his now exposed position in the center back into a position that was

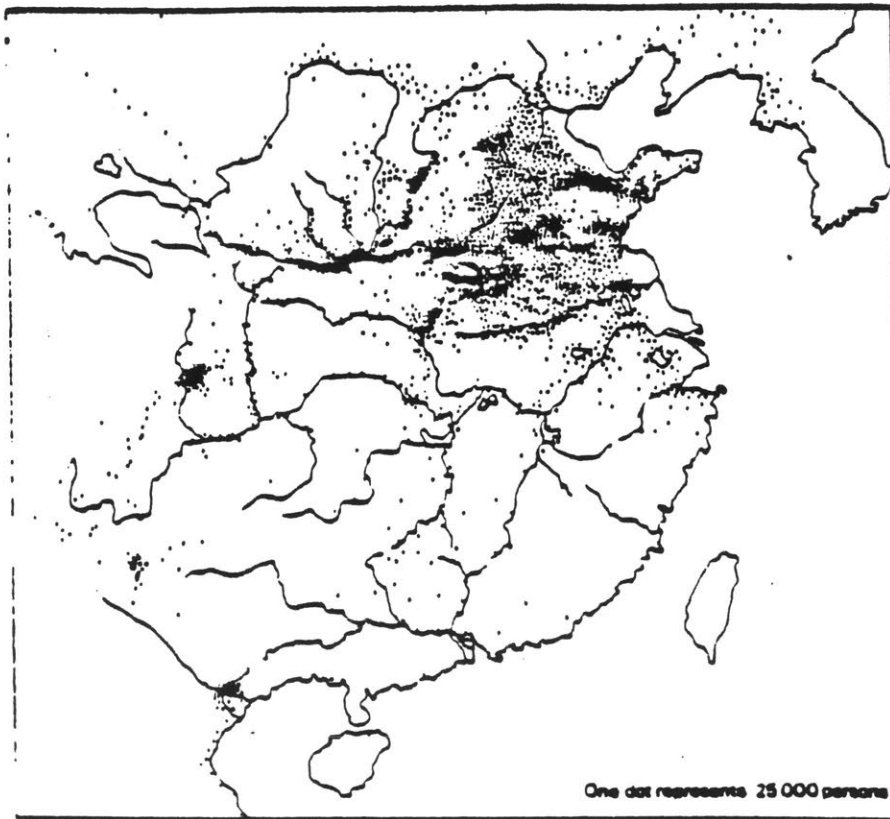
Map 5
The Core of Feudalism, the Heart of Chinese
Civilization



From Eberhard, A History of China, p. 39.

Map 6

The Demography of Ancient China



Population: A.D. 2

From CHC, p. 241.

once more peripheral. Above all, by concealing his long-range ambition (conquest of all China?), and openly settling for servile rank, Liu Pang regained moral strength where it mattered--in the camp of his rebel protector. Better to let the stronger hand of the protector bear the brunt of repelling hostile forces for a while. The alternative--abandoning his home ground all together and marching off far away--would not have been a wise move at all: with neither noble rank nor a large following to recommend him, he could not easily reacquire a base of operations beyond his native land.

Thus Liu Pang could expect to find in temporary alliance protection appropriate to the circumstances. Paradoxically, despite his subordinate status, he also could expect to retain the initiative. By ostensibly submerging his ambition, Liu Pang prepared the means of having it resurface: he had only to remain patient, and do what he was told.

At this moment, the precise social weakness in China at that time was the rebel powers' crying need for help. It stands to reason that any rebel power which Liu Pang might latch on to, would have to reward all who helped it. They all were, after all, in desperate battle with the empire. With his reward in hand--loyalty should assure that a reward was received--Liu Pang could then prepare for the next step. That next step would come if and when the senior partners of the alliance fell out among themselves.

The situation at that time in revolutionary China was certainly fluid enough to eventually provide Liu Pang with an opportunity to create a better base. Liu Pang's successive superiors were too hard pressed to do without a

talent such as his. It would seem that Liu Pang brought to the alliance an outstanding reputation for magnanimity, moral balance and broad maneuver, at a time when such reputations were in short supply.² Witness how the older generals of Ch'u contrasted a colleague's (Hsiang Yü's) character to Liu Pang's: the one is "fiery, violent, and very destructive. When he attacked Hsiang-ch'eng, he left nothing alive, wherever he passes, he destroys and exterminates." The other, is instead "a person of outstanding qualities who will abide by just conduct ... [who will not] exploit or tyrannize [over the people] ... [who is] habitually generous ..."³ Yet Liu Pang, as we have seen, could also storm cities and behead stubborn foes and would not let traitors escape their due punishment. Surely Liu Pang could count on the fact that his harmonized talents would again be released and given expression.

There were, of course, risks to go along with the formation of an unequal alliance. The alliance, as a whole, could lose. Or the senior partners could trick Liu Pang, deprive him of his just reward and attempt to destroy him in the wake of victory. Such could be Liu Pang's fate by calling upon third parties and fickle chance.

There was, however, a remedy for fickle chance. If his senior allies did lose, Liu Pang could very well break away from them, and begin the process of finding a strong rebel ally again. As far as dealing with a double-cross perpetrated by his superiors, Liu Pang's best defense was to carry out his orders to the letter. By so remaining in harmony with his superiors, he might not prevent an unfair demotion, but he could block a total defeat. How could a allied leadership destroy Liu Pang utterly, if he had been true to them, and still enjoy the trust of others who they

had not deceived?

Given the extremely fluid conditions that prevailed in the early civil war, Liu Pang was a second time at the highest realm of policy waging political war where it mattered. This time, however, the strategy was rightly built upon the formation of a subordinate and subordinate alliance. Now we must see if he chose his actual partners in rebellion well.

Anonymity, on a large scale, finally deserted Liu Pang's cause in January 208 B.C.⁴ In that month, Liu Pang's modest rebel holdings became the prey of a major rebel power. Ch'en She, having just carved out a rebel fiefdom that lay southwest of P'ei (it stretched from Chi to Hsi), now turned towards the northeast. In the wake of Ch'en She's latest intrigue, Liu Pang's city commandant at Feng was induced to change sides. In response to this serious incursion, Liu Pang ended for the time being his career as an independent bandit and allied himself with a third rebel party to his east, a party under the control of Lord Ning of Tung-yang, based at Liu. (By this time, rebellions were breaking out all over China--in defiance of Ch'in, rebel kingdoms were now established in Yen, Chao, Ch'i, Wei and Wu.) With the assistance of troops from Lord Ning, Liu Pang brought Feng under attack.

In February 208 B.C., a large imperial field army under the command of Chang Han, a high ranking Ch'in general, advanced north against rebel Ch'u (under Ch'en She), and the outskirts of Liu Pang's territory: Liu Pang's successes were now even attracting the attention of imperial theater command. Liu Pang and Lord Ning did what they could to stem the tide of Ch'in's counterattack, fighting several not

entirely unsuccessful battles around Hsiao, Tang and Hsia-i. Then in October, hearing that the rebel forces of Wu had reached Hsieh, Liu Pang subordinated himself for a second time in a still larger rebel alliance. Liu Pang's new master was Hsiang Liang, C-in-C of the army of the rebel state of Ch'u, and uncle of Hsiang Yü, Liu Pang's future rival. The immediate price of Liu Pang's accommodation was subordination in the Ch'u hierarchy of command, and participation in Ch'u's broad northwestern advance into Shantung and Honan. (The revolt of Ch'u had begun in Wu, east of the Yangste.) Liu Pang was first permitted to try again to punish the traitor at Feng. The steadfastness with which he pursued that traitor (he finally did punish him), shows iron resolve, and a proper foil to mildness.⁵

Once allied and subordinated to rebel Ch'u, Liu Pang's fortunes went through several vicissitudes. First, Liu Pang, in a junior but not inconsequential command, shared in a series of great victories over the Ch'in army (viz. at Tung-a, Ch'eng-yang, P'u-yang, Ting-t'ao, Yung-ch'iu and points north near Ch'i). It is possible that Liu Pang shared in a number of massacres too. (Were they justified, or not?) Then came apparent disaster. Hsiang Liang, in command of the main rebel body, having grown proud and boastful, fell victim to a clever night attack conducted by the Ch'in general Chang Han, who had shortly before been reinforced. Hearing of the defeat, Liu Pang, Hsiang Yü and all rebel Ch'u forces fell back upon P'eng-ch'eng. Fortunately for rebel Ch'u, Chang Han now broke off his attack. Confident that his eastern front was now secure, Chang Han turned back upon Chao in the west, also in revolt.

Despite these vicissitudes, Liu Pang's chose his protectors well. Care was taken to find protection that was

well placed. Both the bases of Lord Ning of Tung-yang and Hsiang Liang of Wu lay at angles to the threats posed in turn by Ch'en She's rebel army and Chang Han's imperial army. Both armies which threatened were headed northeast. Both Lord Ning's base (Liu) and Hsiang Liang's base (Wu) lay to the southeast.

Liu Pang also took care to find himself protection that was successively proportional to the threats he faced. The threat which he first faced, that posed by Ch'en She, was of moderate intensity; the second threat, that posed by Chang Han, was heavy--his alliances with Lord Ning of Tung-yang and Hsiang Liang of Wu evoked moderate and heavy counterweights respectively. Ch'en She, it would appear, was not in command of an especially large army; nor was his prestige especially great, coming as he did from Wei and Chi, former feudal lands of only secondary importance in the former "Vertical Alliance" of the Warring State Period.³ The "five or six thousand men" which Lord Ning furnished Liu Pang provided adequate reinforcement; Lord Ning's pedigree, descending from Tung-yang, another former feudal land of secondary importance, provided adequate offsetting prestige.

Chang Han, on the other hand, disposed of a major field army, that was also, presumably, well equipped and trained. What is more, he operated from great depth: his base of operations extended from the Ssu River all the way back to Kuan-chung itself. On top of that, he bore in his office of general, the still immense prestige--and dread--of the Ch'in empire. Liu Pang's alliance with Hsiang Liang of Wu brought against all that all this. One, the best drilled rebel army in the East, inter alia, a rebel army boasting 8000 elite troops trained in Wu.⁶ Two, the great depth of rebel Wu--a territory extending some 400 km southeast from Hsieh. And,

three, the most prestigious connections in the rebel world: Hsiang Liang, and his nephew and lieutenant Hsiang Yü, were born of the family of Ch'u--the former leading family in the former Vertical Alliance.⁷ So strong was Liu Pang's second protector that it could absorb a mighty blow delivered by a major imperial army, get back on its feet and come back swinging.

Thus Liu Pang did find in successive alliances protection appropriate to the circumstances. It shall now be shown that, despite his subordinate rank in these alliances, he also did retain the initiative.

Thanks to his rebel superiors, Liu Pang would soon be exchanging his two-bit part for a major role. When the pressure against Ch'u subsided, and Chang Han marched off in the opposite direction now bound for Chao, the capital of Ch'u was withdrawn from Hsu-i to P'eng-ch'eng. There at P'eng-ch'eng, a new strategy, with the help of a mercenary strategist by name of Sung I, was devised.⁸ Henceforth, metropolitan Ch'in would be subject to attack from two directions. The great empire's lair was to be approached along axes set north and south of the Yellow River. The northern attack would be the charge of Sung I; Hsiang Yü would be his second in command. The southern attack would be directed by Liu Pang, who, in recognition of his new responsibility, was enfeoffed marquis of Tang. The Ch'u army of the north was by far the larger. Yet its mission, as Sung I saw it, was diversionary: it was to pin down Chang Han, and eventually relieve Chao. Pursuit of the main chance--the penetration of Kuan-chung, homeland of Ch'in--was entrusted to Liu Pang, and the army of the south, such as it was. None the less, a pact was made with all Ch'u commanders which said that the first commander to enter

Kuan-chung would get to keep it, and make of it a kingdom.

A strategy was now in place for the defeat of Ch'in by strategic flank attack. The larger force of Ch'u, under the authority of Sung I and Hsiang Yü, would draw to itself the attention--but not necessarily the fury--of the empire. With powerful rebel armies in his front (Ch'u) and rear (Chao), Chang Han and the great majority of all imperial troops in the east would be tied down. Yet the forces of Ch'u need not be harmed, from a distance they could observe the deadly quarrel being waged between Chao and Ch'in, and still do their job. Meanwhile, with his path cleared of heavy resistance, Liu Pang could march pellmell for the homeland of Ch'in. With the homeland in Liu Pang's hands, Ch'in's forces in the field would be caught in the most awkward of vices, and must surrender as a matter of course. Domination of the great field army of Ch'in could be accomplished with little loss of life on the part of Ch'u. For his reward Liu Pang would have the homeland of Ch'in, but the leaders of Ch'u would have the great mass of China and would also still have the larger army in the field. The balance of power between inferior Liu Pang and superior Sung I, Hsiang Yu and the King of Ch'u need not change.

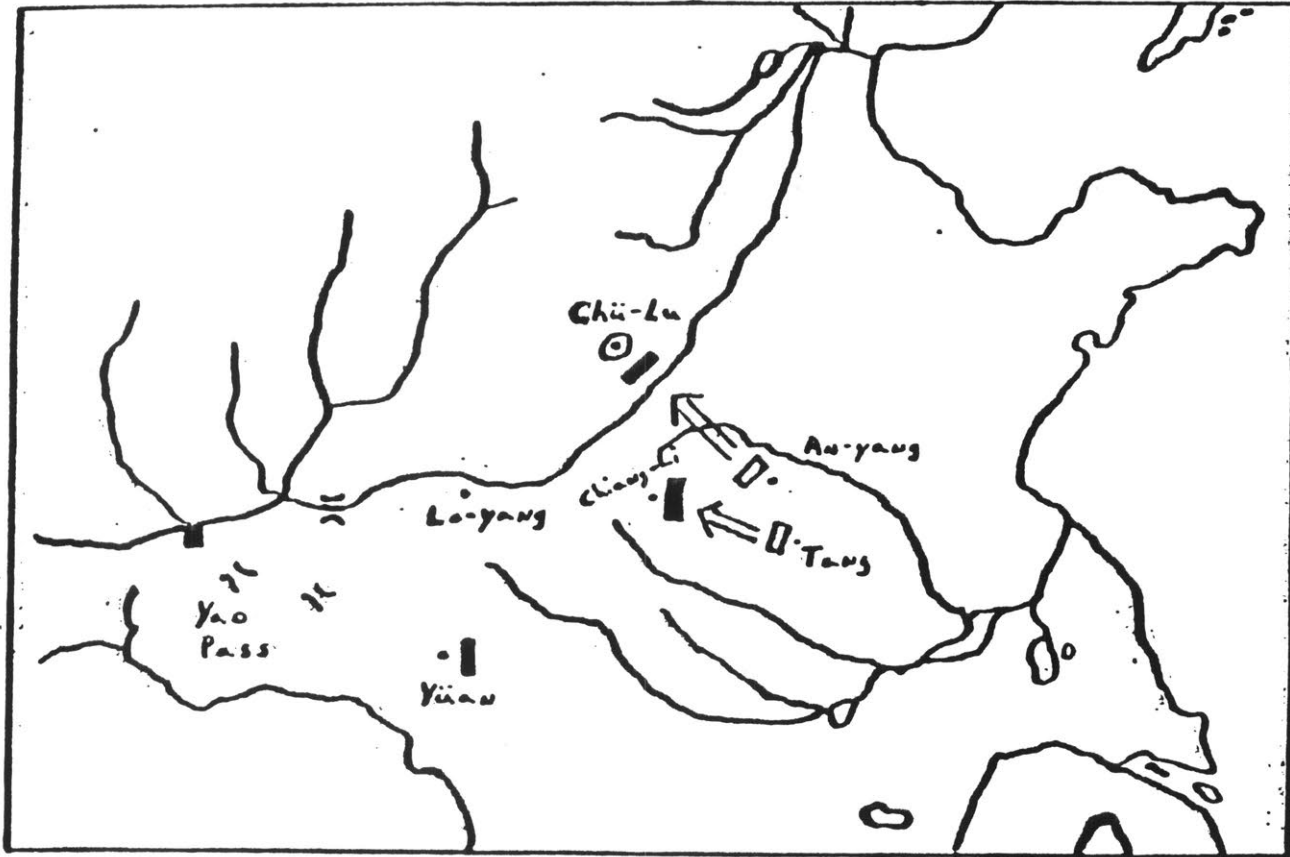
This was the plan as conceived by Sung I. Liu Pang, as we shall see below, adhered to it faithfully. But should he have?

At first inspection, the role offered Liu Pang has all the attraction of being adrift in a large boat without a motor, as opposed to being adrift in a little raft. Nastier swells can be better braved, but when all is said and done, one is still adrift. Closer examination of the facts dispels this initial pessimism, however.

It is true that the culmination of the plan of Sung I would leave the relative balance of intrinsic strength between Liu Pang and his superiors much as it already was. Liu Pang would still possess a small fraction of power, his superiors--the greater portion. But there was this crucial difference. At campaign's end, Liu Pang would have exchanged a centrally located base for a peripheral one. On top of that, this base at the periphery was also the best naturally fortified territory that all of China had to offer.⁹ All the generals of rebel Ch'u understood the significance of the prize.¹⁰ From this fortified periphery, Liu Pang would be ideally placed to exploit any dissensions that opened in the east. His back and flanks would be free, he could concentrate on his front. Moreover one look at the supreme command of rebel Ch'u must have told Liu Pang that dissension and greater opportunity was not far away. Hsiang Yü, to name but one general, was visibly upset with his subordinate status, and no man of good character. Liu Pang had witnessed that himself.

Here now, too, was concrete risk to go along with possible concrete benefit. Liu Pang could very well find himself tricked and done in. He could indeed be the first to enter Kuan-chung, and yet have the promised fruits denied him: the northern army of Ch'u did, after all, number much larger forces. But to protect himself against this contingency, Liu Pang did have a recourse of sorts. If he fulfilled his orders to the letter and kept himself in moral balance, he could not be unduly cheated without arousing the suspicions of other subordinate commanders.

Ch'u's new offensive jumped off in the fall of 207 B.C.¹¹ See Map 7. For Liu Pang's part a definite pattern emerged at the highest level of his policy. First a battle



Liu Pang's Advance as an Ally of Rebel Ch'u
The March West

Map 7

- ⊙ = Rebel King of Chao under siege
- = Major Armies of Ch'in
- from An-yang = Rebel Army of Ch'u
under Sung I, then Hsiang Yü
- from Tang = Rebel Army of Ch'u
under Liu Pang

would be fought, then in the wake of victory it was routine to draw recruits with sweet promises and generally kind treatment. Such was generally the case along the line of march between Tang, where Liu Pang began, and Lo-yang, the eastern gateway to Kuan-chung. Thus were battles fought at Ch'eng-yang, Chiang-li, Ch'eng-wu, and Chang-i; and also at Ch'en-liu, Pai-ma, Ch'u-yung, and P'ing-yin. Each battle, or cluster of battles, was followed by matching recruiting drives which were launched in Li, the environs of Chang-i, the environs of Ch'en-liu, and Hann. A battle fought at Ying-yang was followed by a massacre, however. Liu Pang's conduct at the highest level of his policy was efficient and consistent with a grand strategy that gave political warfare pride of place.

It might be objected that the sequence of events--first fight, then recruit--makes no sense at all as good political maneuver. Moreover if there was a real need to fight first, this would seem to violate the principle of attacking when conditions were auspicious for the conduct of political warfare. In one sense, these objections are true--but not unduly so. However cruel and wanton the empire of Ch'in, it continued to command allegiance far afield, as long as its armies remained unbeaten in the field. Thus it was necessary to beat them. But--and this made all the difference--it was not necessary to sweep the entire field and disarm the imperial army as a whole to reap very significant political advantage. The decay of the empire was very real; local military victories would harvest local political gains; other rebel parties were already in the field looking for stronger leadership. These political gains could then be used to loosen the imperial structure still more. Conditions were then auspicious for the conduct of political warfare. And the policy of magnanimity in the

wake of victories was generally the best way to attack the empire's latent social weakness. For that weakness loomed up by and large because of the excessive harshness of the empire.

Thus it must have been assumed that disaffection in the Ch'in empire could be exploited, and helpful recruits found when and where needed. Else Liu Pang's forces must eventually drown in the rising tide of enemy forces that were overwhelming superior at any of a number of points along the axis of advance. When Liu Pang took up his new assignment and set out for the west and the homeland of Ch'in, this was certainly a fair assumption to make. There is no doubt then that his theater-political strategy cannot be faulted, as far as this goes. But can we not go further? Is there not evidence that discredits Liu Pang's strategy at this highest of levels? For one thing, the local populace that lay along Liu Pang's route did not come over in droves even after Liu Pang won great battles; moreover, the resistance thrown up by Ch'in's men under arms was formidable. And then too, there was the massacre of the whole city of Ying-yang, hardly the act of a man reputed to be "generous" and of "just conduct."

However potent these objections may seem to be, they can be dealt with. First on the issue of massacre, it must be remembered that this was the only one recorded in a campaign in which battles in the open field and assaults on cities were numerous; moreover in which the troops were pushed hard between battles also. Also it would appear that the massacre of Ying-yang was unavoidable. When Liu Pang gave the order to cut the inhabitants of Ying-yang down, we know that he fully intended to force the Lo-yang-Han-ku Pass defile. He could hardly afford to leave intact so close to

his line of retreat--a most restricted one on top of that--the unpacified population of a recently beaten Ch'in city. Moreover, he could hardly have afforded to take the time to pacify the city and district of Ying-yang. And, who knows?, it is possible that the ordered execution of the hapless Ch'in general, Yang Hsiung, did boost the morale of Ch'in forces.

Now it is true that the number of defections to Liu Pang's cause were not that many, but we must bear in mind several important and extenuating circumstances. First, it is likely that the region through which Liu Pang passed en route to Lo-yang was settled by a significant number of native Ch'in peoples.¹² Their loyalty to Ch'in--however capricious or harsh its general rule--was likely to be high. Such is the physic effect of empire on the imperial tribe itself. Secondly, since the region in question did lay close to Lo-yang, it lay close to Ch'in reinforcement--and the prospect of future reprisals for disloyalties. Along these same lines, the largest imperial army then in the field was not to far away--Chang Han's army of 200,000 men. Thirdly, the reputation of Liu Pang, and the prestige he enjoyed was just growing.

It is important to realize too that although the number of defections to Liu Pang's cause were not high, the quality of those that did defect was. P'eng Yüeh, Li I-chi and Chang Liang were the principal leaders recruited, and they were all men of exceptional character and vision; and would all serve Liu Pang in key capacities for some time to come. All three men were known to be thoughtful and balanced disciplinarians in their own right. Moreover, all three had been looking for a formidable and fair leader for some time, passed up many, and yet confidently fell in behind Liu Pang

when they came upon him. Notable commendation indeed.

Liu Pang's success at the highest level of his theater strategy was thus predicated upon first winning battles, then would come political exploitation of the breach. However unavoidable it was to shed some blood, Liu Pang's task could be made easier if he could manage to fight few battles, and manage to pick highly winnable ones at that. Liu Pang's rebel allies had already given him a tremendous boost in this respect by drawing most of the attention of the enemy upon themselves. But in exchange for this head start, Liu Pang had few troops with which to work. Military maneuver was of the essence therefore. Did Liu Pang deliver?

Liu Pang's advance, at theater level, shows the unmistakable signs of central attack and concentration of his most mobile and battle worthy forces. For most of his march, some 300 km all told, between battles fought at the fortresses of Chang-i in what is today western Shantung, and Ying-yang in western Honan on the modern map, Liu Pang marched with haste and cut a narrow swath, he did not pacify adjacent enemy lands to any appreciable depth off his line of march. By way of sharp contrast, he did pacify for many miles around in lands that lay directly beyond his jump off point near Tang, and that lay in close proximity to Lo-yang, the Han-ku Pass and the eastern gateway to Kuan-chung. Any objections to Liu Pang's military conduct at theater level must be unjust. As at the political level, so too at the highest military level, Liu Pang avoided the strength of the enemy, and struck at his weakness.

Liu Pang's mission was to make for the eastern door to Kuan-chung as quickly as possible, doing the least harm to

his forces, and doing nothing to jeopardize the success of his superiors' plan of attack as a whole. Where his own mission was concerned, it must have been essential to gather enough forces to overcome any hostile forces that might be encountered on the march. Thus the need to rip a large hole at the base line of the offensive. By so doing, badly needed forces could be recruited. What is more, the climatic assault on Lo-yang and the Han-ku Pass would take special preparation too. Liu Pang's forces would be operating in a restricted area, and thus had to be sure of their immediate line of retreat. He might also need a final reinforcement, to replace losses to his army, losses that could only be heavy given the long road covered, and the speed with which it was covered.

Where the security of his superior's forces were concerned, the peculiarity of the march on Lo-yang must have been acceptable too. Pacification of the land adjacent to Tang would have a second happy effect. Not only would Liu Pang find new recruits, but the territory fronting the Ch'u capital would be consolidated, and the lateral line of communication linking the capital to the northern army would be shielded as well. Liu Pang's failure to pacify most enemy lands along his line of march would leave enemy forces at large, and behind the lines of Ch'u. But in the long run, these survivors would be had too. Liu Pang, by his bee-line drive, may not have destroyed all forces along his line of march, but he would be sure to disrupt them. It must have been understood that once the eastern passes had been reached, and reinforcement of the east blocked, the residue of those imperial forces that remained east of the passes and still in fighting trim would feel abandoned, forlorn and broken, and would eventually despair and surrender, as if they had been beaten in battle one by

one.¹³ Just as there was no crying need to engage and directly defeat in battle the army of Chang Han, so too there was no crying need to defeat all imperial troops that lay deployed in Liu Pang's theater.

The details of Liu Pang's western advance are also in a piece with his broader action. It was Liu Pang who won the race to be first inside Kuan-chung. But first we must hear how he reached the eastern outskirts of the Ch'in homeland. In preparation for his great advance towards Kuan-chung, Liu Pang assembled his new army at the city of Tang (not far west of P'eng-ch'eng). His army was called a "motley band," and this was only fair, for the HS says that it comprised "the scattered soldiers of King Ch'en [She] and of Hsiang Liang."¹⁴ From Tang, Liu Pang marched west by northwest, came upon the walled towns of Ch'eng-yang and Chiang-li, and put to the sword the two Ch'in "armies" (division strength?) which stood in the way. These victories won, Liu Pang now wheeled round to the northeast, and marched on Ch'eng-wu. Soon a third Ch'in army in less than a month lay beaten. From Ch'eng-wu, Liu Pang's host moved due south to Li. Reinforcements were to be gained thereabouts: four thousand men under the Marquis of Kang-wu (forced to join), and unknown numbers of troops under two Wei_h generals were to swell Liu Pang's ranks. In the midst of all these movements, yet another Ch'in army was brought to battle, and routed. Liu Pang now all but retraced his recent steps, and marched north on Chang-i, but not before meeting up with P'eng Yueh and his band of highwaymen, one thousand strong. United, Liu Pang and P'eng Yueh tried to storm Chang-i. They failed.

Undaunted by the successful resistance at Chang-i, Liu Pang resumed his advance on Kuan-chung, marching west by

southwest via Kao-yang. P'eng Yüeh stayed behind and retired to Chu-yeh, gathering more soldiers. At Kao-yang, Liu Pang was approached by the Confucian Master Li I-chi. Li I-chi's nickname was "Mad Scholar," but the plan which he shared with Liu Pang and put into action was not mad, only effective: Li I-chi went ahead and Liu Pang and his army came after, all were bound for the great thoroughfare, emporium and grain depot, Ch'en-liu: Li I-chi gained the confidence of the Ch'en-liu garrison, Liu Pang's host then fell upon the distracted city. Supreme at Ch'en-liu, Liu Pang made Li I-chi a most trusted advisor, and raised up his brother to the command of all forces of Ch'en-liu. Liu Pang's host had now gone half-way to the Han-ku Pass. The eastern gateway to Kuan-chung was but ten days' march away (about 200 km).

From Ch'en-liu, Liu Pang fought his way further to the west. An attack on K'ai-feng failed, but no matter, Liu Pang's forces just rolled intently on. At Pai-ma and again at Ch'u-yung, battles (how intense?) raged between Liu Pang and the Ch'in general, Yang Hsiung. At the end of them, Yang Hsiung was beaten and distraught: to the proud fortress of Jung-yang he retired: awaiting him was this order from the capital--off with his head, make of him an example for the rest of our generals! Liu Pang now pounced upon the city of Ying-yang (it lay southwest of Jung-yang, and due south of the Huan-yuan Pass). Liu Pang had the garrison and inhabitants murdered, one and all. This bloody act complete, Liu Pang joined forces with Chang Liang and his band of one thousand brigands, and together they pacified the region of Hann. Then came startling news. An army of rebel Chao, marching out of the east and north of the Yellow River, was set to enter the Passes first. (At this time, the northern army of rebel Ch'u was approaching Kuan-chung

via Chao and the road that ran parallel to the Yellow River.) Liu Pang heard the news and then took flight, making a dash for P'ing-yin, an easy ford to cross the Yellow River. Liu Pang got there first, by this means was the design of rebel Chao frustrated. After P'ing-yin, Liu Pang tried to force the Lo-yang-Han-ku Pass defile, but to no avail. Finding the direct road to Hsien-yang, the Ch'in imperial capital, barred by a heavy defense, Liu Pang turned away and marched south. Thus ended Liu Pang's bid to pry Kuan-chung open from the east.

The first thing that must strike the reader about this western drive is its meandering course. How can this spell strategy? In two big areas, first between Tang and Chiang-li, and later between Ch'en-liu and Lo-yang, the army of Liu Pang seems to wander around in circles, blundering onward with no clear direction. Another thing that stands out is the failure of Liu Pang to take certain key cities, like Chang-i and K'ai-feng. Was not this ill-advised? Was not Liu Pang lucky he was not attacked from behind? Should he not have brought both Chang-i and K'ai-feng under seige, once direct assault failed? Should he not have conquered in a much more systematic way?

Closer examination of the facts shows that both of these objections have no merit. Take the second objection first. To blame Liu Pang for bypassing Chang-i and K'ai-feng, after quick assaults on both these cities failed, is to ignore the importance that speed must have played in his plans. It must not be forgotten that Liu Pang was in a race with the northern army of Ch'u to see who would be the first to enter Kuan-chung. To bring a city under laborious seige would be to stop the general advance for many weeks. It would have been inconsistent with the rapid advance

sustained between all battles. (Liu Pang's army covered almost five km a day for seven to eight months.) What is more, for every day the general advance was unnecessarily slowed down, another day was given to the Ch'in generals to assess and respond to Liu Pang's mounting threat. All this is not to say that, by leaving Chang-i and K'ai-feng intact and alive along his line of communication and retreat, Liu Pang opened himself up to unnecessary risk. Quite the contrary, Liu Pang did take adequate precautions under the circumstances. P'eng Yüeh must have been left behind at Chu-yeh precisely for this purpose, to observe the garrison at Chang-i, and harass it if it came out. And by no means was P'eng Yüeh's command insignificant. In short order (when Hsiang Yü entered Kuan-chung), P'eng Yüeh had "over ten thousand" soldiers," says the SC.¹⁵ Likewise some of the newly recruited forces at Ch'en-liu must have been told to observe the garrison at K'ai-feng, and harass it if it came out.

Having just emphasized the critical role speed must have played in Liu Pang's plans, it would then seem contradictory to defend his meandering general path. There need be no contradiction, however. Speed can be important, even critical to success, but this does not mean that one's just charges blithely forward. To begin with, when Liu Pang first set out from Tang, and operated in the area in which Chang-i lay, he must have lacked the strength to attack Chang-i directly and at once; moreover, he could not yet afford to detach any of his forces to ring Chang-i and thereby neutralize its garrison. (P'eng Yüeh's marauders and the soldiers of Wei_h had yet to be recruited.) And yet, he had to come to grips with Chang-i. Chang-i was a thoroughfare city on the Ssu River, and the Ssu River was a major avenue of invasion for Ch'in forces. An imperial army

based at Chang-i, and able to sortie from there, could do untold harm to Liu Pang's line of communication and retreat. Thus Liu Pang first operated at a distance from Chang-i; he made sure to target weaker enemy forces that could support it; attacked these enemy forces in detail, one by one; and he gathered more strength of his own. Only then, when he was supreme in the region just beyond Chang-i, did he try his assault on Chang-i. Thus did Liu Pang avoid enemy strength, and strike at weakness.

Liu Pang meandered about in the other big area between K'ai-feng and Lo-yang for an equally good reason, it would seem: again to avoid enemy strength and strike at weakness. If Liu Pang had marched straightway for Lo-yang after defeating Yang Hsiang at Ch'u-yung, he must have run the awful risk of being trapped in cramped quarters. In his front would have lain the Ch'in forces guarding Lo-yang; to his rear--those Ch'in forces which were encamped in and around Ying-yang. What is more, he would have forfeited the help which Chang Liang and the rebels of Hann could have offered. Instead, by pushing first for Ying-yang (and Hann), Liu Pang isolated this part of the enemy defense, struck at weakness; and improved his chances for a subsequent assault upon Lo-yang. The second detour, the one that brought Liu Pang to P'ing-yin and the banks of the Yellow River, can hardly be faulted. For by this lightening move, Liu Pang barred most efficiently the intervention of a competitor (rebel Chao). The strength of Liu Pang's army must have been multiplied many times over by taking up a defensive position behind a major river.

The speed and directness--at the operational level--of the attack upon the powerful fortress and thoroughfare of Ch'en-liu contrasts quite sharply with the meandering course

of Liu Pang's marches around Chang-i and Lo-yang. And this is how it should have been. For speed obtained from the tactical ruse suggested by Li I-chi, and led by him. Here circumvention followed from infiltration. The time that was saved by this maneuver was considerable, and may have contributed in no small way to the subsequent stunning defeat of Yang Hsiang.

The tactical-operational component of Liu Pang's march between Tang and Lo-yang has now been analyzed. The signs are there that military maneuver informed this component throughout. As such, it fit nicely with Liu Pang's military conduct as a whole.

Liu Pang's offensive as a whole, including the role played by rebel guerrilla forces that joined his army along the march, implies the implementation of a plan of maneuver that was based upon central attack and concentration of force and detachment of force. The modern technique of the Blitzkrieg comes readily to mind. As with the Blitzkrieg, so with Liu Pang's advance, the attacker deliberately plunges into the center of the enemy's line, there amasses preponderant strength at one or (a handful) of select spots; fans out once weak spots are detected; leaves pockets of resistance behind if he must--letting slower moving forces mop these pockets up--the security of the whole army is predicated upon the paralyzing, disruptive effect of high speed concentrated attack. Thus too can the attacker overcome a unfavorable disparity in numbers.

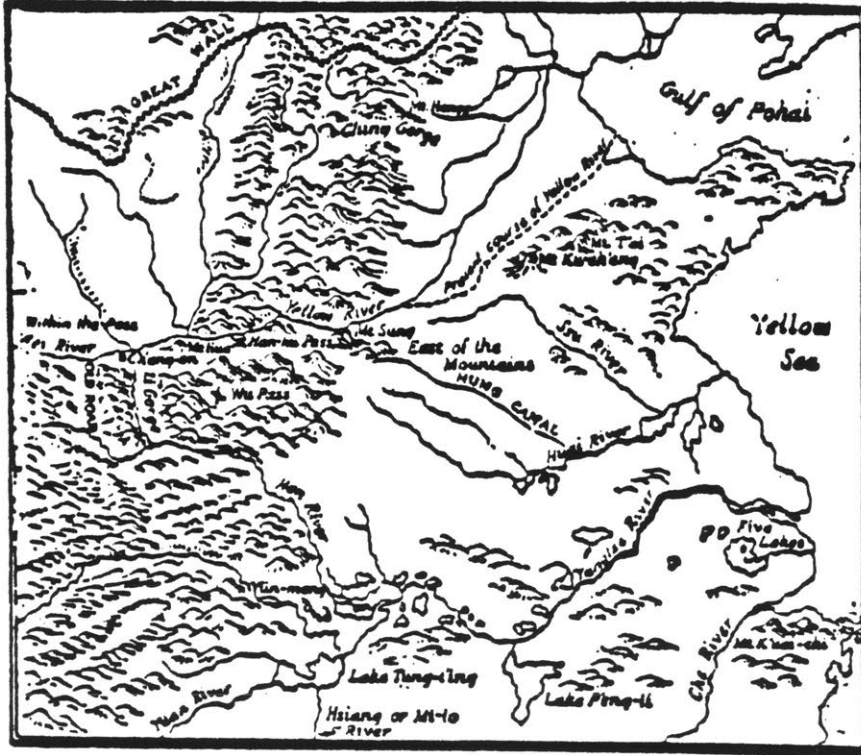
Unlike the Blitzkrieg, however, there was a moral-political component to Liu Pang's attack. Unlike, for instance, the lightning marches of Adolf Hitler through Slavic Europe, Liu Pang judiciously exploited the political

advantages to be had by his ancient version of lightning war. He did not treat the people he subjugated along the way as beasts of prey; rather he usually shared with them the spoils of victory. In this crucial respect, Liu Pang's winning policy was more like the policy exhibited by Alexander the Great in his lightning war in Persia. (Alexander treated defeated Persians well. In fact, he ordered his men to marry some of them.) Indeed all military operations were conducted with the political object very much in mind.

It is now time to review this period in the civil war. A great deal of the maneuver offensive can be discerned. Liu Pang kept himself in moral balance throughout the entire offensive. He struck when the enemy was morally vulnerable. He outmaneuvered the enemy by slicing directly up the center of the enemy line, and shrewdly counted on enemy harshness to provide timely and local reinforcement along the line of march. The turning point of this campaign was reached when Liu Pang reached Lo-yang. A bevy of imperial garrisons still remained at large behind and to the east of Liu Pang's "schwerpunkt," but to no avail for they were now cut off from Kuan-chung, and any hope of aid. Indeed we hear nothing more about these forces. Liu Pang was now poised for the pursuit phase--at theater level--if he could only amass the necessary numbers to force the defiles. But that, as it turned out, was a tall order.

Liu Pang refused to force the Han-ku Pass by the strategic version of a battering ram.¹⁶ Only a powerful army could force the defile. See Map 8. Liu Pang lacked that, and made no effort to gather one. Instead with a quick push quite out of reach, he set out at once to find another way in. As fast as he had come upon the Pass, he

The Topography of Heavily Settled China



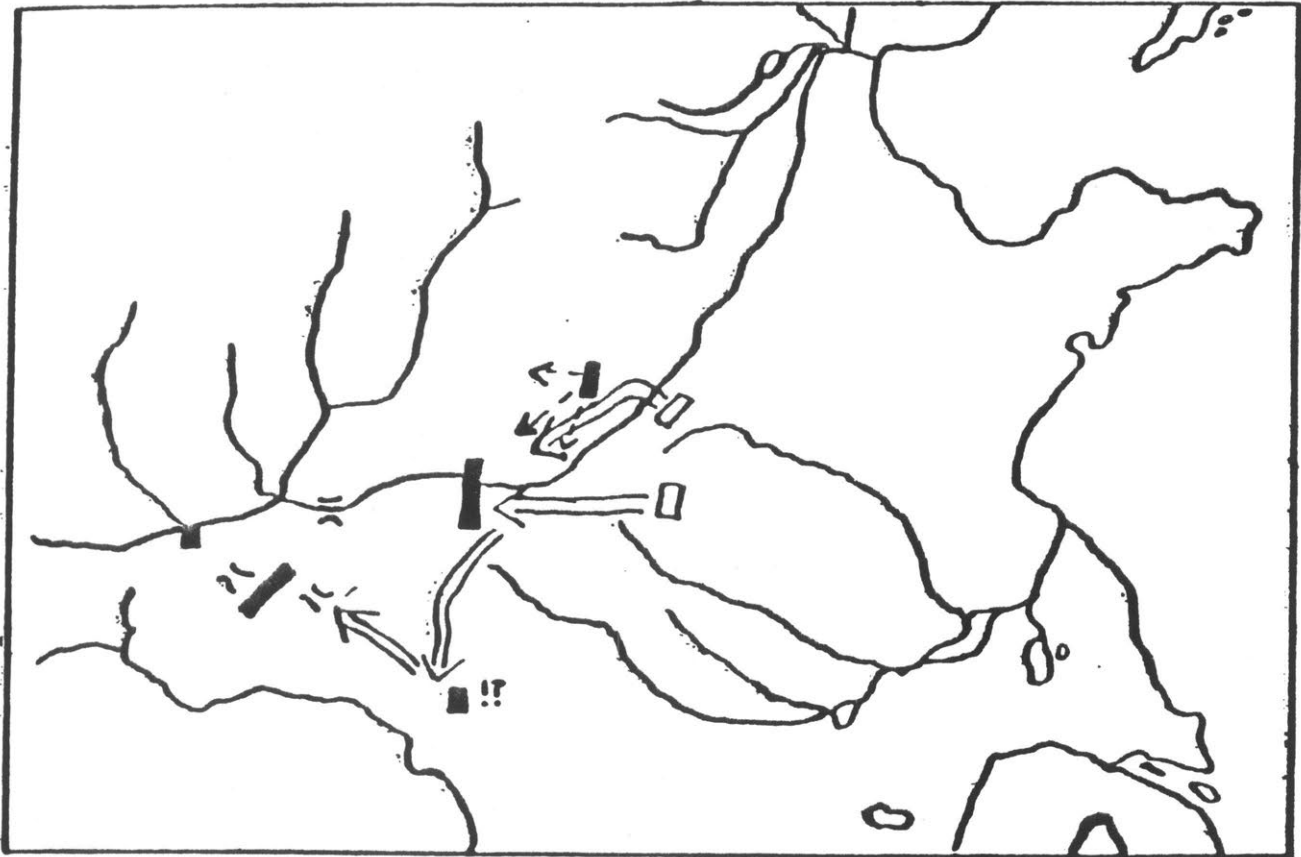
From Watson, Records, Vol. I, p. 25.



quit it. Wheeling round, he made haste for the Yao and Wu Passes, the southern gateway to Kuan-chung. This gateway Liu Pang duly marched on, but not directly. First he rolled up the province of Nan-yang (western Honan), going some 500 km out of his way. See Map 9.

Thus did Liu Pang act decisively. But did he also act wisely? To begin with, there was the detour round southeastern Kuan-chung. The enemy, occupying interior lines, must have been able to redeploy faster and with less bother than Han, which redeployed along exterior lines. Surely there was nothing clever or economical about this detour. It certainly could not qualify as a outflanking move at all. And, if this wasteful redeployment was not enough, there was the fact that Han made it not directly, but round-about: why conquer Nan-yang and add another 500 km to a march already extended by 300 km by the need to enter from the Wu Pass?

Closer examination of the facts reveals that neither of these two objections has merit. Liu Pang's detour before Kuan-chung was proper. Once it was discovered that the garrisons guarding the Han-ku Pass and the direct entrance to Kuan-chung were strong, it was essential to negate the enemy's advantage that came from occupying interior lines. As long as Han tried to force the Han-ku-Lo-yang defile alone, it masked the threat posed by the northern army of Ch'u, and the home guard of Ch'in had but to counter a fraction of the army of Ch'u. By moving south, Han uncovered the threat that the northern army posed, while still posing a threat of its own. The defense was then confronted with converging threats from different directions--the classic means of negating the benefits of interior lines. What is more, this maneuver on the part of

Map 9
Liu Pang's Advance with Rebel Ch'u
The March Southwest



-  = Ch'in Army routed by Hsiang Yü, then massacred
-  = Ch'in Army surrenders to Liu Pang, then joins his cause

Liu Pang, redounded to Han's advantage for another reason. It would seem that between the two armies, the northern army of Ch'u was the larger, and was also commanded by men of wider tactical reputation.¹⁷ Thus Liu Pang must have had every reason to believe that resistance to his forces would be less than the resistance which the northern army was likely to encounter. This, as we shall see, was indeed what happened.

Liu Pang was also justified by the depth of his detour round Kuan-chung. For an advance on Hsieh-yang along the axis Lo-yang-Han-ku Pass, Liu Pang could have counted upon the rear support offered by his recent conquest of northern Honan; no support of a comparable nature was at hand for an advance on Hsieh-yang from the southeast--unless Nan-yang, the hinterland beyond the Wu Pass, could be brought under control. What is more, to have marched directly from Lo-yang to the Wu Pass would have been to have run a second risk; the forces of Han risked attack from the rear as they engaged the home guard of Ch'in from the front. So much was said by Chang Liang, the man who proposed to Liu Pang this line of action.¹⁸

Thus Liu Pang turned the flank of the enemy at the strategic level, and did so with skill. But the skill he displayed is more impressive still, for we must not forget that he lacked strategic command. By outflanking the Ch'in defenders at the Lo-yang-Han-ku defile, he reestablished the effect of two great armies working together, when, in fact, he only commanded one. Yet, as with all maneuver, there was risk to go with this benefit; and since the benefit was great, the risk was great also. By uncovering the northern axis of invasion into Kuan-chung, and by making a long outflanking move, Liu Pang gave the northern army of Ch'u

additional time to get inside the "Passes" first. In his defense, it can be said that the plan of operations of the northern army made this outcome less likely. When Liu Pang set out for the west, the plan of Ch'u at northern theater level (prior to Hsiang Yü's illegal usurpation of supreme command) called for the northern army to wait for Ch'in and Chao to exhaust each other before it advanced.¹⁹

Thus Liu Pang, on his own responsibility, breathed life once more into the military benefits of the strategic flank march. Here is the time to see if still adhered to his political strategy and to his earlier tactics.

From Lo-yang, Liu Pang gathered "horses and cavalrymen" at Yang-ch'eng. Fresh out of Yang-ch'eng, Liu Pang came upon the Administrator of Nan-yang Commandery at a place east of Ch'ou. A battle royal was fought: the Administrator was routed. The Administrator then retreated to his capital, Yüan. Liu Pang pursued by night and another route, led his troops with "his flags and pennons rolled up, and, when it became first light, he had already surrounded the city of Yüan with three lines." The HS goes on to say that the Administrator now wanted to cut his own throat, but a man of his suite, Ch'en K'uei, had another idea. To Liu Pang, a deal was offered--spare the Administrator and the city, and the Administrator would defend it for Liu Pang with his life; what is more, most of the "militia and soldiers" of Yüan would join Liu Pang's ranks and march westward with him.²⁰ Liu Pang accepted; the deal was done.

Ch'en K'uei predicted greater things for Liu Pang's act of magnanimity. Indeed word of his victory and his magnanimity preceded him, and further resistance in Nan-yang was ended, for the most part, by compassionate policy. Liu

Pang offered all who surrendered pardon and a stake in the rebellion. From Nan-yang to the Yao and Wu Passes, Liu Pang played the role of Pied Piper and liberator with incredible success. Sweet propaganda, promises of reform and offers of gain littered his path. The SC says that "... all the [intervening] cities without exception submitted to him."²¹ The honor role of captured districts piled up also, as Yin, Hsi-ling, Hsi and Li fell to the conqueror. Fighting did occur at Hu-yang, Hsi and Chih, however. Liu Pang now stood before the Yao Pass, and the last major obstacle blocking his entrance to Kuan-chung.

Outside the Yao Pass, Liu Pang sent an envoy to the court of Ch'in. Perhaps the mighty mountain ramparts of Kuan-chung could be breached by negotiation alone. Back came the answer, a favorable one it would seem: Chao Kao, the chancellor of Ch'in, bid Liu Pang to divide the area within the Passes between them both. But the reputation of the offeree was suspect; just before making the offer, Chao Kao had put the Second Emperor of Ch'in to death; Liu Pang saw a trick in the assassinator's bargain, and set himself instead to overcome the assassinator's generals. This latter object was forthwith accomplished by ruse and battle. Once inside the "Passes," Liu Pang stayed true to his policy of kindness; the once dreaded empire of Ch'in collapsed like a house of cards in the face of this alien concept. The SC says it best: "The people of Ch'in were delighted at this mildness and the Ch'in armies grew unwary so that they suffered great [and ultimate] defeat."²² In 206 B.C. Liu Pang received in supplication Chao Kao's puppet, Tzu-ying, the last king of Ch'in.

There can be no question at all about the brilliance of the political strategy which Liu Pang displayed in his

advance on Kuan-chung. Here, for the most part, was large scale expression of the strategy that informed the advance on Lo-yang. Once again, the clash and movement of armies was dull instrumental music to the opera being performed by Liu Pang's troops on the higher plane of propaganda. In his campaign between Tang and Lo-yang, Liu Pang had been harsh and compassionate in pleasing proportion; using force with stunning success against the defiant, then handsomely rewarding almost all who surrendered--in stark contrast to the practice of Ch'in, who won then oppressed; his lightening campaign in the south did nothing to dispel his ever widening reputation. At the walls of Yuan, Ch'en K'uei, spoke highly of Liu Pang's "honor:" indeed there was much of that.

Liu Pang's forces won great victories with stunning speed and minimal loss, and then they fully exploited the victories they had won. By overcoming one by one the vaunted armies of Ch'in, Liu Pang gained the attention of the peasantry: then he went one step further, sympathized with the oppressed and rewarded the repentant. This unusual combination was too much to resist, for Liu Pang's rebel band came to symbolize the winds of healthy change. Especially after the capture of the provincial capital of Nan-yang, the very presence of the army of Liu Pang served to divide many of the people of Ch'in from the local government of Ch'in. Those who continued to resist found themselves isolated and prone to easy defeat in detail. After virtually every defeat, Liu Pang would again treat the vanquished kindly, which would further enhance his own appeal ... which would further divide the enemy ... and on and on the cycle would go.

Certainly Liu Pang's political strategy differs sharply

from the political strategy of the northern army, once under the command of Hsiang Yü. For instance, after the defeat of the northern field army of Ch'in, Hsiang Yü had every one of its soldiers massacred--all 200,000--, and upon entering the Ch'in capital of Hsien-yang, he had the city looted and its inhabitants put to death.²³

I have said nothing about the tactical craft which sprung open the mountain ramparts of Kuan-chung. The Yao Pass, at the suggestion of Chang Liang,²⁴ was breached by a double ruse. Unbeknown to the garrison of the pass, forces of Han were dispersed in the mountains around the pass. Then the Ch'in general in command of the garrison there was bribed to change sides, but when his guard was down and his troops put at ease, his garrison was attacked. Much of the Ch'in army was put to the sword; remnants of the army fled; the Han army set after them in hot pursuit; a final battle--a mere formality for Han given the state the defenders were in--was fought north of Lan-t'ien.

It is unquestionably true that, from a purely tactical point of view, the assault on the passes cannot be faulted. The strength of the garrison at Yao Pass was avoided by an apt deceit. Like the assault on P'ei, the garrison at P'ei was surrounded and forces were positioned for converging attacks. This was the proper way to prearrange forces for an attack on a position that was too strong to penetrate. Unlike the assault on P'ei, the attacker's lured the commander, not the rank and file, off balance. In the latter case this was best, for the weakness in the enemy camp did lie with the commander: he was a butcher or merchant given to money and prey to bribery. With the commander's guard down, and his fear of attack removed, the disposition of his forces was automatically disrupted. It

was an easy matter then to break into the relaxed dispositions of the camp. Speed in pursuit picked up where the initial deception left off.

It remains to account for the massacre of the Ch'in army at the Yao Pass. Here was a brutal act which was inconsistent with Liu Pang's general policy of treating the subjects of Ch'in with kindness. Was it not also wasteful and thoughtless? By this act, did not Liu Pang throw away the future services of a large Ch'in army? Did he not also send some of his own soldiers to their deaths unnecessarily? (However tight the trap it was impossible to kill all the enemy without the killers incurring losses of their own.) In short, was it not inconsistent with a maneuver strategy?

Closer examination of the facts shows that the massacre at the Yao Pass was perfectly rational, and quite necessary. To do otherwise would only have courted an enormous risk. While the general of the enemy army had succumbed to temptation and turned traitor, the enemy army itself had not. If the enemy army did not follow their leader's example, the situation would have been most dangerous for Liu Pang's forces--Liu Pang's forces were, at that moment, boxed in by the defiles of the mountains that shielded Kuan-chung from the south, and were highly vulnerable to ambush themselves. Thus showing kindness here could have ended Liu Pang's entire enterprise. The SC records that Liu Pang and his advisors were aware of the risk they ultimately chose not to court.²⁵

It is now worthwhile to look back over the entire scene of war that stretched from Lo-yang to the Yao Pass to Hsien-yang. What we find, when reduced to its essence, is a four stage advance. From Lo-yang to the Yao Pass by way of

the detour through Nan-yang, Liu Pang goes about establishing a strong defensive base of great depth that lies tangential to the major theater of operations--the strong hold of Kuan-chung. At the same time, he is careful to build up his moral strength. This, in turn, was easy enough, for Liu Pang merely negated by frequent acts of magnanimity the moral imbalance of his opponent Ch'in. The second stage and turning point of the campaign is the breach of the Yao Pass. Notice that the enemy, by succumbing to bribery, comes of his own free will and impropriety (excessive trust in Liu Pang and lust for money) to leave his strong defensive position and put himself off balance. The third stage spans the time from the rout of the Ch'in army at the Yao Pass to the final battle north of Lan-t'ien. Here is the pursuit stage, when the fighting is heaviest (the enemy is making a last stand), but where the resistance is hopelessly turned owing to the shock induced by the speed of pursuit after the defeat at Yao Pass. The final stage is the fruition of peace: the victors commune with the rank and file of the vanquished.

Thus it appears, and has been argued that Liu Pang's conquest of Kuan-chung was soundly achieved: each level of strategy had been properly thought out and put into action; each stage in the advance pointing towards a workable peace. Liu Pang had gained his secure base, had gained it that is if the northern army of rebel Ch'u would honor the conditions stipulated by their king. Unfortunately for Liu Pang, this was not be. Within two months of his triumphant entry into Kuan-chung, Liu Pang would face, once more, the task of conquering Kuan-chung. Here, in a war full of stern tests, was the sternest test he would have to face.

Chance, the nemesis of most men, almost destroyed Liu

Pang in the winter of 205-206 B.C., the fateful season of the fall of Ch'in.²⁶ While Liu Pang threatened the homeland of Ch'in from the south, events had taken an unexpected turn in the north. The last time Liu Pang saw the banners of the northern army of rebel Ch'u, they flew at the behest of Sung I, an admirer of Liu Pang and a promoter of his ambition. For 46 days, Sung I had dithered with the northern army of Ch'u east of Chao at An-yang. This was an apparent attempt one, to kill time while the Ch'in army of Chang Han and the rebel army of Chao killed each other and two, to give Liu Pang a head start on the direct conquest of Kuan-chung. On the 47th day, Hsiang Yü, who was envious of Liu Pang, and who was deliberately assigned to Sung I's command, could contain his contempt of Sung I and Sung I's subtle strategy no longer; would brutally murder Sung I in the supreme commander's tent; and would boldly seize command of the northern army of Ch'u. Hsiang Yü's next move was to set his army with great speed to the relief of the army of Chao. The latter army was suffering under the curse of a long siege around the Chao capital of Chü-lu. A swift, if dangerous, victory won before the walls of Chu-lu catapulted Hsiang Yü to command of all the allied armies. The way was now clear for an advance on Lo-yang and the Han-ku Pass from the northwest. Shortly thereafter, Chang Han and his charge, the pride of the empire's field army in the East, despaired of holding their own and fell in with Hsiang Yü. (At this time, Liu Pang was preparing to force the Yao Pass.) Several more battles later, including the massacre of Chang Han's army--all 200,000 men--, Hsiang Yü put his army in array before the Han-ku Pass, aimed to seize everything within, and burned to destroy Liu Pang.

Upon entering Kuan-chung, Liu Pang made no attempt to block the Han-ku Pass to Hsiang Yü's forces. It is clear

from his edicts to the Kuan-chung public that he believed Hsiang Yü would not deny him the fruits of victory: Liu Pang believed that Hsiang Yü would honor the king of Ch'u's terms--whoever entered the "Land Within the Passes" first would be entitled to keep it.²⁷ Then there came this: word that Hsiang Yü had appointed Chang Han "king of Yung"--king of the "Land within the Passes." Hsiang Yü clearly intended to break the agreement with the king of Ch'u. What to do?

At this moment of supreme danger, Liu Pang's impulse was to defend Kuan-chung. He could not, however, prepare a stout defense in time. Whether because Liu Pang had been dilatory in his previous dispositions owing to laziness (unlikely), or because he simply could not do any better owing to the scattered nature of his dispositions when he entered Kuan-chung (possible), or because he had kept his forces concentrated too long owing to excessive trust in Hsiang Yu (most likely), only a weak garrison could be assembled at Han-ku Pass. Hsiang Yü easily found the means to overcome this garrison. Liu Pang's predicament was now transformed. It is said that Hsiang Yü had with him 400,000 men: Liu Pang had but one-quarter that number:²⁸ in terms of tactical leadership, the advantage lay utterly also on Hsiang Yü's side.

With Hsiang Yü's superior army arrayed in strength inside "the Passes," Liu Pang could entertain no further thought of contesting Kuan-chung. Kuan-chung's defenses breached, Liu Pang did not retreat, however. Instead he bargained. And he threw caution to the wind. Liu Pang did not ask to meet Hsiang Yü on neutral ground, on ground out in the middle of their armies. Instead, with no more than Hsiang Yü's word that he would not be harmed, Liu Pang, and his very top advisor, Chang Liang, ventured into the very

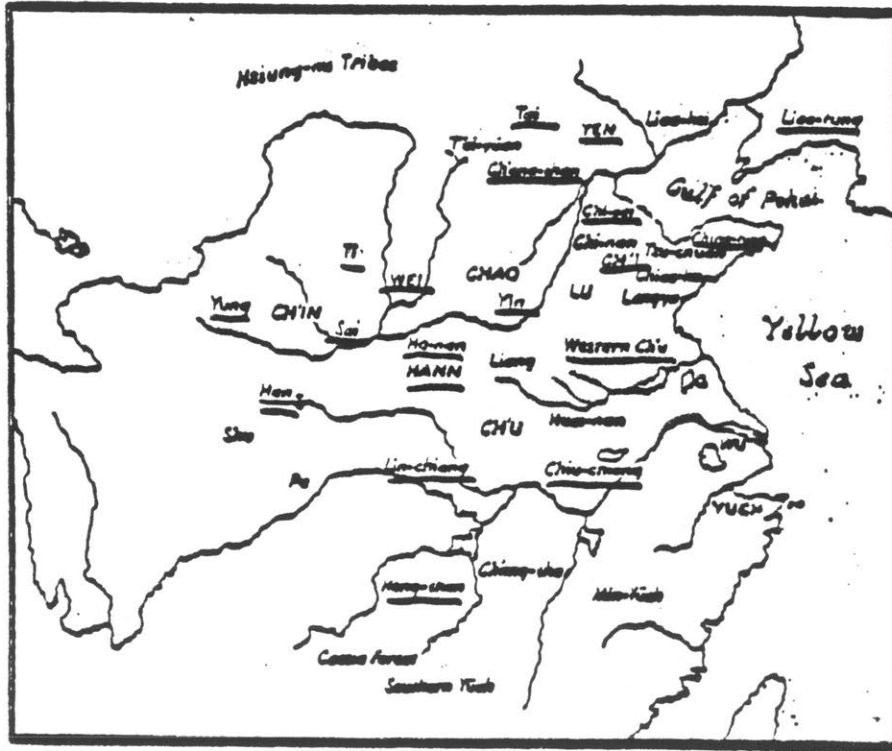
heart of Hsiang Yü's camp (at Hsin-feng, east of Hsieh-yang and north of Pa-shang) with only a bodyguard 100 men strong, and with his own camp more than 10 miles away (at Pa-shang), well out of tactical reach, about a day's march distant. If Hsiang Yü broke his word, or if the parley became heated, there would be no escape for Liu Pang.

Thus began one of the most celebrated tete-a-tete's in all Chinese history. Liu Pang's central talking points in their discussions were these: (1) that the Han-ku Pass had only been garrisoned to keep out bandits; (2) that nothing had been taken from Kuan-chung, all was being kept under lock and key for Hsiang Yü.

The outcome of the rendezvous was sweeping. Hsiang Yu declared himself master of China, and presided over the creation of a hegemony of eighteen states. See Map 10. In violation of the spirit of King Hsieh's promise, but in accordance with it in a twisted technical sense, Liu Pang was made king of "the land within the passes"--the land within those passes that led not to Kuan-chung, but to semi-primitive Shu, Pa and Han_s. Meanwhile, Hsiang Yü placed his favorites on sixteen of the other thrones, including three former generals of Ch'in who were granted kingships in Kuan-chung. Hsiang Yü himself retired to the kingdom of Western Ch'u--the richest kingdom in China, formed by the union of ancient Liang and Ch'u.²⁹

Let us now analyze Liu Pang's succession of defensive strategies. Was the first defensive strategy wise? Was it wise for Liu Pang to try to defend Kuan-chung? To be sure, the first plan had its appeal--on paper. Kuan-chung was endowed with superb natural defenses. To the east and to the south--Hsiang Yü's feasible axes of approach--Kuan-chung

Map 10
The Empire of Hsiang Yü



—— = Kingdoms of Hsiang Yü's Empire

Western Ch'u = personal Kingdom of Hsiang Yü

Han_S = Kingdom of Liu Pang

From Watson, Records, Vol. I, p. 57.

was surrounded by veritable mountain ramparts, ramparts which were passable by an army at only three defiles (the Ching Gorge, Han-ku Pass, and Yao and Wu Passes). Also, Kuan-chung was inhabited by a fierce, warrior race. Once mobilized, the inhabitants could handily reinforce any occupying army within. Finally, Kuan-chung was blessed with fertile farms. The Valley of the Wei River was one of the main bread baskets of China. A fairly large army dwelling within could draw upon adequate supplies for a long period of time. Liu Pang was fully aware of all this when he made his first decision to defend Kuan-chung, so it is said.

For all that, it would appear that Liu Pang did make a mistake in choosing to defend Kuan-chung. Such, in fact, was the conclusion that Liu Pang and Chang Liang both reached together after the Han-ku Pass defense was breached.³⁰ Even assuming that an adequate defense could have been thrown up against Hsiang Yü's vanguard in time, that is, even assuming that the defense of Kuan-chung could have been readied, the plan to defend Kuan-chung was flawed in the fundamentals.

First of all, by defending Kuan-chung, Liu Pang would not have been able to have preserved his own forces and taken the enemy intact. Assuming that Liu Pang did manage to hold on to Kuan-chung, he could only have done so at great loss of life. Surely, bloody battles would have been fought in the defiles or enormous sacrifices would have been imposed on China as a whole throughout the course of a long siege or both of these things would have occurred together.

Second, by choosing to defend Kuan-chung, Liu Pang would have forfeited the initiative. The mountains as barriers cut two ways. Not only could they serve to keep

enemies out, they could also serve to shut the defenders in. With Liu Pang confined to Kuan-chung, Hsiang Yü would be free to gain control over more than two-thirds of China. Eventually he could have consolidated his hold, and deployed against Liu Pang many more troops. Perhaps, too, he could have assembled the necessary troops and built up the necessary commissariat to outflank the mountains of Kuan-chung from the north, via the great northern steppe.

Third, Liu Pang may have been welcomed in Kuan-chung as a liberator when he first arrived, but it was to be seen if he could maintain the people's friendship through the trying times of a siege. Surely, to maintain the support and discipline of the populace, stern measures would have been necessary; and stern measures would inevitably harm Liu Pang's authority.

Thus the attempted defense of Kuan-chung was a sure mistake. Liu Pang's first major mistake of the civil war is duly noted. But what of his second defensive strategy? Was it wise of him to throw himself upon Hsiang Yü's mercy? Had not Liu Pang thrown himself from one panicked course of action to another?

Had Liu Pang opted to withdraw his forces from Kuan-chung instead, had he sought another, albeit different, military solution to his problem, he might have been safe for the moment, perhaps even safe for an indefinite time to come. After all, his line of communication, which wound through the southern Passes and Nan-chung, was intact and beyond that line lay the rugged sanctuary of southwest China. But he would, at the same time, have revealed his intentions in full, and thus would have forfeited all chance of regaining the initiative. By running, Liu Pang would

have placed himself in open defiance of Hsiang Yü and the emerging empire of Ch'u. Hsiang Yü would have hunted Liu Pang down himself, or he would have assigned someone else to. Under these circumstances, Liu Pang might have saved himself in the rugged terrain of the southwest; he almost certainly could not regain a significant base of operations in China proper.

Thus neither military solution--to retreat from Kuan-chung, nor to defend Kuan-chung was the thing to do. But what was it about the plan that was actually used that was so appealing? It was true that the plan had worked, but had not that been because of incredible luck? Hsiang Yü, after all, had sworn to punish Liu Pang; moreover, Liu Pang, at that moment, was the last remaining obstacle to China-wide dominion, and then there he was within Hsiang Yü's grasp.

Far from being a wild gamble, Liu Pang's move was in reality a very shrewd maneuver on the highest diplomatic plane. To be sure, by withdrawing from the passes, Liu Pang was left wide open to attack, but that, in fact, was precisely the plan's strength. Liu Pang had left everything within the "Passes" as he had found it, and offered all to Hsiang Yu. Moreover, it was Liu Pang, by reason of having gotten there first, who deserved to be king of Ch'in, not Hsiang Yü, and yet Liu Pang was graciously surrendering what was rightfully his. Hsiang Yü could thus only exterminate Liu Pang at frightful moral cost. If Hsiang Yü treated a vassal thus, how would he treat men who had given up much less? Surely Hsiang Yü's power depended upon circumspect treatment of Liu Pang. The SC agrees with this judgment.³¹

The possibility of moral manipulation thus presented

itself as Hsiang Yü came storming into Kuan-chung. But wait, the plan may have been good in theory, but what made it work in practice? Hsiang Yü's cruelty was notorious. How could Liu Pang be reasonably sure that Hsiang Yü would not overlook the strategic niceties of the situation and do him in? Here is where "knowing the enemy" played such a crucial part. Liu Pang also knew that Hsiang Yü, for all his cruelty, could also be kind hearted, especially in the face of supplication or loyal service or both these things.³² Here then was an opportunity to exploit Hsiang Yü's peculiar penchant to trust excessively. Thus was the precise weakness in the enemy exploited to maximum effect.

By offering to share northwestern China with Hsiang Yü, Liu Pang insured his survival, and revived his moral strength, but did he also retain the initiative? While in possession of the provinces immediately south of Kuan-chung, Liu Pang could muster 100,000 troops and could eventually expect to mobilize many more locals. But after having withdrawn to Han_s, his base shrunk drastically, and he was left with a field army of 30,000.³³ But sheer military power is the least important determinant of any balance of power. To know the plans of the enemy--better still, to shape his plans--and to also conceal your own, is much more important. For you can aim your blows with precision, while the enemy can only flail his arms and hope. After the settlement, the plans of Liu Pang's principal opponent had become clear and they had been altered in Liu Pang's favor and Liu Pang's plans had remained obscure. Liu Pang knew that Hsiang Yü would be drawn eastward--in part, because Hsiang Yü would no longer see Liu Pang as a threat; in part, because Hsiang Yü's hold in the East was still quite precarious. On top of that, Liu Pang knew that Hsiang Yü would have to replace him as king of Ch'in with a

candidate(s) of inferior popularity (Chang Han et. al.). For Chang Han had been appointed king before the fact by Hsiang Yü.³⁴

Thus Liu Pang had shaken off his panic in time, and had chosen a deceptive diplomatic strategy, not a transparent military one. In so doing, he had once more converted an exposed, central position into a relatively secure, peripheral one. So Liu Pang retained his freedom of action, and could still bid to become supreme ruler of China, if he so chose. But how to convert his cramped peripheral base in Han_s into a powerful, secure one? And that accomplished, how, in turn, to convert strength in the periphery into mastery of the center?

FOOTNOTES

Second Campaign of Conquest
Text: pp. 75-118

1. HS 1A: 11b-12a (Dubs, HFHD, Vol. I, pp. 43-44).
2. On Liu Pang's outstanding reputation (and his moral superiority over other men like Hsiang Yü) see SC 8 (Watson, Records, Vol. I, p. 86).
3. Op. cit., pp. 47-48; HS 1A: 14a-14b.
4. For an account of this episode see Op. cit., SC 8 (pp. 83-85) and SC 7 (pp. 42-43).
5. HS Vol. I, see Dubs, footnote no. 5, p. 44.
6. Op. cit., SC 7 (p. 39).
7. SC 7 (Watson, Records, Vol. I, p. 37).
8. Sung I, we are told, was a keen student of strategy. Ibid., SC 7 (p. 44).
9. On the rich palaces that were built at Hsien-yang see Twitchett and Loewe, CHC, pp. 63-64; on the topographical virtues of Kuan-chung see Ibid., p. 46.
10. The top leadership of rebel Ch'u earmarked the assignment of the conquest of Kuan-chung with great care; proof of the importance of that target. For an account of these careful deliberations see SC 8 (Watson, Records, Vol. I, pp. 85-86).
11. For an account of the race to Kuan-chung see Ibid., SC 8 (pp. 85-90) and SC 7 (pp. 44-49).
12. Liu Pang's route followed one of the main lines of communication joining the China Plain to Kuan-chung. It is inconceivable that the central government of Ch'in did not resettle some of their own loyal peoples along this main line. With their own peoples in place, it would be easier to control the line.
13. Down through the history of Former Han, rebels who sprung up in eastern China, saw the significance of the eastern passes in this light. Viz uprisings by the King of Wu (154 B.C.) and by the King of Ch'ang-sha (123 B.C.).

14. HS 1A: 14b (Dubs, HFHD, Vol. I, p. 48).
15. Detaching P'eng Yüeh's forces could not have been too serious a loss, for the annals do not suggest that his forces were well trained and equipped for high intensity warfare in the open field. SC 90 (Watson, Records, Vol. I, p. 192)
16. For the history of the march between Lo-yang and the Ch'in capital, see HS 1A: 16a-20b (Dubs, HFHD, Vol. I, pp. 52-59).
17. Twitchett and Loewe, CHC, p. 112 and Dubs, HFHD, Vol. I, p. 6.
18. Op. cit., SC 8 (pp. 87-88).
19. SC 7 (Watson, Records, Vol. I, pp. 44-45)
20. HS 1A: 16b-17a (Dubs, HFHD, Vol. I, p. 53)
21. Op. cit., SC 8 (p. 88).
22. Ibid., SC 8 (p. 89).
23. For the massacre of the army of Ch'in see Ibid., SC 7 (p. 49) and for the sack of Hsien-yang--Ibid., SC 8 (p. 93).
24. See Ibid., SC 8 (p. 88) for both quote and Chang Liang's plan.
25. Ibid., SC 55 (p. 137)
26. The account of Liu Pang's re-establishment of a temporary base can be found in Ibid., SC 7 (pp. 44-59) and Ibid., SC 8 (pp. 90-94).
27. Ibid., SC 8 (p. 90).
28. Ibid., SC 8 (p. 90).
29. For the 18 kings of the short-lived empire of Ch'u see Ibid., SC 7 (pp. 56-59) and Ibid., SC 8 (pp. 93-94). And for Hsiang Yu's decision to place wealth over security, forfeit Kuan-chung as his personal kingdom and take Western Ch'u see Ibid., SC 7 (p. 55).
30. Ibid., SC 55 (p. 138).
31. Ibid., SC 7 (p. 56).
32. On Hsiang Yu's inconsistent character see Ibid., SC 7

(pp. 37, 73-74) and SC 92 (pp. 211-212). Such information must have been known to Liu Pang. When Liu Pang allied with Rebel Ch'u in 207 B.C., he must have had a chance to observe Hsiang Yü at first hand, and thus gather information that would have complemented Hsiang Yü's persona.

33. On the reduction in Liu Pang's forces see Ibid., SC 8 (pp. 91 and 94).

34. Ibid., SC 8 (p. 90)

Chapter Five

The Third Campaign of Conquest

RIGHTEOUS BETRAYAL AT THE SUMMIT

AND THE STRATEGIC DOUBLE PINCER:

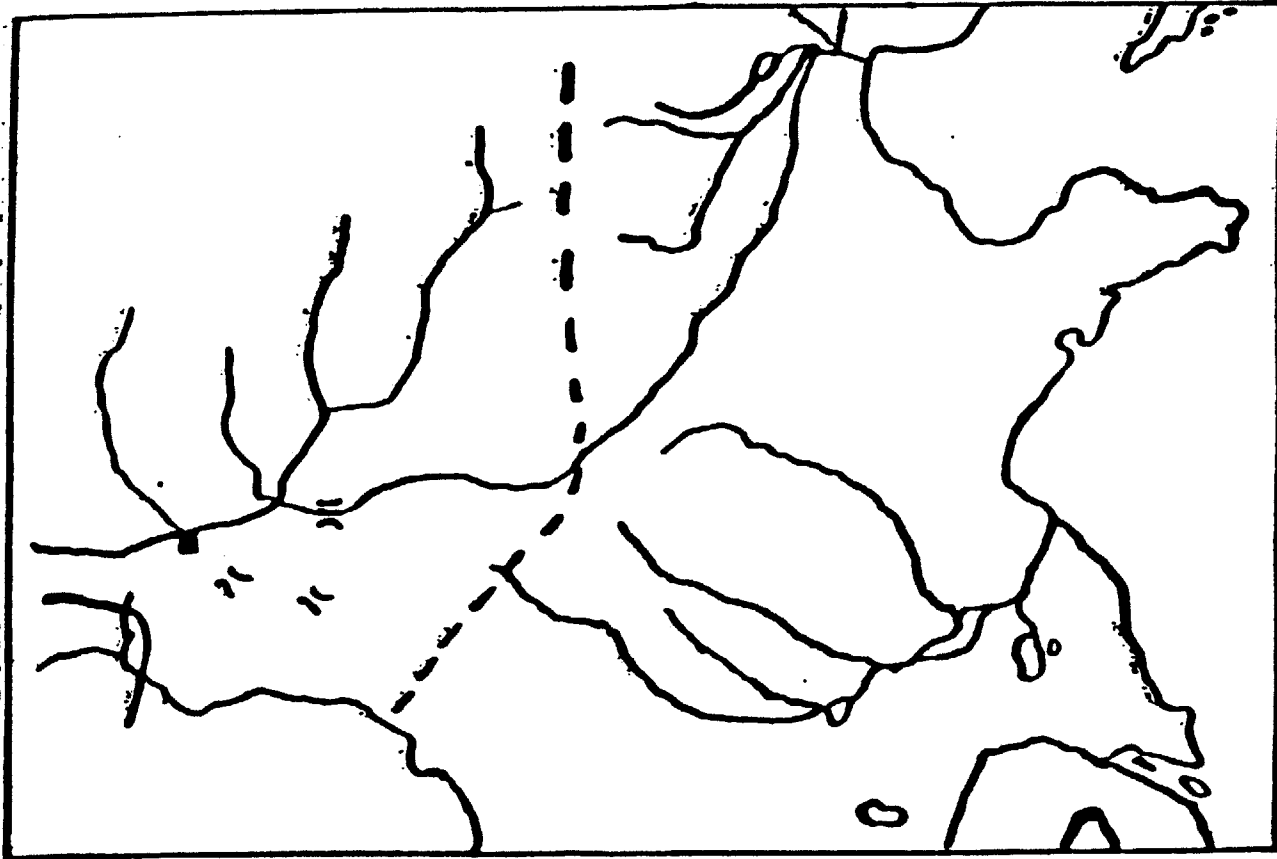
The Conquest of China (206-202 B.C.)

It had been three long bloody years since Liu Pang last made use of diplomatic surprise. In 206 B.C. he built his third and final attack around it. If it took four more years to end the fighting, and subdue all China, that was not for want of an unorthodox beginning. Liu Pang had been as loyal a partner as a partner could be as he and the forces of Ch'u shot their way to mastery of China. For his reward, he was stripped of the conquest that was rightfully his, and delegated to a hobble of a kingdom in the new order and eighteen kingdom empire. And yet Liu Pang did not protest--not until, that is, his nemesis Hsiang Yü had marched his forces far away in eastern China. And then Liu Pang protested in a major way. Claiming to be taking back that which belonged to him, Liu Pang stormed Kuan-chung, the conquest denied him.¹ In a matter of about six weeks, Liu Pang had deposed five of the kings enthroned by Hsiang Yü. East of the adjoining districts to the "Land Within the Passes," Hsiang Yü was still supreme, but elsewhere Liu Pang was in control. See Map 11.

The timing for the seizure of Kuan-chung might have

Map 11

The War Fronts in 206 and 205 B.C.



- = War Front on the Eve of Liu Pang's Reconquest of Kuan-chung (June 206 B.C.)
- = War Front on the Eve of the Assassination of the Emperor of Ch'u and of Liu Pang's First Advance on the East (April 205 B.C.)

been auspicious, but was it auspicious too to cross Hsiang Yü? Hsiang Yü was merely the best tactician in all the civilized world, and merely disposed of the largest and toughest army then in China.

Close examination of the facts shows that the surprise unveiled by Liu Pang was a good one to make. Liu Pang was not immediately attacked and declared an outlaw when word of what he had done reached Hsiang Yu. Some may put the reason for Liu Pang's good fortune solely at the feet of rebellion then breaking out in eastern China (at Ch'i). But there may be another reason too. Hsiang Yü, after all, could have broken off his campaign of repression in Ch'i and marched posthaste for Kuan-chung. But he did not, perhaps because he was unsure of Liu Pang's ultimate intentions. Liu Pang, Hsiang Yü may have reasoned, did deserve Kuan-chung. It would have been a matter of time before he tried to take it in any case. Better to believe this, leave Liu Pang alone, and deal with forces who were known for sure to be hostile to the state. Liu Pang's major diplomatic gambit, which portended to overturn the whole delicate balance of power in the world, must have become in the mind of Hsiang Yü a fait accompli.

The first diplomatic surprise which Liu Pang attempted (at P'ei) had shocked the enemy into action; now surprise used this second time stunned the enemy, and made him passive. The transformations in power that were wrought (the matter of scale aside) were all but total, and definitely massive, and yet the enemies' reactions were very different. This stayed the same, however. On the first occasion, as on the second, deception was critical for success; so too the timing of the move--both victims were out of moral joint, and vulnerable to division.

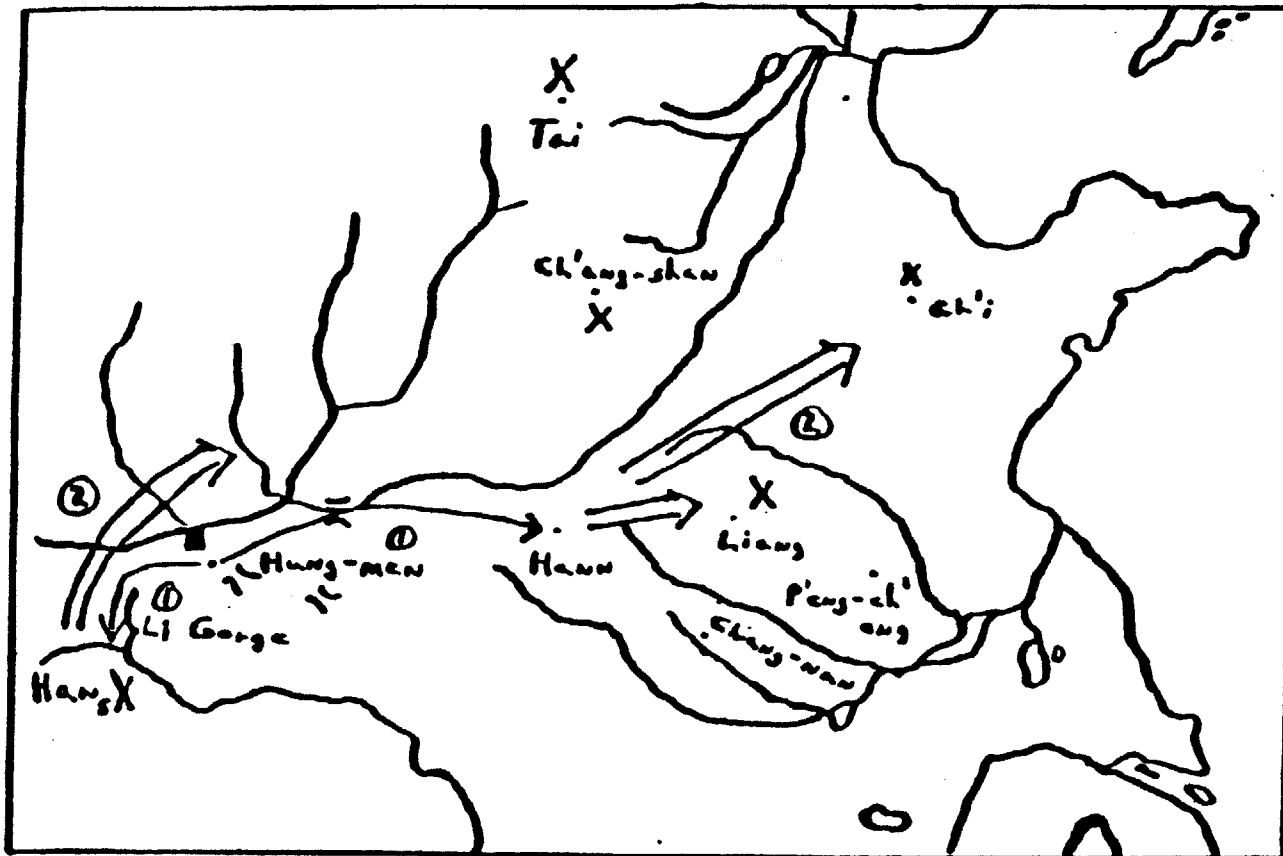
And what of the details of Liu Pang's audacious move?

Three months after withdrawing to Han_s with a bare 30,000 men, Liu Pang went back to the attack. As a prelude to the attack, Liu Pang severed his communications behind him when he withdrew from Kuan-chung, bound for Han_s. The bridges over the treacherous Li Gorge were destroyed, bridges which were the only means of joining Han_s with Kuan-chung. Also in anticipation of the attack, Liu Pang sent Chang Liang back to Han_h where Hsiang Yü was next bivouacked. Chang Liang then told Hsiang Yü about the destruction of the Li Gorge bridges, and about an impending revolt in Ch'i. (Chang Liang then returned to Han_s in secret.²)

The start of the attack coincided with several events. One, Hsiang Yü had withdrawn to the far side of China, intent on putting down the major rebellion then breaking out in Ch'i. See Map 12. Two, the oppressive habits of Hsiang Yü's three newly appointed kings of Kuan-chung had become manifest in full. The return of the Han army to Kuan-chung coincided with a major propaganda effort. Wherever Liu Pang's forces went, they were as kind to the populace as they had been the first time.

The outcome of this second invasion of Kuan-chung matched the outcome of the first invasion. Han fought several quick and decisive battles with Chang Han, Ssu-ma Hsin and Tung I, kings of the former territory of Kuan-chung. Control over the "Land within the passes" was regained with little bloodshed. Then Han Hsin was sent outside the "Passes" to secure the more immediate approaches in Han_h and Wei. With the homeland of Ch'in in firm harness again, Liu Pang enfeoffed all of his principal generals.

Liu Pang's Breakout from Han's, and Hsiang Yü's
Suppression in the East



- (1) Liu Pang and Hsiang Yü withdraw after meeting at Hung-men
- (2) Revolts break out at X, Hsiang Yü marches north to quell them; Liu Pang recaptures Kuan-chung

P'eng-ch'eng = Capital of Hsiang Yü
 Chiang-nan = Home of Emperor of Ch'u

Operations came to a halt once the original territory promised to the conqueror of Kuan-chung had been recovered. Finally, Liu Pang did not proclaim his intentions to expand beyond Kuan-chung. Thus ended the most amazing of Liu Pang's offensives in the civil war.

The SC says that Han Hsin proposed the plan of campaign that led to the near bloodless recapture of Kuan-chung (and later much else besides). With confidence we can mark down this date as the latest possible time in which Liu Pang actually equated his aims with the conquest of all China. The plan's essence was to "... pursue the opposite policy [of Hsiang Yü]...."³ (my italics) Hsiang Yü ruled oppressively; rewarded favorites at the cost of alienating leaders who enjoyed more prestige and were more able; set a bad example by his mistreatment of the titular head of state; would not heed the advice of his subordinates; and kept the best spoils of victory for himself. Thus it was proposed to make use of brave men and wise counsel; share the spoils of the world; place the imperial capital in the west; and lead all the armies back to their homes in the east. Again, grand strategy was ultimately built upon negation of the enemy's harsh imbalance. The destruction of the bridges added to the deception of the plan. Chang Liang performed the role of double agent (his friendship with Hsiang Ho made his dissembling role possible).

Thus Liu Pang exploited the weakness in the new empire of Hsiang Yü. Hsiang Yü was overly concerned with the center of his empire: so Liu Pang struck hard on the edge. Hsiang Yü was preoccupied with rebellion on the far eastern side of empire: so Liu Pang sparked revolt on the far western side. Hsiang Yü built his empire upon excessive harshness, upon a weak moral foundation: so Liu Pang

countered with magnanimity. But the reconquest of the Kuan-chung, great though this accomplishment was, was not the only effect of Liu Pang's campaign of winter 206 B.C. Liu Pang had, barring a miracle, all but won the civil war. Though Liu Pang's deception--his pretense to be a man of only limited aims--was now blown, Liu Pang's China-wide maneuver, his grand strategic maneuver, had reached its point of culmination. Liu Pang was secure in the periphery; Hsiang Yü was exposed in the center. Liu Pang held the keys to Hsiang Yü's defeat.

As long as Liu Pang remained west of the North China Plain, he might still enjoy a trace of sympathy in the heart of Hsiang Yü. But cross over into the east, and there would be war for sure. Liu Pang took this fateful step in 206 B.C., but not before Hsiang Yü furnished him with a powerful excuse. Hsiang Yü assassinated the emperor of Ch'u, Liu Pang's former sovereign. Liu Pang now resolved to set his entire army in motion to attain the Ch'u capital, P'eng-ch'eng.

As Liu Pang swept through Kuan-chung,⁴ Hsiang Yü began to put down the revolt in Ch'i, again displaying his usual cruelty.⁵ Then, Liu Pang had sent Han Hsin beyond the Han-ku Pass to defeat the king of Han_h who barred the entry to the North China Plain. Liu Pang then attended to the consolidation of the territories immediately beyond the pass. While at Lo-yang, he was brought news that Hsiang Yü had murdered the emperor of Ch'u. With this event as pretext, Liu Pang declared war against Hsiang Yü and called upon all the lords of the East to join in. It is said that five lords did so.⁶ With Hsiang Yü still committed to crushing revolt in Ch'i, Liu Pang led an enormous motley force, reputed to number 560,000 men, to the Ch'u capital

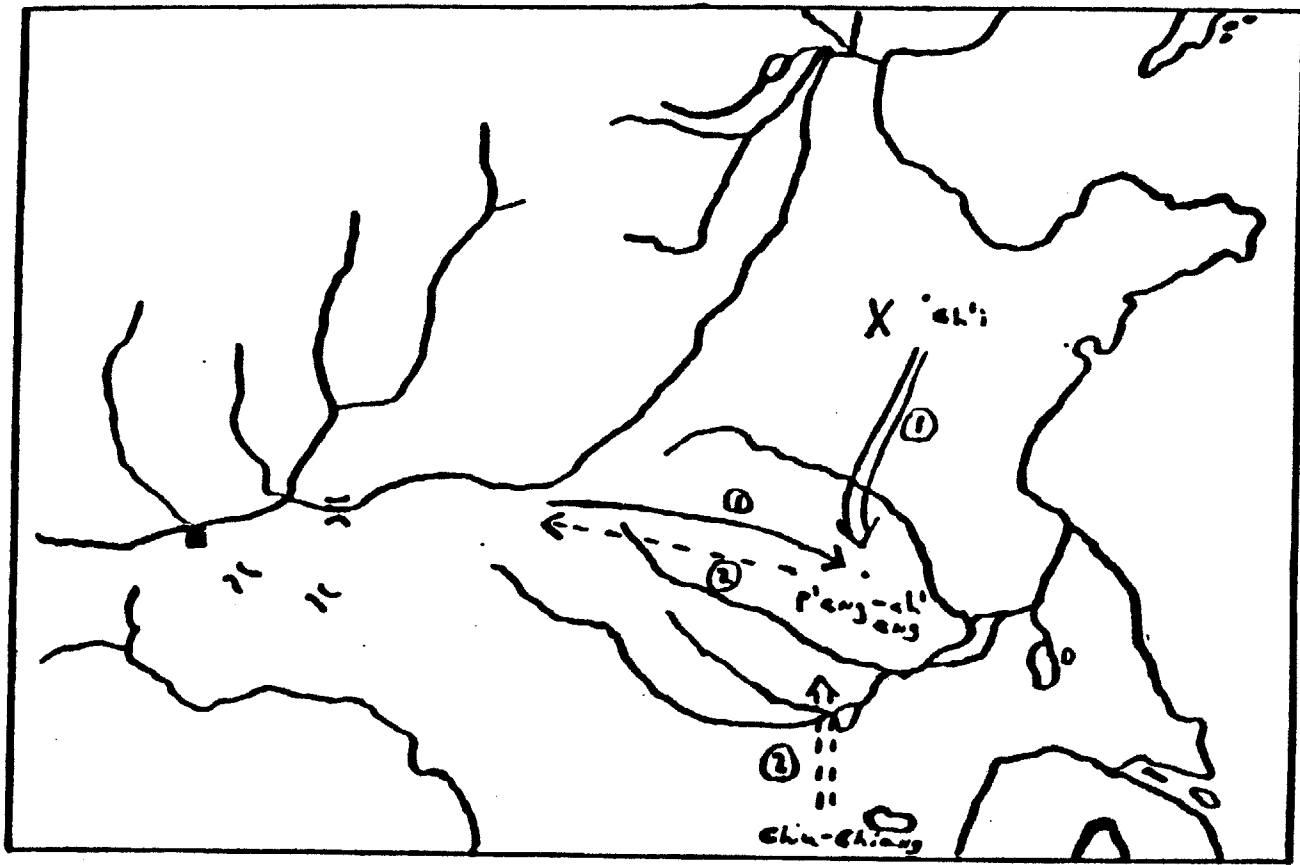
via Lo-yang, Wai-huang and Tang.⁷ There, in the capital, all discipline broke down. Liu Pang ordered his soldiers to prepare a great feast, or was it that he was forced to permit (?) a great feast. The consequences were disastrous: Hsiang Yü led a picked force of 30,000 back from Ch'i by forced marches, and surprised the allied armies: Liu Pang's forces dispersed, and Liu Pang himself barely escaped at the head of 200 cavalry. Now, as Liu Pang fell back from P'eng-ch'eng, most of Liu Pang's allies deserted his cause. See Map 13.

Here Liu Pang committed his one great mistake while on the attack. By setting his entire army in motion to attain a single objective, Liu Pang forfeited the manipulative advantages of two forces acting in concert. It may have been assumed that the combination of the threats posed by the insurgents in Ch'i and Liu Pang's army could together manipulate Hsiang Yü, as if both threats were acting in concert. If so, this was an erroneous assumption, and, as it turned out, a very nearly fatal one: the insurgency in Ch'i was not far enough advanced to pose an immediate dire threat to Hsiang Yü: Hsiang Yü still possessed freedom of action for at least some of his forces. At the very least, Liu Pang should have interposed a corps of observation between his main force and Hsiang Yü's in Ch'i.

Why this error? Why did Liu Pang bank so heavily upon an all-out leap for P'eng-ch'eng? Why did he forsake precaution, and not deploy a corps of observation? Does not this error reveal a fundamental flaw in Liu Pang's thinking: how can he be the great grand strategist I have made him out to be?

To be sure, the consequences of Liu Pang's peculiar

Liu Pang's Ill-fated Conquest of P'eng-ch'eng



- (1) ———→ = Liu Pang and 5 feudal Lords attack P'eng-ch'eng while Hsiang Yü in Ch'i
- ====→ = Hsiang Yü's flying column
- (2) - - - -→ = Retreat of Liu Pang
- - - -→ = Ch'ing Pu enlisted by Liu Pang

attack on P'eng-ch'eng were disastrous and very nearly fatal, so much so that this attack almost cost him his own life, let alone the achievement of his goal. None the less, a more careful scrutiny of the facts will not show Liu Pang in a bad light. All strategists must be judged on the balance they strike between risks and benefits. I believe that in this instance, as in virtually all others, Liu Pang struck a reasonable balance.

The benefits which Liu Pang courted by his single-minded dash for P'eng-ch'eng were profound. If Liu Pang could have held the Ch'u capital, the odds were very good that Hsiang Yu's remaining support would have all but faded away. But there could have been more. By the designed capture of P'eng-ch'eng and expected dissolution of Hsiang Yü's authority, Liu Pang would have transformed his chances of survival in the peace that would follow the civil war. In this ultimate act, China would have been delivered into Liu Pang's hands by his hands alone. No need to grant unusually special rewards to Han Hsin, P'eng Yüeh and Han's other great generals. On the other hand, commit these generals to the final drive--the appointment of Han Hsin to command of a corps of observation was the obvious other choice--and the power and prestige of these generals was bound to grow, with all the attendant dangers. Finally, all these benefits of profound implication could have been had quickly.

As it was Liu Pang fell short of quick and comprehensive victory by the slimmest of margins. If at least the ratio of forces on the opposing sides can be believed, Liu Pang lost even though he outnumbered Hsiang Yü by the odds of twenty to one! Moreover, Liu Pang took this profound gamble knowing that, should he lose, he still had

powerful advantages to fall back upon. His military reputation might be tarnished, but his moral reputation need not be harmed; he still would possess the incomparable strong hold of Kuan-chung; he had a number of brilliant generals still to use; and his enemy would still be beset by rebellion, and haunted by the consequences of his harshness on every side.

In the final analysis, Liu Pang was done in for the second time by the unexpected failure of a third party (on the first occasion inside Kuan-chung by Hsiang Yü; on this occasion by the rebels of Ch'i). Other maneuver strategists have, at one time or another, nearly succumbed to the perverse workings of fate, and we do not hold them to be any less cunning or remarkable. To name but one such strategist, Erwin Rommel, "The Desert Fox" and German panzer commander of the Second World War, is known in military circles the world over for his craft and genius and outflanking skill. This even though on many occasions he suffered the ill effects of risk, and was denied immediate benefit. More than once he narrowly missed capture himself; and lost great quantities of men and equipment. For all that, we still consider Rommel great: we should consider Liu Pang great too: by the very nature of maneuver warfare and the immense importance attributed to the ill-defined and intangible, we should expect him to fall from time to time--how much more so, when heavy importance must be placed upon the chance actions of third parties!⁸

Han strategy after the defeat of P'eng-ch'eng suffered from no more upsets. In fact, even in the wake of defeat and during the retreat from P'eng-ch'eng, Han displayed once more brilliant and successful strategy, once more making proper use of sundered forces acting in concert.

As Liu Pang fell back from P'eng-ch'eng, he sought an alliance with Ch'ing Pu, the king of Chiu-chiang (central Anhwei), Hsiang Yü's most capable lieutenant, and also, at the time, his most disgruntled one. Hsiang Yü was then forced to divide his field army for a second time--this time in order to cover his southern flank. With Hsiang Yü's pursuit slowed, Liu Pang had time to reassemble detachments of his own forces that were streaming back from P'eng-ch'eng. Together, this reformed army fell back upon Jung-yang, and the fortified grain complex of Ao. In the meantime, reinforcements in the way of "the old and the weak and those not yet registered" (over 56 and under 23 years of age) were brought forward from within the "Passes" by the logistical wizard and prime minister Hsiao Ho; Han Hsin joined the besieged too. Together Liu Pang and Han Hsin beat back certain forces of Ch'u (Hsiang Yü's vanguard?) which had reached points south of Jung-yang between Ching and So.

For the next year (June 205 B.C.-July 204 B.C.), Liu Pang kept the main body of his army on the defensive and in the mountains, that is, in the mountains east of the Passes. Liu Pang's forces suffered heavily for this decision. Most elements of the main body were deployed in and around Jung-yang, and Hsiang Yü, having brought forward most of his forces, brought Jung-yang under a terrific siege.

While the siege of Jung-yang was in progress, the king of Wei abandoned Han and joined Ch'u (early fall 205 B.C.). This led to a regional counterattack, and ultimately to a renewed advance in the northern theater.⁹ First, Han Hsin was sent to reclaim Wei. This he accomplished with tactical flourish complete with the use of a dummy army and a feigned river crossing (at P'u-fan). Wei conquered, the best troops

of Han Hsin were ordered to withdraw and to help Liu Pang at the Jung-yang. Then with 30,000 men remaining, Han Hsin was sent to break into Chao, Yen and Ch'i and, if possible, interdict Hsiang Yü's line of communication. Chao was duly brought low at the Battle of the Ching Gorge, one of the most stunning engagements of the entire war. See Diagram 1. Han Hsin then turned his sights on Yen. This hapless kingdom fell to mere propaganda. Instead of marching on Yen when his troops were exhausted after the conquest of Chao, Han Hsin merely advertised his newly won reputation, and informed the king of Yen that isolation from Hsiang Yü was all but fact. The king of Yen got the message and promptly changed sides, shocked by the speed and ease of Han Hsin's victories over Wei and Chao. In accordance with the broad plan conceived two years earlier in Han_s, kingdoms and commanderies were set up in T'ai-yuan, Chao, Tai, Ch'ang-shan and Yen and, and given over to Han generals and turncoat kings of Hsiang Yü who had taken part in the recent conquests of Wei, Chao and Yen.¹⁰

This then was the extent of Han's operations in the first year after the defeat at P'eng-ch'eng. The limited offensive content of these operations can be attributed to exhaustion. Having suffered heavy losses in the first drive on Ch'u's center, Han could not yet mount another major drive. Instead, it had to remain on the defensive, at least in the center. Thus was the disposability of Han's forces greatly reduced. Liu Pang's decision to make a stand at Jung-yang, east of the Han-ku Pass, further reduced this disposability. There was nothing wrong with this defensive deployment, however. To have fallen back further to the Han-ku Pass, would have eased the burden on the defense on the central front, but it would have also restricted Han's freedom of action throughout China as a whole. Instead of

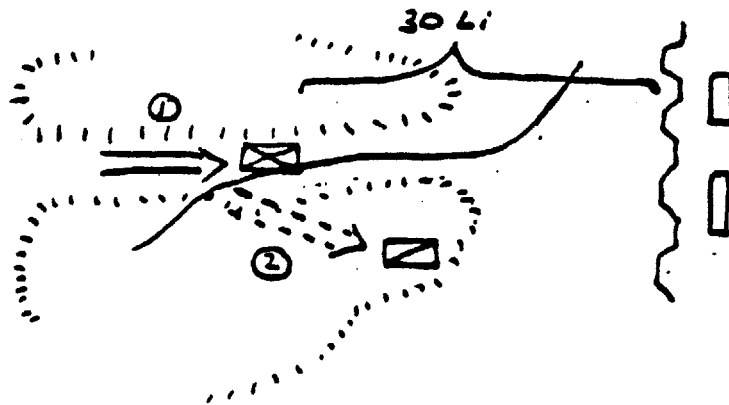
Diagram 1



The Battle of the Ching Gorge: Han Hsin
at His Best on the Field of Battle

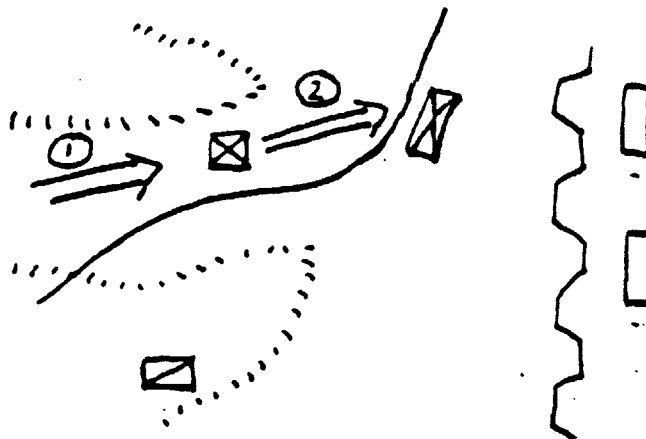


- (1) Han Hsin sends spy to enemy camp. Spy reports that plan of Kuang-wu (Sun Tzuian?) has been rejected by Ch'en Yu, King of Chao and a Confucianist, who speaks only of his "soldiers of righteousness". (Kuang-wu wanted to ambush Han Hsin inside the Gorge.)
- (2) Assured of the enemy's passive disposition, Han Hsin leads his small army into the Gorge.

Diagram 1

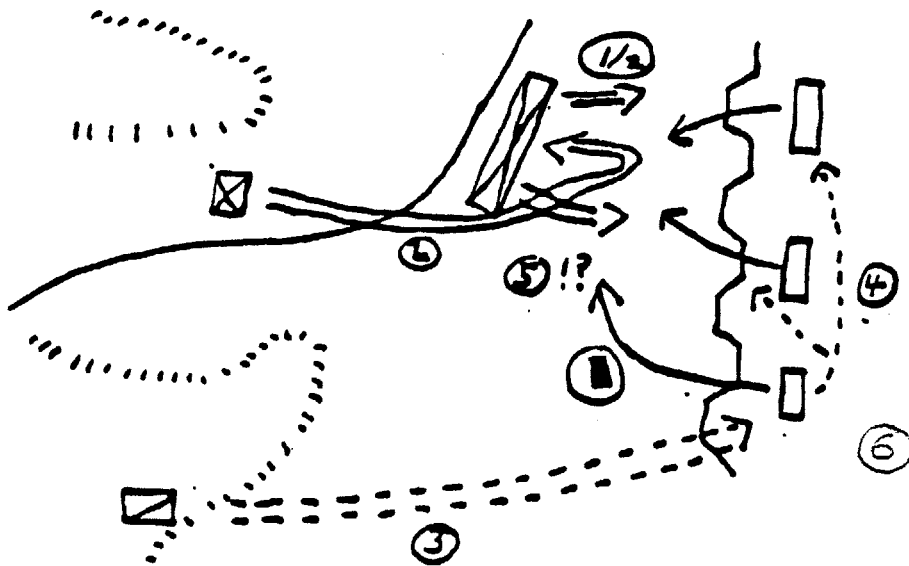


- (1) Han Hsin's Army halts 30 Li from enemy camp ()
- (2) 2000 light cavalry () carrying bright red flags sent by secret route



- (1) Main Body advances
- (2) 10,000 infantry sent ahead and deploy with their backs to the river.
Enemy "Laughs".

Diagram 1



- (1/2) Vanguard of 10,000 advance
- (1) The enemy leaves the forts to engage, sure to win
- (2) Han Hsin and escort cross the river as if to reinforce vanguard, but then throw down their flags and flee; enemy presses all the harder, completely forsaking forts
- (3) Light cavalry race into the forts
- (4) Light cavalry display their red flags on the battlements
- (5) Vanguard, being desperate, fights bravely, Enemy sees red flags, panics and loses
- (6) Note: Han Hsin uses plan of Kuang-wu for later capture of Yen

having easy access to all three major invasion axes into eastern China (via Chao, Jung-yang and Nan-yang), Han would only have had easy access to two (by way of Chao and Nan-yang).

As it was, Liu Pang could only spare a small fraction of his total command to offensive action. Even so, in the able hands of Han Hsin, this small fraction of force went, as we have seen, a long way. The secret to Han Hsin's success was, in part, his reliance upon well conceived tactical maneuver. On two separate occasions, when fighting the superior forces of Wei and Chao, Han Hsin drew his superior opponents out of advantageous positions by offering part of his force as bait, and striking the enemy flank with the other part. It is interesting to note that the fraction of Han Hsin's force that served as bait varied enormously between the battles at P'u-fan (quite small) and Ching Gorge (quite large). This enormous difference was appropriate, and demonstrates proper flexibility at tactical level. At P'u-fan, the enemy could not easily discern the bait, but could easily discern the outflanking force (once the outflanking force was in position). At Ching Gorge, the situation was reversed. Han Hsin exploited the gap in each enemy's arc of observation, and mounted his deception where the enemy's powers of discernment were poor. The immediate effect was to multiply, in the mind of the enemy, the size of Han Hsin's force. The intermediate effect was to disrupt the cohesion of the enemy army. The ultimate effect was victory ... on the battlefield.

The secret of Han Hsin's success also lay, in part, in the speed which he exploited, at theater level, the psychological shock of his tactical victories. The decision to threaten Yen by propaganda alone, in the wake of the

victory at Ching Gorge, was a brilliant ploy, and bolder than it might at first appear. To rely upon a propaganda attack was to choose the fastest possible attack (the speed of attack being equal to that of a fast pony-traveling envoy). And high speed attack, under the circumstances--viz. the magnitude of Han Hsin's god-like victories over Chao and Wei, and the awkward state of Yen's defenses (including Yen's distance from Hsiang Yü's main army)--did seem to be the best way of compounding the horror of Han Hsin's tactical success. But there was this risk: by threatening Yen with mere propaganda, Han Hsin was broadcasting his total intention. Had the king of Yen kept his wits about him, he could have taken the news about Chao's defeat for what it was, and used the time that was spared him by the lightening delivery of that news to mobilize his army, rather than to serve up, in record time, his kingdom.

Theater level speed in exploiting tactical victories, and battlefield maneuver in attaining them, does not exhaust the secrets of Han Hsin's success. In the last analysis, the vast scope of his achievement--conquest of all northeast China with a mere army of 30,000 men--was attributable to a regional manifestation of sound grand strategy. Han Hsin did not so much vanquish Hsiang Yü's northern kings, as he severed their allegiance from Hsiang Yu. Again, at the highest level of war, as at all the lower levels, the forces of Han targeted an enemy that could be managed. It was one thing to compel the king of Yen to change sides; it would have been quite another to compel him to give up his kingdom all together. As with all maneuver too, risk went with this benefit. The king of Yen, and certain other lesser rulers in the north, were no longer on Hsiang Yü's side; but it would have been foolish to assume that they were now fully

committed to Liu Pang. These new allies in the cause would have to be watched. And, one day, if need be, removed.

It was hoped that Han Hsin's theater offensive in the north would cause Hsiang Yu to lift the siege of Jung-yang.¹¹ This hope did not come true. Han Hsin apparently lacked the strength to finish his theater offensive and capture Ch'i, and follow-through with a descent upon Hsiang Yü's line of communications. This left Liu Pang's troops at Jung-yang in a perilous condition. With his troops' provisions running dangerously low, Liu Pang offered Hsiang Yü peace and half the world; Hsiang Yü rejected the offer. Liu Pang now turned again to strategem. It is said that 40,000 catties of gold were used where 30,000 soldiers had come up short. A wily and brave man, by name of Ch'en P'ing, proposed and acted upon a plan to divide Hsiang Yu from his lieutenants. This strategem enjoyed greater success than had Han Hsin's. Thus, by sordid implication, was the reputation of Fan Tseng, Hsiang Yu's most gifted lieutenant, tarnished. Disgraced, Fan Tseng was sent home, and would die on the way. In this way, Hsiang Yü lost his most clever of lieutenants at a most critical time.

With a discerning eye in the enemy camp adroitly removed, Liu Pang now prepared his escape from Jung-yang. Liu Pang slipped out of Jung-yang by creating a great diversion. 2000 women donned uniforms, an officer dressed himself up to look like Liu Pang, and the whole dissembling lot marched out the eastern gate of Jung-yang. When Hsiang Yu's army swarmed in with glea to capture or kill the impostor army, Liu Pang escaped through the western gate.

Han's final offensive during the civil war finds Han's

At first inspection, Liu Pang's plan of campaign after the retreat from P'eng-ch'eng (205 B.C.), might be held to account on this ground--did not Liu Pang make a mistake by avoiding battle with Hsiang Yü for such a long time? Was not the result a protracted war--the very situation Liu Pang's side--the weaker side--could not afford? A more careful review of the risks involved shows that this strategy was perfectly rational.

The other way of doing things would have been for Liu Pang to have sought the "decisive" battle, to have marshalled all his forces, and committed his best generals, especially Han Hsin, to a showdown in central China with Hsiang Yü. In that way, Liu Pang could have achieved, in one blow, the very thing that Hsiang Yü achieved with his "decisive" victory in Chao (206 B.C.). All the marches and countermarches and minor battles of four years of war could then have been avoided, or so the argument goes. The problem with this approach is that it presumes superior generalship, or a standoff in generalship and vastly superior odds.

Hsiang Yü, by far the best tactician of all the tacticians who helped in the overthrow of Ch'in, was in no way past his peak when Liu Pang began his retreat from P'eng-ch'eng--Hsiang Yü's performance at P'eng-ch'eng certainly confirmed that. Han Hsin, the very best general on the side of Han, was not judged Hsiang Yü's superior. Also, when Han began the final campaign against Hsiang Yü, the advantage in numbers was on the latter's side, for Hsiang Yü held about two-thirds of the population of China (minus peoples in revolt).

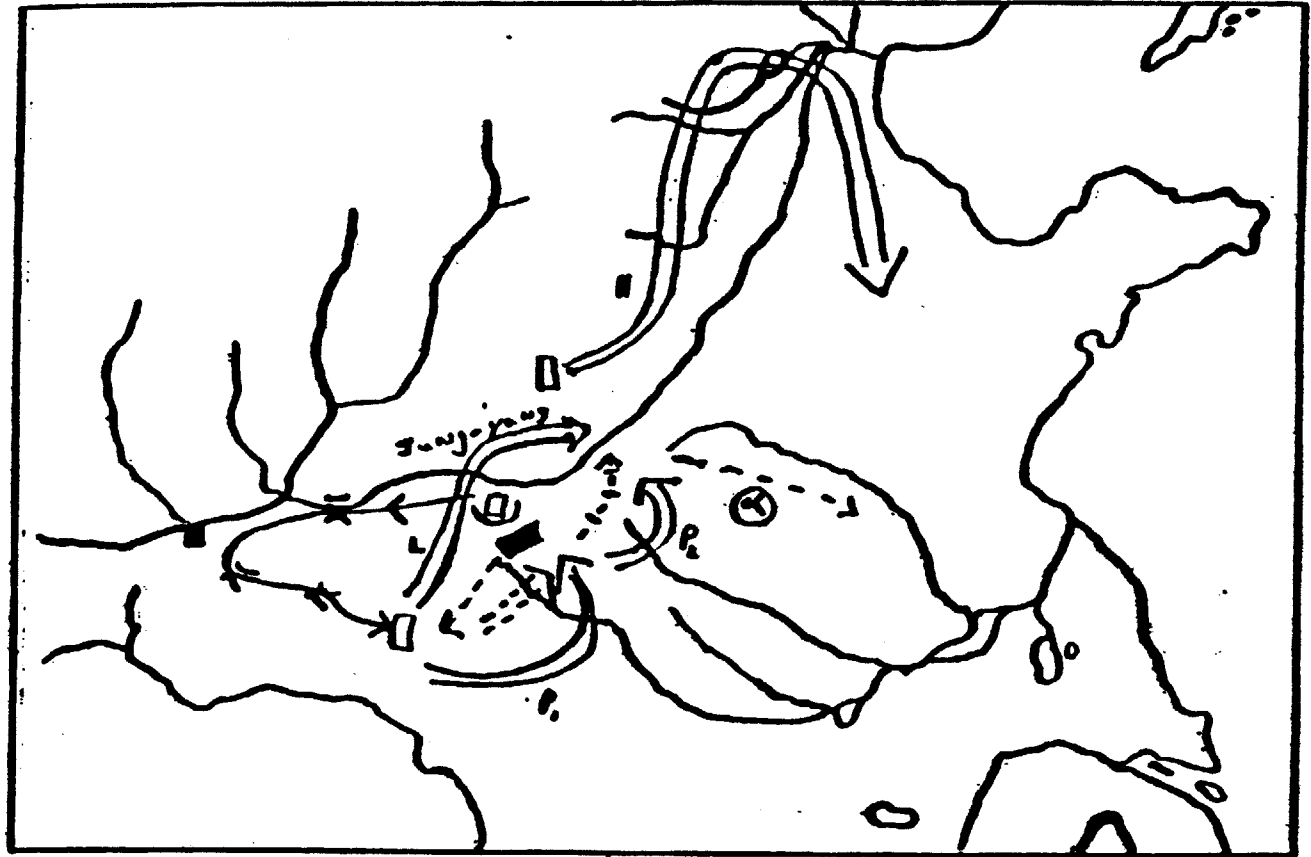
As it was, Han's strategy--to avoid contact with Hsiang

east on Ch'i. At Little Hsiu-Wu, Liu Pang once more fortified his camp, while sending Lu Wan (a loyal boyhood friend) and Liu Chia with 20,000 infantry and several hundred cavalry to aid P'eng Yüeh still at large behind Hsiang Yü's lines.¹² Thus reinforced, P'eng Yüeh proceeded to capture 10 or more cities in Liang. As he did so, Han Hsin came in possession of Ch'i. See Map 14.

Hsiang Yü, and not Liu Pang was now the one fighting on interior lines: he sent Lung Chu and Chou Lan to attack Han Hsin, the grand marshal Ts'ao Chiu to block Liu Pang at Ch'eng-kao, while he himself dealt with P'eng Yüeh inside Liang. Only Hsiang Yü's army accomplished its mission; the others suffered defeats. Hsiang Yü then doubled back on Ch'eng-kao, but Liu Pang's army dispersed. Hsiang Yü then tried to negotiate a separate peace with Han Hsin, but Han Hsin could not be turned. At that, another stalemate ensued, and Liu Pang's forces deployed in a great arc Hsiang Yü's armies.

The stalemate lasted only a brief time. Han Hsin pressed forward into Ch'u, P'eng Yüeh went back to harassing the army of Ch'u in rear, and Liu Pang's army was reinforced from the west. Han and Ch'u then agreed to a peace, but Han broke it, and Liu Pang engaged Hsiang Yü for the first time at Ku-ling. It was Liu Pang who was beaten this time: Han Hsin and P'eng Yüeh did not rendezvous as agreed. To prevent the recurrence of such an event in the future, Liu Pang guaranteed both men kingdoms--Han Hsin in Ch'u and P'eng Yüeh in Liang. After that, additional allies were enlisted from among Hsiang Yü's armies, most notably Chou Yin, king of Chiu-chiang. Finally, the decisive victory was won over Hsiang Yü at Kai-hsia (202 B.C.).

Liu Pang's Definitive Conquest of the East



- ☐ = Liu Pang besieged at Jung-yang by Hsiang Yü
- = Liu Pang redeploys via Wu Pass
- - - -> = Hsiang Yü redeploys
- ↪ = P'eng Yüeh operates in Hsiang Yü's rear areas
- ↪ = Hsiang Yü turns on P'eng Yüeh
- = Liu Pang redeploys / - - -> = Hsiang Yü redeploys
- ↪ = P'eng Yüeh harasses Hsiang Yü / H → = Han Hsin advance
- - - ↪ ⊗ = Hsiang Yü retreats

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As it was, Han's strategy--to avoid contact with Hsiang

Yü, while harassing his subordinates in independent commands and while detaching his peripheral client states--properly attacked Hsiang Yü's strategy at its roots. It was Hsiang Yü's strategy to seek decisive battle with himself on the scene. Hsiang Yü always concentrated in his own person the most important military commands. He predicated control of his empire on the assumption that he would also be able to put out the flames of rebellion in person. And comforted by that assumption, he arrogated to himself control over the choicest lands, and arrogated to his favorites control over the remaining lands. Thus, Han's plan of campaign was once more founded upon negating the enemy's strategy. Once more attacked his precise weakness.

Han also maneuvered in putting their plan of campaign into action. Liu Pang's use of subordinates was singularly apt. Chiang Liang recommended such use of Han Hsin, P'eng Yüeh and Ch'ing Pu.¹³ At theater level, at the start of the campaign, they used the main body of the Han army to engage and bait Hsiang Yü into the possibility of decisive battle, while he was outflanked by Han Hsin. In this way the main army distracted Hsiang Yü, while Han Hsin's army delivered the main punch. Meanwhile, at regional level, in the vicinity of Hsiang Yü, Han's main army split into two groups with complementary operational styles. The larger of the two groups, usually under Liu Pang's personal command, relied upon static warfare. The smaller group, under P'eng Yüeh relied upon fluid, guerrilla warfare. This division of labor was correct, P'eng Yüeh being more able. Also, it was necessary if Han's base in Ch'in was to be preserved and if a Han army was to survive behind Ch'u's lines. Back and forth these two groups would exchange roles: alternating as engaging force and outflanking force depending upon the aim of Hsiang Yü. Towards the close of the campaign, these

roles were also sometimes reversed between the main body and Han Hsin's force.

The rapid mixing of engaging force and outflanking force in proximity to Hsiang Yü, and slower mixing at a distance, acted as a lethal synergism, unwinding Hsiang Yü's main army and detaching more and more of Hsiang Yu's client kings. The Allied strategy in 1813 in the war against Napoleon provides an exact parallel. At that time, during the preparatory stages of the Leipzig Campaign in central Europe, the Allied armies did not seek a battle of decision with Napoleon, but thought it better to attack his lieutenants, and detach his client kings.

Deceptive measures were also employed by Liu Pang while on the attack. At Ch'eng-ka^o, Hsiang Yü's commander on the spot, the marquis of Hai-ch'un, was seduced into disaster. For five or six days, Liu Pang's forces reviled and insulted the army of the marquis. Finally, the marquis' army could contain their rage no longer; they left the safety of their fortress and began to ford the Ssu River, intent on crushing Liu Pang; Liu Pang struck when half of the enemy had crossed the river. Ch'i was initially taken by mere propaganda. The Confucian, Master Li I-chi, was sent to induce the king of Ch'i to change sides. Han Hsin, whose army was close by and headed towards Ch'i, attacked Ch'i, however, winning a great victory by force of serendipitous treachery.

P'eng Yüeh and Han Hsin were brought into the final drive against Hsiang Yü by promising them rich kingdoms along their line of march.

Crowning all this was the ruse at the battle of Kai-hsia that led to Hsiang Yü's ultimate defeat.

In the end, Han did seek a decisive battle, but only after the outcome had been preordained. By the time Han's forces converged upon Hsiang Yu at Kai-hsia, Hsiang Yü had been demoralized. If we can believe the SC, Hsiang Yü remained outwitted and dumfounded to the end.

"It has been eight years since I first led my army forth. In that time I have fought over seventy battles. Every enemy I faced was destroyed, everyone I attacked submitted. Never once did I suffer defeat, until at last I became dictator of the world. But now suddenly [I am finished.] It is because Heaven would destroy me, not because I have committed any fault in battle...."¹⁴ [my italics]

What Hsiang Yü never did understand, but what Liu Pang and his generals did understand, and from the very first, was that "... to win one hundred victories, in one hundred battles is not the acme of skill."¹⁵ What civil war Han aimed to do, and did accomplish was to subdue the enemy without much fighting. This they accomplished by properly subordinating the parts of strategy to the whole--tactical to regional to theater, by making sure that the political instrument took precedence over the military, and, above all, by all achieving moral ascendancy.

Looking back too over the course of Liu Pang's campaign against Hsiang Yü, we can see the same broad evolution of strategy that marked Liu Pang's campaigns against successive leaders of Ch'in. Thus, Liu Pang first secured a tangential, secure base of operations (Han_g) and revived his moral strength (subordinating his ambition to Hsiang Yü's); then he conducted the decisive maneuver of the campaign (regaining control of Kuan-chung); after that, through many

vicissitudes, he defeated Hsiang Yü militarily (this time relying on flank attack and dispersion of force); and finally, he settled for a magnanimous peace (granting eastern lands to his civil war supporters). Surely, Han had a grand strategy during the civil war, and it was singularly apt.

FOOTNOTES

Third Campaign of Conquest
Text: pp. 122-148

1. SC 7 and SC 8 (Watson, Records, Vol. I, pp. 59-61 and pp. 94-96).
2. On Chang Liang's plans see Ibid., SC 55 (pp. 138-140).
3. Ibid., SC 92 (pp. 211-212).
4. For the overall account of this episode see Ibid., SC 7 (pp. 61-63) and SC 8 (96-99).
5. Ibid., SC 8 (p. 97).
6. The composition of Liu Pang's army that took P'eng-ch'eng is disputed. See Dubs, HFHD, Vol. I, footnote #3, pp. 77-78 for the different versions.
7. Elsewhere we read that Liu Pang's army of "560,000" men, really numbered 50,000 infantry and 5,000 cavalry. Op. cit., SC 91 (p. 202).
8. With hindsight, we can better calculate the risk which Liu Pang ran by his assault on P'eng-ch'eng. At the level of numbers, the advantage lay with Han. But at the next most important level, the level of generalship, the advantage lay with Hsiang Yü. The factors of weather and terrain canceled out. That left moral influence, and here these factors also canceled out, although Han may have thought otherwise. To be sure, Hsiang Yü suffered a complete collapse of moral authority in Ch'i, but then again the cohesion attending the army of Liu Pang--a force flying six different flags, never before brought together and in the uncertain times of the civil war--could not have been good either. Thus, generalship reemerges as the critical factor in the balance, and so the advantage lay with Hsiang Yü. It is curious that the annals do not give the reasoning behind this ill fated offensive. Could that mean it was a decision Liu Pang made without the approval of his ministers and generals? Chang Liang did march with Liu Pang; Han Hsin did not. On Han Hsin's absence see SC 92 (Watson, Records., Vol. I, p. 213), and on Chang Liang's presence Ibid., SC 55 (p. 139).
9. For the account of Han Hsin's campaign in the northeast see Ibid., SC 92 (pp. 213-219).

10. HS 1A: 35a (Dubs, HFHD, Vol. I, p. 83).
11. For an account of the final offensive see op. cit., SC 7 (pp. 63-73) and SC 8 (pp. 99-106).
12. SC 8 (Watson, Records, Vol. I, p. 101).
13. Ibid., SC 55 (p. 140).
14. Ibid., SC 7 (p. 71).
15. Sun Tzu III.3 (Griffith, Art of War, p. 77).

Chapter Six

TACTICAL ORGANIZATION OF LIU PANG'S REBELS

FROM MOTLEY BAND

TO

ECLECTIC ARMY

The tactical organization of Liu Pang's rebel army must have varied considerably in the civil war. Indeed there were times in the civil war when one cannot talk of a Han army at all. In the beginning, during the campaign of 209 B.C., the "organization" of the forces led by Liu Pang could not have been much more complex than that of a lightly drilled rabble of peasants, armed with stones and picks, and whatever more sophisticated weapons could be scavenged.¹ At the end of the civil war, during the final offensive against Hsiang Yu, the organization of the Han forces had greatly improved; and all manner of forces including heavy and light infantry, cavalry, chariots and sappers certainly filled the ranks; but just how were they organized? Whether that organization had taken on an identity of its own, or had been grafted on to the organization of the defeated imperial army of Ch'in, or on to the traditional organization of one or more of the feudal states of old, is a matter very much open to question.

One thing is rather clear, by the start of Liu Pang's famous march towards the west and the homeland of Ch'in, the organization of Liu Pang's rebel forces must have mirrored

all or much of the organization of the army of rebel Ch'u (c. 208 B.C.). At that time, Liu Pang received the command of several thousands of Ch'u soldiers, and he had already served in the Ch'u officer corps for six months. It is quite likely then that at the start of Liu Pang's second great campaign in the civil war, his organization included infantry and chariots, possibly elite infantry, most probably very few sappers, and most definitely a very niggardly commissariat.²

The organization of Liu Pang's forces would become more eclectic, and original as the march towards the homeland of Ch'in proceeded. Consider what forces were recruited and captured along the route: soldiers of rebel Wei_h (heavy infantry and some chariots?),³ bandits serving under P'eng Yüeh and Chang Liang (certainly light infantry),⁴ and a host of small armies of the empire (infantry, chariots and sappers surely, and some cavalry?).⁵ Once Liu Pang swung south and west, his forces numbered horses and cavalrymen for sure. The HS is quite definite that cavalry were recruited or dragooned south of Lo-yang.⁶

By the start of the third campaign in the civil war, once Liu Pang seized the "Land Within the Passes," the homeland of Ch'in, the order of battle of the rebel Han army could have been made as complex as any order of battle in China. The major pastures of China were then in Liu Pang's hands, with all that that offered by way of forging a new cavalry corps.⁷ Surely many of the empire's siege machines were lying around, and could be used too--unless Hsiang Yu had taken them for himself, or destroyed them, when he was inside the "Passes." The SC and HS do not say if Liu Pang took advantage. However, it can be inferred that the Han siege train was improved--heavy use was made of

fortifications at Jung-yang and Yuan (205-204 B.C.).⁸ Also, light cavalry, a favorite Ch'in formation, was included in the army of Liu Pang's lieutenant, Han Hsin.⁹ On the other hand, it does not appear that the size of the Han cavalry corps was increased appreciably. Indeed, it was necessary to recruit cavalry from the northeast kingdom of Yen, and from a nomadic people, by name of Northern Mo (fall 203 B.C.).¹⁰ It would seem that the infantry arm of the Han army was greatly improved also. This can be inferred from the flexibility and elusiveness which the main Han army displayed in its march on Hsiang Yü's center through the great China plain. Finally, Ch'in's great wall defense that guarded the northern border was revived in part,¹¹ and recruits (branch of service?) were drawn from the "Land Within the Passes."¹²

This then is the evolving order of battle of the rebel Han army, such as can be made out. Three trends really stand out. One trend is the constant improvement in the army's ability to fight in high-intensity combat in the open field in China. As time came to pass, the forces of rebel Han were better able to engage compact multitudes of Chinese soldiers deployed in open unbroken terrain. Another trend is the constant improvement in the army's ability to harass the lines of communication of hostile Chinese forces. On the other hand, little was done to call to the colors soldiers capable of fighting in low-intensity combat in the open field astride the frontiers of China.

These three trends make perfect sense. To begin with, there was very little need to deploy a force that could fight barbarians, especially nomads. Throughout the first and second campaigns of the civil war, rebel Han always operated well inside of China, and had no contact with

foreign forces. In the third campaign, when rebel Han had to assume ever expanding responsibility for the protection of China's frontiers, the barbarian threat was by and large quiescent. Trouble along the borders would come later.

By contrast, rebel Han was always fighting one Chinese army or another. The better its ability to battle in the open field, the faster it could ascend to supreme power. Deployment of a force light enough and mobile enough to harass enemy lines of communication, gave rebel Han no insignificant ability to outmaneuver hostile Chinese forces at the tactical level.

One development does surprise, however. Why did rebel Han not recruit larger cavalry forces when fighting Ch'in? The army of Ch'in that had conquered all China was largely composed of cavalry. By no means would an infantry army fair well against it. Are we to presume that Ch'in had demobilized much of its mounted soldiers in the subsequent peace and civil war? The answer can only be yes. Apparently, the decline of the empire brought in its wake a severe shortage of fodder and food. Without a vast commissariat, a large cavalry army cannot be afforded.

FOOTNOTES

Tactical Organization of Liu Pang's Rebels
Text pp. 151-154

1. It is said that Liu Pang had at this time "almost a hundred followers." SC 8 (Watson, Records, Vol. I, p. 81)
2. When Liu Pang leagued with rebel Ch'u, he brought with him three thousand troops from P'ei and the surrounding vicinity, and six thousand troops from the conquest of Tang. To these nine thousands, he received at once five thousand soldiers and ten generals of "fifth rank" from rebel Ch'u. HS 1A: 12b (Dubs, HFHD, Vol. I, p. 44) For the next five or six months, Liu Pang fought alongside Hsiang Yü, by then an important general serving rebel Ch'u. In the fall of 208 B.C. when he began his march towards Kuan-chung, he received "the scattered soldiers of King Ch'en She (not of Ch'u), and of Hsiang Liang." The latter commander, then dead, had recently been supreme general of all forces of rebel Ch'u. HS 1A: 14b Ibid., p. 48 Rebel Ch'u went to war against Ch'in with eight thousand "picked" men. SC 7 (Watson, Records, Vol. I, p. 39) Hsiang Yü commanded "war chariots" (mobile command platforms or shock wagons?) during the march on Chao. During that same march provisions for his forces were running low. SC 7 Ibid., p. 46. If Hsiang Yü's supply wagons were running low, Liu Pang's must have been running low also. For the latter commander had the inferior force.
3. HS 1A: 15a (Dubs, HFHD, Vol. I, pp. 49-50) Four thousand men were also taken away from the Marquis of Kang-wu, the state he served is unknown.
4. HS 1A: 15a and 16a Ibid., pp. 50 and 52
5. HS 1A: 14b-16a Ibid., pp. 48-52
6. HS 1A: 16a Ibid., p. 52
7. Michael Loewe, "The Campaigns of Han Wu-ti," Chinese Ways in Warfare (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1974), p. 98
8. HS 1A: 34a-34b and 36b (Dubs, HFHD, Vol. I, pp. 80-81 and 86)
9. SC 92 (Watson, Records, Vol. I, p. 215)
10. HS 1A: 39b (Dubs, HFHD, Vol. I, p. 93). Liu Pang was

said to have returned "the pastures, enclosures, gardens and ponds of the former Ch'in" dynasty over to the common people for cultivation. HS 1A: 30b Ibid., p. 74. If so, it would have been impossible to deploy a large cavalry corps.

11. The barrier at Ho-shang commandery was repaired. HS 1A: 30b Ibid., p. 73.

12. The most notable levies came when Liu Pang occupied Kuan-chung for the first time, and when he fell back from P'eng-ch'eng. HS 1A: 21a and 34a Ibid., pp. 59 and 80

Chapter Seven

The Campaigns of Conquest

CONCLUSION

By the time of the battle of Kai-hsia, Liu Pang's use of deception had come full circle. At the first battle Liu Pang fought, the battle of P'ei, Liu Pang had exploited for his own peculiar ends the perception of the empire of Ch'i turned upside down by countless rebellions led by independent bandits. At the last battle Liu Pang fought, what was exploited now was the perception that all the world was in open revolt against Ch'u, and its sole leader was Liu Pang. In the enemy camp both at Kai-hsia and at P'ei, the principal emotion was the same--the feeling of panic brought on by dissembled entrapment. The respective effects were the same also--mass surrender and all but bloodless victory. In the intervening seven years, Liu Pang would also exploit with craft and indirection, and with the same spectacular results and economical success, the hatred and the long-simmering resentment that was the food and drink of whole-sale sedition.

Scattered pockets of rebellion encountered by Liu Pang between 209 B.C. and fall 206 B.C. (the time of his first entrance into Kuan-chung) enabled him to swell his ranks with followers, at the same time that it enabled him to cloak his unbounded or evolving goals. Ch'in's main strength was battle in the open field; its great weakness was its harsh policy and niggardly way with rewards. Liu Pang was careful to be more balanced in matters moral: of

his conduct it could be said, "In Victory: Magnanimity." Also by not making his ultimate aims known--principally by subordinating his cause in a larger rebel cause, and then in a still larger one--Liu Pang rode, by different means diplomatic and propagandistic, the crest of China-wide rebellion, and avoided the crushing undertoe of less prudent rebel armies, and devastating intramural wars. By the spring of 205 B.C., Liu Pang made his main ambition known. But by then it did not matter. For he had so deceived his main rebel rival, that his rival had carelessly left him at large within closer striking distance of Kuan-chung, the securest base in all of ancient China from whence to issue forth in war. Thus did Liu Pang outmaneuver his foes time and time again at the highest realm of strategy. Clearly the use of force and the role of armies was of less importance in Liu Pang's lofty scheme.

But if the movement of soldiers and the clash of their steel was of only secondary use in Liu Pang's total plan of conquest, its use was still important, nonetheless. Because Liu Pang was born a commoner, and had only risen, by the time of the great revolts, to the lowly rank of village clerk, he would still have to take power, and to take power, power had to be used. Yet here emerged a seemingly insuperable barrier. For how do you take power--the power of a vast and imperial state--when you start with almost none at all? Liu Pang had but one choice. He had to ration what power he had (and later acquired): he had to avoid strength and fall upon weakness at every turn. Thus was he compelled to rely upon military maneuver, strategic and also tactical as well as operational. The movement of armies between battlefields became the means of distracting the enemy in the higher realms of policy; the movement of armies on the field of battle became the means of distracting the

enemy from the deadly application of their superior arms.

The consequences of having to depend, in significant measure, upon the use of inferior arms was profound. To begin with, Liu Pang's operations were highly sensitive to chance. This explains, in part, the otherwise fathomless starts and stops, twists and turns, in Liu Pang's advance. Where superior force could not be outflanked, superior force would have to be lived with for a time. Thus the fact that Liu Pang's civil war campaign was punctuated with many defensive periods, periods in which Liu Pang was dependent on outside third parties, parties beyond his control, to shake things up, and reopen room for offensive maneuver.

Because Liu Pang was dependent on the use of inferior arms, he had also to be flexible--highly flexible--in his offensive schemes. Thus for one campaign he would threaten the center of the enemy line and concentrate his force; for another campaign turn the opposing front and disperse force; for a third--attack centrally and disperse and combine, disperse and combine force.

And because Liu Pang was dependent on the use of inferior arms, the consequences of his errors could be greatly magnified. Such was his fate after his premature advance on P'eng-ch'eng in 205 B.C. And such could have been his fate several months earlier in Kuan-chung.

Finally, Liu Pang's dependence on the use of inferior force, forced him to lift up his eyes, and peer far into the future--into the future peace that would follow the civil war. For this reason, he had to be more accommodating of fellow generals, and whole peoples, than he would or might have liked. Thus did he leave to his seven year reign as

emperor and to the next century of successive reigns of successive emperors, the task of pacifying, and, in many cases, wholly uprooting men who had helped bring the fledgling Dynasty through the civil war.

PART TWO

THE CONSOLIDATION OF THE EMPIRE

(202-106 B.C.)

Chapter Eight

THREE CAMPAIGNS OF CONSOLIDATION:

THREE GRAND STRATAGEMS:

THREE DIFFERENT THEATER STRATEGIES OF ATTACK

AND ONE STRATEGY TO DEFEND THE FRONTIERS

If Liu Pang's conquest of China under Heaven was a feat for god's alone, so too was the consolidation of his mighty victory. Immortal though the first feat was--the ascent of a village clerk to the highest office in the land--consider what came after that. Over the relatively brief span of a single century (202-106 B.C.), the Dynasty of Han brought unity and tranquillity to an entire civilization for the first time since history began. The China of those days, everything from eastern Tibet to the eastern sea and from the Great Wall to the valley of the Yangste, and even beyond, was delivered up from local rule and brought under one man's abiding will. On top of that, the cost of this amazing change was cheap indeed. Few Chinese lost their lives as the change took place and the heart of the economy hardly skipped one single beat. No wonder that, to this very day, the people of "mainland" Asia call themselves proudly Han Chinese.

During the imperial reign of Liu Pang (posthumous Han Kao-ti), there were seven armed rebellions, (and three conspiracies); and Chinese blood was shed in ten battles of minor size. After that, there were only five armed revolts.

Three of these were quickly and easily crushed (in 177, 173 and 122 B.C.), another began menacingly enough, but, like the other two, was crushed with minimal loss of life (180 B.C.). The last uprising worthy of attention was the one truly massive uprising of the early empire--the infamous Revolt of the Seven Kingdoms (154 B.C.): more than a third of all lands in east China suffered fighting on their soil. Even so, the duration of this one great challenge to empire was not excessively long, being brought to conclusion in three short months.¹

When the new empire was formed, the Chinese economy was in utter disarray. Yet as Han broadened its control, the economy revived and rapidly took off. During the reigns of Han Wen-ti and Han Ching-ti in particular (180-140 B.C.), production was never better. So huge and sustained, in fact, was the economic recovery that the HS could draw a most dramatic contrast between conditions in 202 B.C. and 140 B.C. At the dawn of the new dynasty, "there was a dearth of ... grain and vegetables; ... people ate human flesh; and more than half [the population] died." What is more, horses were in such short supply that even the very highest ministers rode about in "ox-drawn carts"--a means of transport ordinarily used by the very poor.² However, by the beginning of the reign of Han Wu-ti: "... the people as individuals were well supplied, and as families had a sufficiency." In fact, food was so abundant that whole depots of grain were going "stale or spoiled." Meanwhile, "in the capital, cash had accumulated in layers of hundreds of millions, [the number of] which could not be checked because the strings [holding the coins] were rotten; ... and ... the great masses of people ... [could afford] horses."³

Thus Han's centralization of China and consolidation of

empire was highly beneficial and economical indeed. But how so? By any tangible or numerical standard of measurement, accomplishment of such a feat should have been impossible given the means at Han's disposal.

To begin with there was the size of the Han army. To be sure, once Liu Pang became emperor, and the consolidation of China began in earnest (after all civil war armies were demobilized), the size of the Han army remained appreciably larger than what it had been during the early days of the drive to empire, yet a relative poverty of means still prevailed. Although the size of the post-civil war, imperial army is not precisely known, it is probably safe to say that over the really crucial years of empire-wide consolidation (c. 202-143 B.C.), its strength lay somewhere between 100,000 and 300,000 men.⁴ (During the years of Han Wu-ti's reign, 140-87 B.C., the size of the imperial army increased enormously, but most of these forces were committed to a great war against barbarian forces.) Han's predecessor Ch'in had failed to successfully centralize China with more than a million men under arms.⁵ Yet, Han succeeded where Ch'in had failed. This among a people who were mostly unaccustomed to direct rule and fiercely hostile to the concept.

The tactical organization of the imperial army was not conducive to rapid expression of the imperial will either. By no means was the imperial army a model of mobility: Han had not copied the tactical organization of its predecessor Ch'in. Thus the new imperial army was not built around the light cavalry arm, but, instead, had been built around heavy infantry, possibly also around combat chariots: light cavalry were strictly ancillary--a partial return, perhaps, to the military formations of the old feudal states.⁶

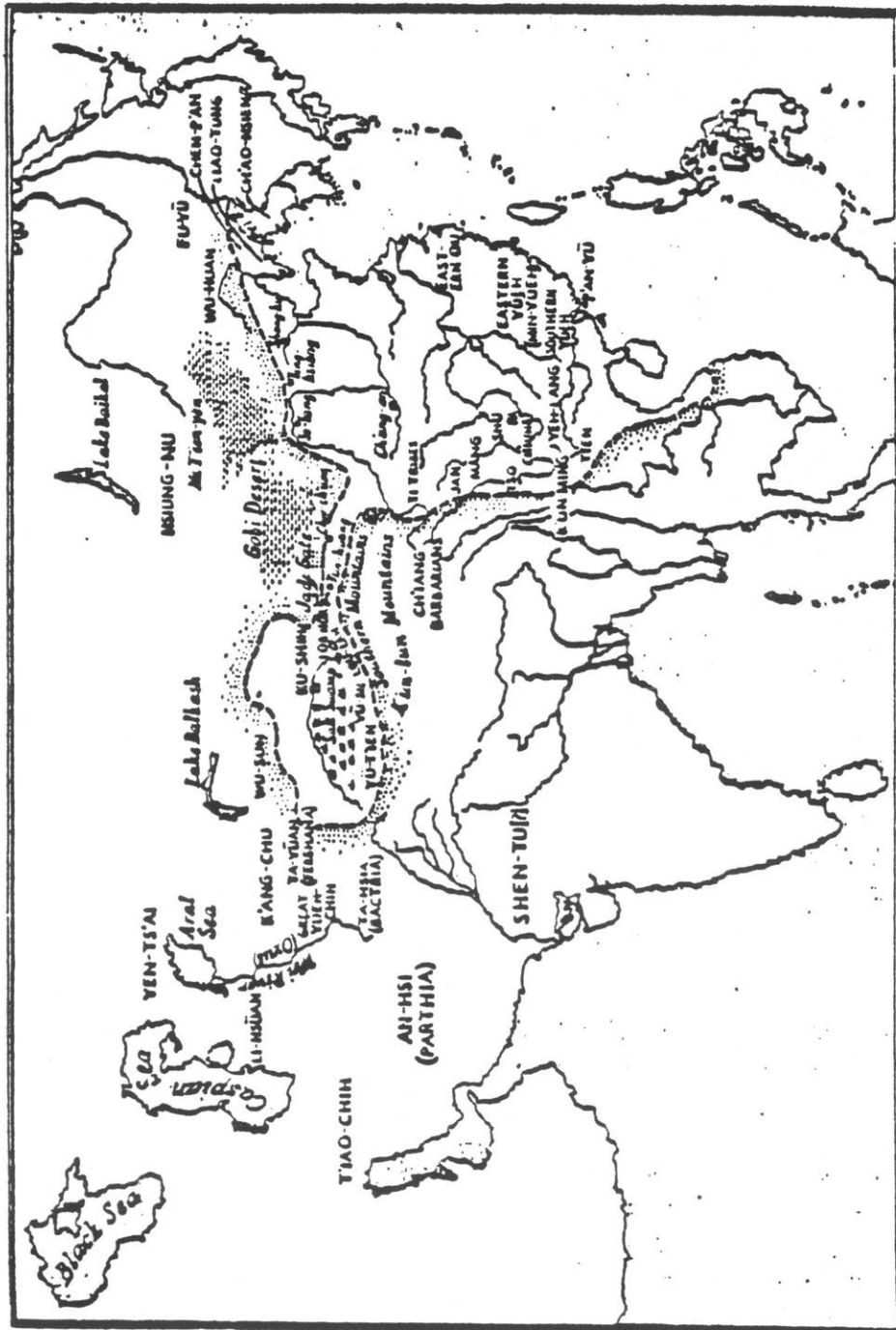
The challenge of having to still centralize more than two-thirds of the Chinese population, with a relatively small army, was not the end of Han's difficulty. Han's army had also to perform a second duty: it had to guard China's long frontiers. See Map 15. During the civil war, this was a small problem, for up until the defeat of Hsiang Yu, protection of all China was not Han's total responsibility. All this quickly changed, however, when Liu Pang became sole ruler. To the southwest and south, China adjoined numerous barbarian tribes and states, some of which could field tens of thousands of light infantry.⁷ To the northwest and north, China stood face to face with several nomadic powers, powers which could field large mounted armies; one nomadic power, in particular, the Hsiung-nu Confederacy, could field a cavalry army of 100,000 men or more.⁸

Compounding the handicap of the size of the imperial army was the lineage of the Dynastic founder. Liu Pang was, as we have seen, certainly not to the manor born. If this was a problem during time of war, it was even more so a problem in time of peace. In peacetime, the old qualification for leadership came once more to the fore: the Chinese were a people for whom it was of the first importance that leadership be based on aristocratic descent.⁹ Although by defeating Hsiang Yü and gaining peace, Liu Pang had disposed of a great rival who boasted parentage of great nobility,¹⁰ there were many would-be challengers who could easily surpass Hsiang Yü's pedigree. Indeed, eastern China was full of the scions of noble ruling families, any one of whom was born in more distinguished company than Liu Pang.

All this being true, there is no reason to expect the utter transformation of power inside China that the Dynasty

Map 15

The Han Empire and its Neighbors



From Watson, Records, Vol. II, p.62.

of Han achieved. With the balance of power such as it was at the founding of the empire (202 B.C.), the regime of Han might hope to hold together in jerry-rigged fashion for a limited time an array of subordinate states, only by creating an effect out of nothing could it come to dominate a thoroughly united civilization. To create this magical effect, it must have been necessary to follow a whole series of sophisticated steps.

The salient steps which the empire of Han took to safeguard its frontiers and centralize all China have all been recorded in the annals. Here is how the early empire centralized China. First, immediately after the conclusion of the civil war, Han confirmed in administrative terms the internal balance of power that then prevailed. Thus, western China, which was held by Liu Pang's closest supporters, was placed under the direct control of the central government; there too was placed the capital of empire, Ch'ang-an, and the base-camps of all imperial arms. Meanwhile, eastern China, occupied by Liu Pang's marshals and turncoats of Hsiang Yü, was converted into a handful of vassal kingdoms; and given over, by formal decree, to its present lords. Gradual expansion of central control got underway within weeks of the empire's founding. The empire absorbed some blows in the form of rebellions, and delivered others by way of pre-emption. The kingdoms of the East were gradually divided, then eventually occupied. All this over the course of a century.

From this, one may gather the impression that early Han policy consisted of compromise, accident and reaction, comprise, accident and reaction that unfolded a series of happy endings. Indeed this is the accepted view today. To the extent that a pattern emerged at all in early Han

statecraft, modern commentators would have us believe that it displayed the signs of a revival of Ch'in-like statecraft, with all that that entailed for strategic policy (Ch'in was not known for diplomatic subtlety). Thus the permanent placement of the imperial capital "within the Passes" (198 B.C.), in a strategic, not "ideological" location; the revival of Ch'in ceremony and worship at court; and the revival of Ch'in's ways of bureaucratic rule, in ever widening circles, indicate Ch'in thinking. Meanwhile, modification was most conspicuous in the decision to establish a mixed imperial order; and also noticeable in reform of Ch'in's harsh laws; easing the burden on peasant and noble everywhere, and greater tolerance accorded to Confucian and pacific ritual. The reason for the modification of Ch'in-like statecraft? Simple enough: the new Dynasty being relatively weak, it was essential that it water down its full agenda.¹¹

It is misleading, however, to believe that Han imperial policy, from inception through consolidation, was at its core informed by Ch'in's example, or its advances the offspring of chance or reaction or its pauses compromises. First of all, those pauses in Han's advance that saw fresh formalized divisions of China may have been compromises at face value, but beneath the surface they signaled a withdrawal into a new defensive stance of great strength, while paradoxically assuring that the initiative was retained.

Typical of a "compromise" reached after the civil war was the one struck up between central court and all the satellite courts in 180 B.C. At that time, an approximate bisection of China between central interests and local eastern interests was supposedly affirmed. The truth was

otherwise. No unprovoked rebellion had any chance of overthrowing Han, what with one, the support Han could count on from most client states as proclaimed champion of the status quo, and guardian against anarchy, and, two, the fact that the central government was shielded by the mountains that flanked the "Land within the Passes." Then too, the initiative lay with the empire. The field army of the empire was disposable, for the client states relieved Han of the burden of providing day to day security in the East.

After the civil war, the strange medley of blows absorbed and delivered also reveals a definite pattern, but of a different order. The rulers of the client East were jealous of each other, but they were also jealous of the privileges they held in common at the expense of the empire. When they were most likely to forge an alliance if Han threatened their common privileges, Han defended. When they were not yet prepared to form a proper defense if attacked, Han did attack. For example, when the client Eastern order was reestablished after the attempted coup of the family of Empress Lu (c. 180 B.C.), the client East, as a whole, was particularly suspicious of new imperial initiatives, so the empire did not advance until given cause to advance by a client state rebellion (177 B.C.). Later after client state rulers who had harbored recent resentment against the empire had died, the empire advanced. (164 B.C.).¹²

Here is how the early empire secured its frontiers. Alliances, such as they were, were concluded with the strongest adjoining barbarian states--with the nomadic Hsiung-nu in the north (199 B.C.), and with the foot barbarian Nan-Yueh in the south (196 B.C.). Despite being bound by treaty, Nan-Yueh and the Hsiung-nu wantonly attacked Chinese territory on quite a few occasions, and did

much harm. On each occasion, after repelling the attacks, Han always sought to renew friendly relations. Not once during the formative years of the consolidation of the empire (202-130 B.C.), did Han ever try to expand or retaliate into Hsiung-nu or Nan-Yueh lands. Not once during the same period, did Han ever meet major barbarian attacks outside its territory. Elsewhere along China's long borders, in Korea, in eastern Tibet and to the east and west of Nan-Yueh, Han was little bothered by outlying tribes, and was content to keep the peace.¹³

As with the facts about domestic policy, so with the facts about border policy, first inspection reveals a state merely reacting to events, and willy-nilly at that. But a closer look at the facts of Han border policy reveals a definite pattern here too.

The Nan-Yueh, and more so the Hsiung-nu, may have mounted major invasions of China on a number of occasions, and may have inflicted heavy damage on the border provinces of the empire, but, discounting one sorry episode that took place at the very start of Han's imperial rule (201 B.C.), the Han imperial army never suffered a major defeat at the hands of the barbarians.¹⁴ Instead, it was standard practice for imperial field forces to go into action after the impetus of any given barbarian invasion had spent itself. Typical of this pattern was Han's response to the Hsiung-nu invasion of 166 B.C. It is said that a nomadic horde of tens of thousands of men invaded northwest China. An enormous army was duly gathered around Ch'ang-an, and by the time it reached the frontier, the enemy had withdrawn.¹⁵ On top of that, at the risk of making a heroic generalization (our records of frontier action are not the best), Han's frontier policy induced a certain rhythm in

nomadic attack. The cost of surging major imperial field forces to the frontier in addition to the cost of subsidizing the barbarians roughly equaled the bother to the barbarians of mounting a big attack.¹⁶

Seen in the broad, and not piecemeal, as modern commentators are wont to, the actions of the early Dynasty at home and abroad do reveal then several sophisticated patterns, patterns that do go well beyond the vague mix of Ch'in-like and Confucian-like policies. But what informed these more sophisticated patterns? Whatever it was, it was not the strategy of maneuver, the strategic style that informed Liu Pang's rise to power, is not that so? After all, circumstances after his rise were so very different from circumstances during his rise, were they not? During his rise, Liu Pang was actually at war, and the twists and turns of his subtle advance could actually be traced in the clash and movements of armies. After his rise, not war but peace prevailed--at least peace prevailed inside China. To be sure, some fighting did take place inside China, but it was the very sporadic fighting of rebellion and suppression. Hardly was their the continuity--and traceability--of an unending succession of military campaigns. Now turn our gaze upon the borders, and what do we find there? An enemy of a markedly different kind from the enemy Liu Pang faced in the civil war. One was civilized, and demonstrated behavior of complex nature; the other was uncivilized, and was crude in his ways. How could a strategy carefully shaped to fight the one, bear any resemblance to a strategy shaped to fight the other? On top of that, what had the latter strategy to do with a strategy aimed to consolidate China?

There is no doubt that, as we shall see, the

particulars of early Han imperial policy (202-106 B.C.) bear little resemblance to the particulars of Han civil war policy. However, a great similarity in the essence of the respective policies shall emerge. As with Han policy during the civil war, so with Han policy after the civil war, the tactical level was subordinated to the strategic, and the strategic--to the grand strategic. Above all, a high quotient of maneuver is visible at each level after as well as throughout the civil war.

At the empire-wide level, Han policy manifest the general characteristics of the maneuver defense. Thus the persistent effort to build good relations with the great barbarian powers of the day (Hsiung-nu and Nan-Yüeh) was wise for sure and shows a classic use of diplomacy to convert an exposed central position into a relatively secure peripheral one. Seen from the perspective of what the Han court directly held at the time of the empire's creation (202 B.C.), it was beset on all sides by hostile or potentially hostile forces (barbarian forces to the north, south and west; jealous and shifty native forces to the east), and could not hope by any stretch of the imagination to overcome all these forces at once. In choosing to ally--and subordinate itself--to the most powerful among the barbarians, Han disengaged itself from threats of secondary importance and freed itself to put to rest the threat that threatened most. It thus avoided the combined strength of its foes as a whole, an eminently rational course of action.

The thinking behind empire-wide strategy is obvious enough, and routinely noted by modern commentators.¹⁷ But what is not obvious is the deployment strategy which backstopped Han's empire-wide diplomacy. Although the precise deployment of the empire's forces is not known,

their approximate deployment is. In the East, of course, client state armies assumed the daily burden of border defense. But in the west, it was the imperial army which did. Facing the steppe frontier of the northwest, the semi-steppe alpine frontier of the west, and the mountainous jungle frontier of the southwest, imperial forces were deployed in echelon. One echelon was situated right on the frontiers and included those forces permanently assigned to the Great Wall complex or to the string of strong points which stood on watch in the west and south. Behind, or perhaps intermingling with the first echelon was the second which included Han special forces--cavalry in the northwest, light infantry in the west and southwest. The third echelon was located in and around the imperial capital and was made up primarily of large infantry armies. Imperial forces also garrisoned the passes and grain depots of the great east-meets-west mountain divide.¹⁸

From this, one may gather the impression that the empire maintained a "territorial" defense of its commandery borders (i.e. met attacks along or just behind the border¹⁹), a defense which was backstopped by a strong strategic reserve. Indeed, forwardly deployed imperial forces did repel barbarian incursions from time to time, and the central reserve was swung to points along the frontiers or east/west divide when these points came under unusual pressure.²⁰

The impression of an all-purpose "territorial" defense is misleading however. The kind of barbarian attack, which forwardly deployed forces usually repelled, was of low-intensity. By no means did Han typically try to intercept high-intensity attacks beyond or along the frontiers. Thus major nomadic attacks in 201, 200, 177, 166

and 158 B.C., and a major attack by Nan-Yüeh in 183 B.C. were not met along the border. Instead, enemy forces were able to range far and wide behind the border.²¹ (The one exception to this defensive pattern came circa 158 B.C. For a year or two, Han implemented an ad hoc territorial defense.²²)

Instead of defeating major barbarian attack before it could do harm, Han special forces, which were deployed forward, fell back upon Ch'ang-an or were concentrated there or both these things were done; and together these forces and elements of the central reserve would march out en masse to meet the attack--weeks after the penetration had occurred, and the invader had done his worst. The same procedure would be repeated in the event of a major eastern rebellion. A certain time would intervene between rebel advance and imperial response. Between the imperial response to eastern rebellion and barbarian invasion, there was, however, this crucial difference--in the former case, the empire would follow up the engagement of the enemy with retaliation; in the latter case, there would be no retaliation at all. By no means did the empire avoid an evil consequence. There was a price to be paid for failure to maintain a forward deterrent in the north and south. Barbarian powers had to be appeased lest they raid continuously, or at least whenever they felt like it. Hence the reason why the exchange of goods between Han and its powerful barbarian neighbors heavily favored the latter.²³

If this was the extent of early Han's operational scheme, there would be nothing particularly interesting here. But this is not the extent of it. It is generally overlooked that imperial frontier defense was provided by the very same army that was also charged with controlling

and consolidating the client East. This distinction makes all the difference.

What emerges is one central field army doing the work of three in the context of a three-front security system in which the security of two of the fronts ranks lower than the security of one. The rich economy of force so achieved was critical for Han, and perfectly rational. On the fronts where Han provided neither a forward direct nor indirect defense against major attack, its enemies were unsuited to the task of occupying territory attacked. The barbarian neighbors of Han were raiders, not full fledged revisionist powers. On the other hand, where a deterrent was in place--the enemy, or rather the potential enemy, was capable of overturning the imperial order single-handedly.

What this also means is that the empire ran an even greater risk than modern commentators acknowledge. Han's entire imperial order was vulnerable to concerted simultaneous attacks launched from different directions. Han's security system was not designed to deal with a combined barbarian/eastern revolt. To prevent that from happening, Han relied upon this: extra care to control the border kingdoms; in the north, preservation of the great wall to symbolize Chinese unity; and artful diplomacy.

Ultimately, Han's frontier strategy rested upon a great deception: making the barbarians and his eastern client kings believe that the empire could effectively interpose its strength between them. Thus Han's recourse to the greatest deception of all, that, to the barbarians, it cultivated the image of a fundamentally united China. Han cultivated this deception rather than deploy a second or even third field army. Han stretched the use of one.

Better that than to oppress the commandery of the West and the client East for more forces, or the taxes to pay for them. Thus was moral influence at home valued more than military power.

Also true to a proper maneuver defense, the effect of Han's frontier strategy was to retain the initiative overall. Han was free to consolidate China, and with China consolidated, it would have overwhelming power to turn against the barbarian world. Thus Han ran a well calculated risk in giving the barbarian a head start to unify his world.

Here then was one important effect that Han needed to create "out of nothing." By avoiding altogether the strength of the barbarian world, and by subordinating frontier security to internal security, a potentially great drain on Han's limited resources was minimized, and minimized without giving too much ground to external powers. The creation of this effect meant that Han had gone a long ways towards overcoming its overall poverty of means. But how did it go the final distance--the longer, and even more difficult distance--, and find a way, not just to defend against, but to successfully attack the local interests of eastern China?

I have noted that Han fought few battles during its campaign of consolidation. In fact, it used its armies very little at all. By no means did its consolidation of China depend upon marching its armies back and forth over eastern China. The central government did not send its field army to the East one day, and on the next say to a certain eastern ruler, "Surrender your land, or we will take it from you." Quite the contrary, it happened more times than not

that a eastern ruler would lose part of his land, or all of it, without Ch'ang-an dispatching the imperial army at all. Moreover, this pattern, which was already common during the reign of the first emperor, would happen virtually every time during the reign of Liu Pang's successors.

It was, as we shall see, the very fact that imperial armies were not physically used very much during the campaign of consolidation that was one of the keys to consolidation. The East may have been unified and centralized against the will of the local rulers, but the typical tell-tale signs of forced incorporation were not much in evidence. Here was, in part, the basis of the empire's great internal deception. Though the power of the central government was steadily growing at the expense of the eastern Chinese, the absence of physical compulsion provided Ch'ang-an with cover. As long as Ch'ang-an said it was not at bottom expansionistic--and made other kinds of benign gestures as well--, there were many in the East who would say the same thing, and who--and this was critical--would support the empire all the while.

The instrument that did much to permit Han's deceptive expansion in the East must have been the client kingdoms. The imperial army would probably remain critical in this strategy, but its use was artfully extenuated. Extenuation occurred, in part, by using local client kingdoms as a lever, and, in part, by outflanking the client kingdoms as a whole in diplomatic fashion--exploiting their moral imbalance and tendency to self-destruct.

The creation of this second effect, in combination with the first--exploiting the barbarian's myopic view--meant that Han overcame its poverty of means by means of an

external and internal maneuver, an empire-wide maneuver. It shall be shown that this empire-wide maneuver comprised three grand stratagems, which, in turn, comprised (1) an unchanging strategy for frontier defense, which isolated successive targets inside China, and shielded the empire as a whole; and (2) three different theater strategies for attack inside China. The result was that the bedrock of Chinese society, the strata of influential families, like the militaristic strata above it, was taken intact with little fighting.

FOOTNOTES

Three Campaigns of Consolidation
Text: pp. 161-178

1. A good summary of the fighting that took place among the Chinese from the time of Lin Pang's revolt against Ch'in through the reign of Han Ching-ti can be found in HFHD, Dubs, Vol. I, pp.2-9 for the civil war; for the reign of Han Kao-ti pp. 9-11; and from the death of Han Kao-ti through 106 B.C. pp.167-172, 215-217, 292-297.

2. HS 24A: 8a,8b (Swann, Food and Money, pp. 148-149).

3. HS 24A: 14a (Swann, Food and Money, pp. 173-175).

4. At the very end of the civil war (202 B.C.), over half a million Chinese may well have been under arms. During his reign (202-195 B.C.), Han Kao-ti demobilized many, although he kept a large strategic reserve at his beck and call. See Dubs, HFHD, Vol. I, p. 11. The largest army that the first emperor ever committed to a single campaign (201 B.C.) was said to number 320,000 men. At the end of Han Kao-ti's reign, it is said that the imperial army had 100,000 men at Jung-yang, and 200,000 quelling rebellion in Tai and Yen. HS 1B: 23b,24a (Dubs, HFHD, Vol. I, pp. 144-145). A much more far reaching mobilization occurred after the death of the first emperor; from that time until the middle years of Han Wu-ti's reign (c. 125 B.C.), the largest recorded gathering of imperial forces came to about 150,000 men. SC 110 (Watson, Records, Vol. I, p. 173) It seems that the standing army of the empire remained fairly constant in size after the demobilization that followed Han Kao-ti's death. On the two occasions when the size of the army changed (c. 177 B.C. for a decrease and c. 144 B.C. for an increase), nothing is said or implied in the annals about an unusually large change. On the decrease: in 177 B.C., Han Wen-ti abolished the post of Grand Commandant HS 4: 11b (Dubs, HFHD, Vol. I, p. 246). Dubs (HFHD, Vol I, p. 217), believes that this change probably also included a general decline in the size of the standing army. On the increase: in 144 B.C., the empire annexed most of northeastern China. Since defense for these territories was now the direct responsibility of the empire, the empire probably increased the size of the imperial army. Note that in summer 144 B.C., the Hsiung-nu attacked Shang commandery, among others, and took the horses of the imperial pastures. HS 5: 8b, (Dubs, HFHD, Vol. I, pp. 325-326). Could this have been a preclusive strike to weaken an expanding imperial cavalry

corps?

5. Ch'in committed 300,000 men to build and defend the long walls in the north. Twitchett and Loewe eds., CHC, pp. 62-63. Another 500,000 men were sent to colonize the south. Herold J. Wiens, Han Chinese Expansion in South China, (USA: The Shoe String Press, Inc., 1967), p. 132. Tens of thousands more must have been sent to garrison the recently annexed feudal states of the East.

6. John P. Greer, Armies and Enemies of Ancient China: 1027 B.C.-1288 A.D., (USA: Wargame Research Group & Heritage Models), pp. 12-16.

7. SC 116 (Watson, Records, Vol. II, pp. 291 and 295).

8. SC 110 (Watson, Records, Vol. II, p. 163).

9. On the importance of inherited prestige see Dubs, HFHD, Vol I, pp. 13-15.

10 SC 7 (Watson, Records, Vol. I, p. 37).

11. For the details of the conventional explanation see Twitchett and Loewe eds., CHC, pp. 119-127.

12. For the outline of these diplomatic moves see Twitchett and Loewe eds., CHC, pp. 140-141.

13. An excellent overview of Han foreign relations can be found in Twitchett and Loewe, CHC. For Han relations with the Hsiung-nu, see pp. 383-389; with Korea, pp. 446-448; with the Nan-Yüeh, pp. 451-452; with the Min-Yüeh, pp. 455-456; and with the diverse peoples of the southwest, p. 457.

14. The elusive disposition of the central field army of the empire can be quickly understood by reading Dubs, HFHD, Vol. I, pp. 10, 167-168, 217 and 297.

15. SC 110 (Watson, Records, Vol. II, pp. 172-173).

16. This conclusion can be inferred from Loewe's remarks. See Michael Loewe, "The Campaigns of Han Wu-ti" Chinese Ways in Warfare (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1974), p. 69.

17. More elaborate proof await Chapters Fifteen and Nineteen of the dissertation.

18. For example, Twitchett and Loewe, CHC, Ibid., pp. 127-128 and 151-152.

19. See first few pages of the chapter: "Strategic

Deployment of Forces."

19. The term is Luttwak's. Edward Luttwak, The Grand Strategy of the Roman Empire: From the First Century A.D. to the Third (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), p. 23.

20. A good example of central reserve troop movements via Ch'ang-an to the East are movements made in 196 B.C. in response to the revolt of Ch'ing Pu. HS 1B: 19a (Dubs, HFHD, Vol. I, p. 135).

21. See chapters: "The Nomadic Threat" and "The Southern Threat, Southern Theater Strategy and Honorary Vassal States."

22. SC 110 (Watson, Records, Vol. II, pp. 175-176). Also see footnote 16 again.

23. The best account of Han's concessions to the Hsiung-nu, Han's most dangerous neighbor, can be found in Ying-shih Yü, Trade and Expansion in Han China (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1967), pp. 41-51.

Chapter Nine

THE EASTERN CLIENT STATES

AND

HEGEMONIC MANEUVER

Consolidation of the better part of ancient China, the central objective of imperial strategy from Han Kao-ti's reign through Han Ching-ti's, required the conduct of a far sighted campaign of internal maneuver. To the extent that we can believe the accounts of a handful of court historians, above all, those written by Ssu-ma Ch'ien (the SC), the salient moments in this campaign have all been recorded. None the less, the home policy of the early Dynasty, as well as the ultimate intellectual source of its inspiration, have remained controversial.

It is a fact that Liu Pang not only led Han's conquest of China, but also led Han's consolidation of China through its first seven years (r. 202-195 B.C.). It is a fact too that many of Liu Pang's generals shared in the making of policy well beyond his death, well into the reign of Han Wen-ti (180-155 B.C.).¹ What is more, for 2000 years folklore has proclaimed the craftiness and exquisite strategic sense of Liu Pang, his inner court and his top generals.² On top of that, the annals emphatically point out the influence of an undisclosed version of Sun Tzu's maneuver manual Art of War on Liu Pang and his partisans as they waged civil war.³ Even so, I know of no modern

commentator who suspects that there was a fundamental connection in method between Liu Pang's civil war policy and the policy of consolidation that followed the civil war. Likewise, I know of no modern commentator who suspects that the early Dynasty had a grand design, a grand design based upon maneuver.

Instead, in explaining later developments in Han's internal policy, we encounter today's conventional argument that a recently bankrupt approach was used in modified form by the post-civil war court. The statecraft of the Ch'in Empire was the approach supposedly modified; and those who argue that would probably say, if pressed, that an eclectic pacific-Confucian approach informed the change. In other words, if I understand this position correctly, it is believed that the court of Han mixed a political strategy based primarily upon frontal attack (the way of Ch'in) with benevolent policy based upon the idea of ruling by setting a good example (the way of the Confucianists).⁴ Chance and occasional planning did the rest. Ultimately, this awkward explanation stems from a failure to appreciate a third approach, an approach which is based upon a dialectical synthesis of contrary elements. This failure springs from a variety of causes.

The most powerful cause of the failure to grasp Han's strategic design for the consolidation of China must surely spring from a generic reason--the failure to recognize the applicability of maneuver methods of conflict to "peacetime" statecraft. It is simply assumed that these methods have currency for "wartime" only. This oversight must be especially a problem for Western Sinologists. These otherwise brilliant commentators, who stand at the forefront of research on Han, received their formative training in the

moral-legal culture of the West, a culture which inspires the point of view that there should exist a sharp difference between state conduct in "peacetime" and in "war." There is no doubt that for this reason the myth surrounding Liu Pang's use of maneuver in the civil war has never before been examined for its own merits, nor for what it might tell us about the nature of Han policy in the peace that followed.⁵

Reinforcing this general cause are several other causes peculiar to the study of the Han period. To begin with, there is the insidious influence of a False Cause. Given hindsight of the prevalence of Ch'in-like and then quasi-Confucian ideas at the imperial court of the first century B.C.,⁶ the conclusion has been drawn that elements of these ideas must have been present at the court of the second century B.C., and must have given rise to a tempered and somewhat reactive policy. Hence, the dual belief that post-civil war/early Han implemented a "modified" version of Ch'in policy, that is to say, a harsh, political-frontal-attack policy modified by a peculiar compromise with eclectic, pacific-Confucian notions, and that Han's consolidation of China sprung partly from accident and partly from ad hoc plans. What has been forgotten is that a grand strategy based upon political subversion and its servant, military maneuver would have the aforementioned elements present also, but these elements would be synthesized, not merely assimilated. Furthermore, allowance would be made for accident in long-range plans. Thus, in domestic policy, a balance would be struck between the harsh ways of Ch'in rule and the benevolent ways of "Heaven;" while in strategic policy, military power and moral authority would be deceptively manipulated.

That large-scale maneuver and appropriate flexibility would be prevalent in the first century of Han existence, but not in the second, can be attributed to two very different sets of circumstances: in the second century B.C., Han was constantly beset by a poverty of means and hence had no choice but to concentrate its collective brain and discipline its strategic conduct; whereas in the first century B.C., a surfeit of means--or so it was thought⁷--led to relaxation in the formulation of strategy and the dominance of one inward looking, minimally strategic program, and then another.

Another peculiar reason for the failure to appreciate early Han's grand design, is adherence to an argument from silence. Because the annals do not explicitly mention Han's offensive thinking during the years of consolidation, from the reign of Liu Pang through the early years of Han Wu-ti's reign, it is taken for granted that the empire had no long-range, carefully crafted offensive plans as such. For virtually the same period (end of Liu Pang's reign through early years of Han Wu-ti's reign), there is also no reference about Sun Tzu's Art of War. However, the annals do record discussions of defensive planning. For example, the defensive advantages of the "Land within the Passes" was carefully deliberated.⁸ And, as we shall see, such defensive planning would have dovetailed nicely with maneuver offensives. Also it is inconceivable that maneuver principles, like those found in Sun Tzu's Art of War, suddenly disappeared in Han thinking after the first few years of Liu Pang's reign. In 120 B.C., it is said that Han Wu-ti himself admonished a prominent cavalry commander to study the Art of War, and we know that the great classic was preserved in the Imperial Library.⁹ Moreover, we know that the game Wei Ch'i, which is based upon extremely long-range

maneuver strategy, was gaining in popularity in early Han.¹⁰ Most importantly, the annals do say that the philosophy from which Sun Tzuian maneuver principles, and more generic maneuver principles derive--the philosophy of Daoism--was the most popular philosophy at the early central court (c. 202-130 B.C.).¹¹

That the annalists do not refer to offensive planning for the period covering the consolidation of empire, nor make mention of classic works of maneuver strategy like Sun Tzu's Art of War, is exactly what we should expect. A man, commissioned by the Dynasty itself to write its history, cannot very well admit the deceitful process whereby total dominion was acquired. On the other hand, we should expect to find exactly what we do find--a methodical attempt one, to distance subsequent regimes from all mention of Sun Tzu, and from the labels "deceitful" or "strategical," and, two, to attribute benevolent rather than crafty qualities to them (for example, Emperor Wen-ti, a benevolent Confucian-like adherent, whose "sole care was to improve the people by means of his virtue."¹²).

The upshot of a failure to appreciate the full significance of maneuver warfare is an incomplete analysis. Thus only military engagements and actual divisions of territory and authority are examined. Overlooked are a whole range of intangible moves made--manipulation of the threat of attack and concealment of imperial intent. In other words, the eye skips over the vital operational level of the diplomatic struggle--the manner in which the Dynasty used engagements with individual client states (diplomatic tactics) to attain its theater level objectives. Without examining the dynamics of Han's expansion, modern commentators have had to invoke fortune as explanation.

From this it is a short step to the conclusion that there was no grand theater design, that Han was not systematically waging political warfare.

Although, in so many words, the annals do not admit the prevalence of an evolving theater strategy, there are signs that there was one: imperial actions reveal the outlines of two theater-level political-military campaigns, campaigns based upon maneuver, which began during the closing months of the Chinese civil war (202 B.C.) and which effectively ended some 100 years later, well into the reign of Han Wu-ti. (In between these two campaigns, c. 195-180 B.C., the empire successfully withstood a powerful dynastic coup. The empire owes its survival to prescient steps taken by Han Kao-ti in his last few years in office, steps also founded upon maneuver.) By no means were these campaigns of attrition, the form antithetical to maneuver: the strength of the enemy was never tackled head-long; nor was the enemy's plan of campaign ignored. Rather these were campaigns of maneuver: the empire exploited weaknesses among the enemy, aimed to disrupt him, not destroy him, and attacked his plans at their inception.

Thus from the very first, eastern elites were attacked incrementally, in order of moral vulnerability: the most vulnerable attacked first. Moral ascendancy was seized at the very onset (and as a precondition the empire was careful to keep itself in moral balance at all times). Maintenance of this ascendancy made it possible to enlist support among the particular elite then under attack, preying upon their excessive trust. This support, in conjunction with the selective, one could almost say surgical, use of imperial military power then lead to the defeat of the enemy in detail. In the beginning of each theater-level

political-military campaign (202-201 B.C. and 180-164 B.C.), it was standard practice for the central government to use force only when it appeared to have the right to do so; it exclusively targeted eastern elites that challenged the status quo; thus it was careful to make sure that the reach of its writ did not exceed what was deemed by custom to fall within its grasp. Later when the imperial deterrent was judged to be insuperable, the empire advanced in ways that could no longer be justified by the need to maintain the status quo as a whole. Surely, all of this was maneuver of the most exquisite kind, one in which the attack on the moral fabric of Chinese life was oblique, and broadly pre-arranged. Ultimately, all this was correct exploitation of the predicament of the early empire.

The original idea for the general layout of the early empire was conceived in the camp of Liu Pang on the eve of the civil war (206 B.C.). History records that Han Hsin, the very best of the early Han generals, first voiced the idea of placing the imperial capital in the "Land within the Passes," and dividing the remainder of China (East) among Han's generals and turncoat confederates.¹³ In the fifth month of 202 B.C., Han Hsin's plan became reality. The imperial capital was not fully fortified until 190 B.C. however.¹⁴

The realization of Han Hsin's plan--dividing the rule of China among the central government and client governments--meant that Han had brought about a "hegemonic" security system.¹⁵ One important consequence of this was the loss of tax revenue, as well as the loss of armies that could have been taken out-of-area. The forfeiture of these resources meant that the size of the imperial army was correspondingly reduced. Yet, the existence of the client

order was not without benefit. Responsibility for the day to day, local security of decentralized Chinese territory devolved upon the client states themselves.

With the collapse of Hsiang Yü's government, all major active threats to the Han regime were effectively eliminated. To be sure, there were endemic barbarian threats to still contend with, but, by and large, the barbarians remained preoccupied with their own intramural quarrels.¹⁶ There did emerge, however, a latent threat of major scope. With the return of peacetime conditions in 202 B.C., the field was clear for the revival of the noble families.¹⁷ Such families would oppose occupation of their lands, the more land occupied the greater the opposition. On top of that, the end of hostilities left Han's generals with very little to do. If not appeased, there could be a fresh outbreak of fighting.

Given the strategic predicament of the early empire, there was as of yet no pressing need for the deployment of a large standing army which only a truly unified China could have offered. However, had the leadership of Han indeed chosen the military path of caution, with respect to its overall defense, it was bound to fully occupy all of China. Yet, that would have equated to a frontal attack upon the whole of the world of client states and upon Han's civil war commanders. If and when the defeat of the latter was achieved, the empire could look forward to unending police operations all across China to keep low the head of local interest. Surely the empire could have looked forward to the conduct of protracted operations for which its resources would not have sufficed. Making this danger all too real must have been the pathetic illustration of Ch'in's fatal policy of absolute universal control,¹⁸ an illustration

which Liu Pang's supporters were quite aware of.¹⁹ Thus the reason for Han's chosen path--handing over most lands to client rule.

By no means was client rule without benefit. It has been pointed out by Luttwak that the existence of client states complements offensive imperial power.²⁰ Ordinarily, on account of their own arms, client states can absolve the imperial state of the responsibility of providing internal security in the client territory, as well as the responsibility of providing perimeter security against low-intensity, transborder barbarian attacks, or against petty attacks that might be launched from the territory of neighboring client kingdoms. Surely Han's client armies provided this security, for we never read of imperial forces being so engaged.

Client armies could not provide local security in the face of high-intensity attack however. The annals are replete with instances in which the nomad Hsiung-nu (e.g. 177, 166, 158 B.C.) or the foot-barbarian Nan-yüeh (179 B.C.) or even fully mobilized, rebel client armies penetrated with ease client state defenses (e.g. 202, 196, 154 B.C.). To have permitted the deployment of large enough client state armies to cope would have wholly deranged the balance of power between commandery of the West and client East. Even so, client states were not worthless in the face of high-intensity threats: their sheer depth of territory was of value: client states could absorb the first blows while stronger, imperial armies were deployed to intercept. One example explored in some detail will suffice to illustrate. Witness the manner in which the client kingdom of Liang benefited the freedom of action of the imperial army at the height of the Revolt of the Seven Kingdoms. The

vanguard of the rebellious army of Wu and Ch'u was bearing down on the Han-ku Pass, but Liang opted for the empire, absorbed the first blows of the rebels, fought two desperate battles, and consequently gave the imperial army time to mobilize and deploy "East of the mountains": the imperial army was relieved of the initial task of keeping the passes open. According to the SC "... in the number of enemy killed and prisoners taken, the Liang armies had achieved virtually as much as the forces of the Han government."²¹

The savings in force deployments that obtains for the imperial state can be considerable, and can then be converted into greater disposable force for offensive operations. On account of the existence of the client states, the commandery of the West did not have to concern itself with the routine protection of its eastern border along a great arc from the northern tip of Shensi to the southern tip of Hunan. Thus imperial forces were usually not tied down guarding the eastern border of the West. (A strong garrison was undoubtedly maintained at Jung-yang, however.²²) What is more, imperial forces were nowhere encamped in the East. Instead, it was possible to concentrate imperial forces in the West. And to the extent that such forces were not preoccupied protecting the western frontiers of the empire, these forces could be disposable in armies of great size. Thus it was not unusual for imperial task forces of 100,000 men plus to be deployed in a single mass--task forces that must have accounted for at least one-third of the entire standing army of the West.²³

The great disposability of imperial forces could be converted into tremendous political leverage for the empire.²⁴ Being of the same culture as the emperor, a given client king could "see" the pacifying effects of a full

dressed imperial invasion, even if only in his mind's eye, as well as any other client king could. Only the most insensitive proxy dynast would fail to comply to such a perceived threat. The magnitude of such a threat can be crudely calculated this way. Assuming for instance that the East was divided up into 10 kingdoms of fairly equal size, a division which prevailed during much of the empire's early existence, and assuming that the per capita mobilizable potential of the commandery of the West and the client states was similar, then it follows that the maximum military power in the hands of the emperor outclassed the military power in the hands of any one client dynast by the odds of five to one. The beauty of Han's overwhelming empire-client state superiority in arms was that it could reap the full theater-wide effect without having to physically invade any one client state. Hence Han's ability to hold on to all of China while merely operating from a peripheral base.

Thus it was the Dynasty's lot to enjoy the customary benefits and suffer the customary drawbacks of a hegemonic security system. But the consequences did not stop here, for Han had wrought not a conventional hegemony but an unconventional one.

Ordinarily we think of a hegemonic security system as an imperial arrangement in which the imperial power occupies the central and most productive lands in the realm around which is arrayed a continuous belt of satellite countries. But Han's hegemony was not like this. Instead, the satellites were placed to one side of the realm and the imperial power or imperial base to the other. As a further twist to this skewed disposition, the imperial base occupied not the heart of the realm but a modestly productive land,

judged by contemporaries to have recently risen from semi-barbaridom. See Diagram 2.

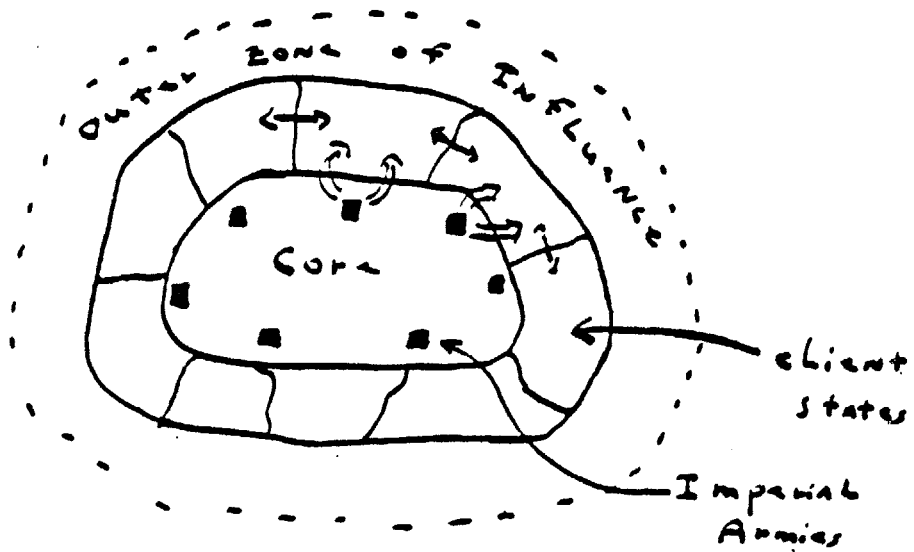
One important advantage of this unconventional arrangement was that the central government possessed the securest base that China had to offer. So much was said at a conference held during Liu Pang's first year as emperor.²⁵ By making the boundary of centralized territory coterminous with the metropolitan area of Ch'in, only a single border was shared with the rest of China; the other three fronts faced weak barbarian tribes. Also the China facing front was mostly mountain: Kuan-chung was only accessible via three passes. Kuan-chung was a self-sufficient province. The Wei Valley, which bisected it, was fertile; moreover, Kuan-chung stood at the headwater of the Yellow and Huai Rivers and thus was ideally situated to receive grain from the East. The most important advantage of Kuan-chung was not mentioned however: the people of this province were long accustomed to central rule. Ch'in, the most centralized state of the Warring State Period, had existed in the land of Kuan-chung for some seven centuries (founded in 897 B.C.). Hence the Dynasty could count upon the loyalty of its centralized subjects.

A second important advantage of dividing the realm along east/west lines was that the Dynasty attained tremendous moral influence not only in the West, but throughout China.²⁶ The east corresponded to the ancient feudal stronghold of China--there local autonomy was most appreciated, and central rule most resented. See Map 16. Moreover, the East contained the richest provinces of China: Han's commanders received richer prizes than even the emperor himself.

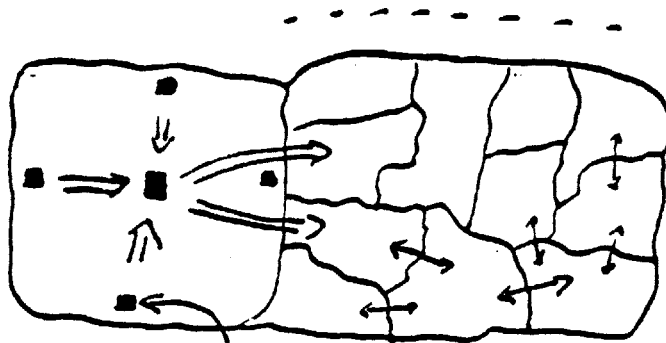
Diagram 2

Ways of Hegemony

The Way of "Classic Continental" Empire

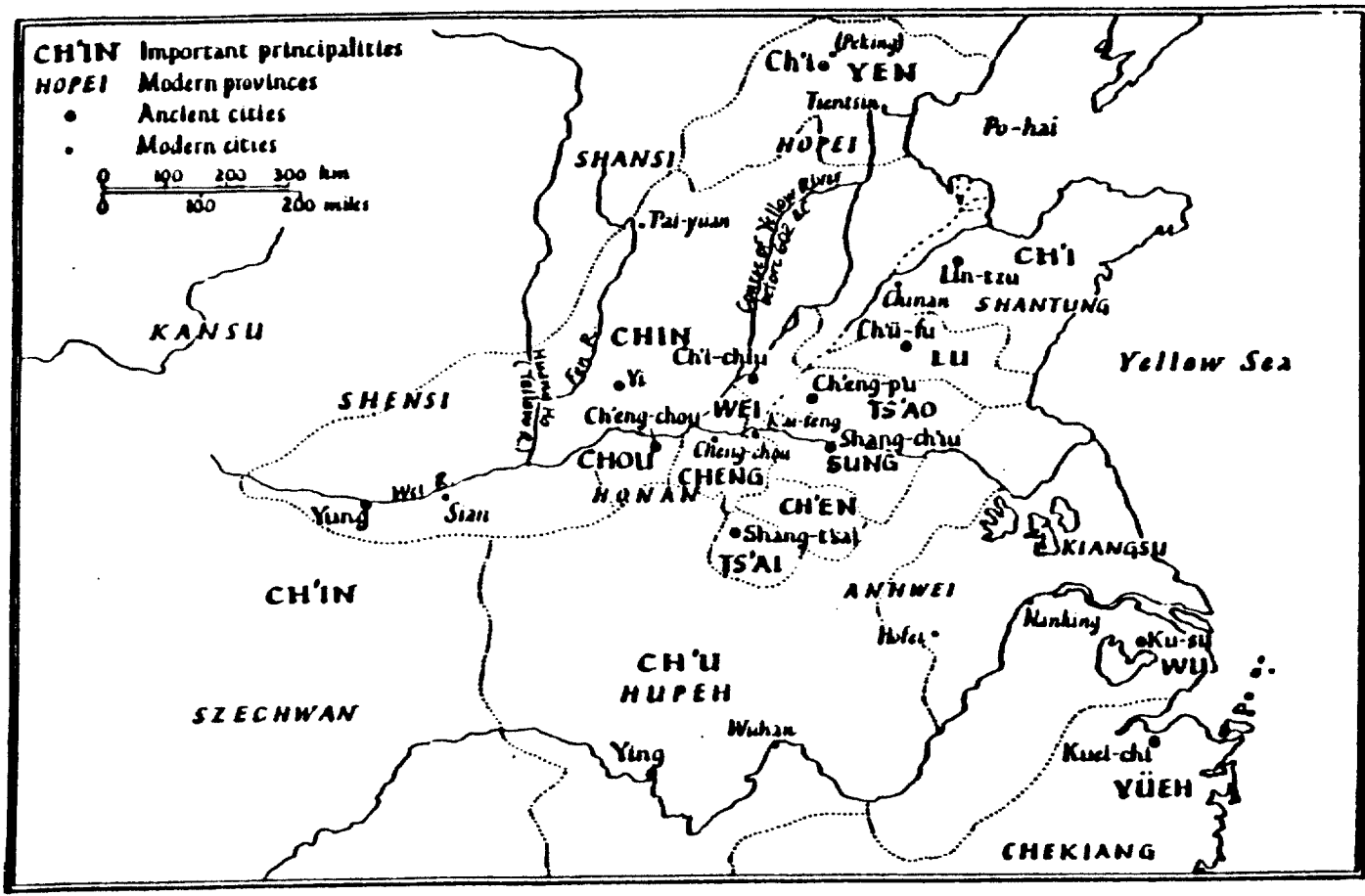


The Way of Han



Map 16

The Empire of Eastern Chou



From Gernet, A History of Chinese Civilization, p. 59.

Thus by placing the imperial base in the West and conferring proxy rule on the East, the Dynasty avoided the strength of the eastern patrician families and its military commanders, and also attained moral ascendancy. It was plain enough for all to see that the central government occupied the best ground from which to keep order in China; and yet it also rewarded the richest lands in all of China on its client kings: it was truly harsh and magnanimous in proper order. It was in moral balance, and it was also well poised to exploit unlawful challenges to the status quo.

However, "all maneuver has inherent in it, risks as well as benefits." The risk which Ch'ang-an ran was that the disposable force which the centralized West gained from the client state arrangement in the East was inferior to the conjoint power of the entire East. Indeed it was also inferior to a certain fraction of this conjoint power. Magnifying this risk still further was the possibility that a rebel alliance might invoke the power of off-lying barbarians also. All this was compounded by the skewed disposition of the early empire. Instead of having client state power dispersed all around an imperial core, which enjoyed interior lines, Han client state power was concentrated in a compact space of great depth.

The big difference in the management of a conventional hegemonic security system, as opposed to the management of one unconventional like Han's, was the role of moral influence, and the importance of maintaining moral balance. Han was more dependent on moral influence to deter rebellion than it would have been otherwise. Only as long as Han seemed to uphold local privilege in the East without also jeopardizing the peace of the empire as a whole was it assured of control.

This dependence on moral influence had strategic implications of great significance. A frontal attack on the East was precluded. To have attempted to do so would have given eastern kings reason to overcome local jealousies; they would have rallied together. That, and the fact that the East possessed tremendous depth meant that a coup de main would have been out of the question. And, of course, even if Han was successful, it would still have been confronted with the problem of administrating a hostile society. On the other hand, the layout of the client East meant that the opposition's plan for defense was a most simple one--the equivalent of a linear defense against military attack. The client East was capable of responding to a broad, unfocused attack; a selective, ambiguous attack would find them vulnerable.

Han, it would seem, systematically exploited the vulnerability of the client East to ambiguous attack. The evidence is there that Han fashioned a subtle maneuver strategy. We shall see this strategy manifest in three stages--the first stage in which preparations are laid for a grand advance; the second stage in which Han's theater-wide maneuver reached its culmination, its grand deception was blown, but, at the same time, the enemy had been irrevocably outflanked; and the third stage in which the enemy made a hopeless last stand.

FOOTNOTES

Eastern Client States and Hegemonic Maneuver
Text: pp. 182-197

1. Dubs, HFHD, Vol. I, pp. 17-18.

2. Dennis Bloodworth and Ching Ping, The Chinese Machiavelli: 3000 Years of Chinese Statecraft (New York: Dill Publishing Co., Inc., 1976). For a glowing opinion, reported in the annals, about the skill of Liu Pang and his lieutenants see SC 10 (Watson, Records, Vol. I, p. 341).

3. The annalists say more: that Liu Pang's approach was Sun Tzuian, for which it should follow that Han civil war strategy was built upon maneuver. Behold what the SC says, "From time to time Chang Liang expounded [Sun Tzu's] Art of War to [Liu Pang]. The latter greatly admired it and always followed the strategies which it outlined...." SC 55 (Watson, Records, Vol. I, p. 136). The annals that cover the civil war (209-202 B.C.) also leave no doubt that from very early on, the most influential of Liu Pang's advisors and strategists were self-proclaimed students of the Sun T'zuian style, or styles like it. See the biographies of Chang Liang, SC 55, and Han Hsin, SC 92. This is not to say that students of other styles, for instance the Modernist Li I-chi, were not influential, only that their ideas were consistently subordinated to the ideas of the Sun Tzuians, like Chang Liang, senior advisor to Liu Pang; Han Hsin, senior general and the Dynasty's most brilliant tactician; and Hsiao Ho, senior logitician and the man who promoted Han Hsin to Liu Pang.

4. Ch'in based its political strategy on frontal attack, not maneuver, in that it always immediately annexed territory it conquered: it disdained the use of the instrument of the client kingdom.

5. The CHC, for example, devotes the sum of 225 pages to retail the domestic story of Former Han, but only 4 of these pages deal with the civil war. Introduction, pp. 1-19; The Former Han dynasty, pp. 103-222; The Structure and Practice of Government, pp. 463-490; and The Economic and Social History of Former Han, pp. 545-607. Compare to the coverage of Liu Pang's role in the civil war, pp. 113-118.

6. For the influence of Modernist and Reformist thinking on the statecraft of the empire in the 1st century B.C., see Michael Loewe, Crisis and Conflict in Han China, (London:

George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1974).

7. Twitchett and Loewe, CHC, pp. 163-164.

8. SC 55 (Watson, Records, Vol. I, pp. 145) and Ibid., SC 8 (pp. 109).

9. On Han Wu-ti's reference to Art of War see Ibid., SC 111 (p.209).

10. Although it has never been totally proven that the game Wei Ch'i is, in fact, part of Sun Tzuian strategic culture, many students of Wei Ch'i and of Sun Tzu's Art of War argue that it is. Scott A. Boorman, The Protracted Game: A Wei-Ch'i Interpretation of Maoist Revolutionary Strategy, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1969), footnote #8, p. 208 provides references to men who have so argued. Moreover, leading Sun Tzuian strategists, like Mao Tse-tung, freely borrow concepts from the game. We know that Wei Ch'i was widely played throughout China from at least the beginning of the Han Dynasty. Ibid., p. 5.

11. Finally, it is known that Daoism was the most popular philosophy at central court during the early Han Dynasty; surely it was very popular throughout China: practitioners of Daoism who were strategists, or who talked strategy must then have been legion. John K. Shyrock, The Origin and Development of the State Cult of Confucius, (New York: Paragon Book Reprint Corp. 1966), p. 29. ... Sun Tzu's Art of War is thought to be in the Daoist tradition. It is believed that Sun Tzu's Art of War translated by Samuel B. Griffith (as well as Wu Ch'i's faithful interpretation) appeared sometime in the early 4th century B.C. Griffith, The Art of War, p. 11. If so, it superceded the start of the Confucian School by about a 100 years, preceded the start of the School of Law, and more or less coincided with the writing of the more formal Daoist text, Lao Zi. J.W. Freiberg, "The Dialectic in China: Maoist and Daoist," Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars, IX, No.1, (January-March 1977), p. 14. It follows then that Sun T'zu tackled the same problems of war and peace that weighed so heavily upon the Confucianists/Reformists and the Legalists/Modernists, and that was building to a climax during the Warring State Period.

12. This quote is from Han Wen-ti's eulogy. HS 4: 22a (Dubs, HFHD, Vol. I, pp. 274).

13. SC 92 (Watson, Records, Vol. I, pp. 211-212).

14. Twitchett and Loewe eds., CHC, p. 122. For details about the capital, and its construction see Ibid., pp.

130-131 and 134-135. Liu Pang had taken the throne in Ting-t'ao, which is in present Shantung. HS 1B: 3b,4a (Dubs, HFHD, Vol. I, p. 102). In May 202 B.C., he moved the seat of government to Lo-yang. HS 1B: 4b (Dubs, HFHD, Vol. I, p. 103 and footnote #4, p. 103).

15. The term is Luttwak's. Edward Luttwak, The Grand Strategy of the Roman Empire: From the First Century A.D. to the Third (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), pp. 22.

16. Southern barbarian would fight southern barbarian, and, for the most part, nomad would fight nomad through circa 180 B.C. See Twitchett and Loewe eds., CHC, p. 128 on the situation in the south; for the situation in the north see Rene Grousset, The Empire of the Steppes, trans., Naomi Walford, (New Brunswick, NJ.: Rutgers University, 1970), pp. 20 and 21.

17. For the loss of prestige and authority which the nobility had undergone during the civil war and before, see Dubs, HFHD, Vol. I, pp. 13-15.

18. Ch'in had pressed its frontal assault against Chinese society so far that it had even ordered the destruction of all fortifications of the "principal cities," and had even ordered the melt down of all "lance and arrow points" not in the hands of the army of empire. SC 16 (Watson, Records, Vol. I, pp. 121).

19. Perhaps the most famous of all the written, memorialized criticisms of the brutal, head-on, bludgeon tactics of Ch'in was penned by Chia I. Twitchett and Loewe, CHC, pp. 148.

20. For a discussion of the merits and detractions of client states see Edward Luttwak, Grand Strategy of the Roman Empire: From the First Century A.D. to the Third, (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press), pp. 22-30.

21. SC 58 (Watson, Records, Vol. I, pp. 442-443).

22. The pivotal role Jung-yang played in the civil war has already been mentioned. In no way could its importance have been diminished after that time, during the period of consolidation: it lay astride the central cross-roads between commandery of the West and vassal East. Witness the fact that, at the moment of the death of Liu Pang, 100,000 men garrisoned Jung-yang: one out of every three imperial soldiers who were east of the mountains was in camp at Jung-yang. HS 1B: 23b-24a (Dubs, HFHD, Vol. I, pp. 144-145).

23. A force of this size was sent against Chi-pei in 177 B.C.. Ibid., HS 4: 12a (p. 248).

24. For a analysis of force-as-perceived power--"armed suasion"--see Edward Luttwak, Grand Strategy of the Roman Empire: From the First Century A.D. to the Third (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press), pp. 32-33 and 195-200.

25. SC 55 (Watson, Records, Vol. I, p. 145).

26. On the considerable freedom that the eastern lords enjoyed until the outbreak of the Revolt of the Seven Kingdoms in 154 B.C., see Hans Bielenstein, The Bureaucracy of Han Times, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), pp. 105-106.

Chapter Ten

The First Campaign Of Consolidation

HEGEMONIC END RUN

AND

STRATEGIC DEFEAT IN DETAIL

Deposal of Wartime Generals Appointed
Client State Kings

Action in the Reign of Liu Pang (202-195 B.C.)

During the reign of Liu Pang (202-195 B.C.), the empire completed its first major act of consolidating China. In the west, the home of the central government, consolidation proceeded as a matter of course. But in the east, things were different. At the beginning of Liu Pang's reign, the east lay in the hands of Han's most important civil war generals; at the end of Liu Pang's reign, the east lay, with but one exception, in the hands of Liu Pang's sons. The transfers of power from generals to sons picked up speed when the empire deposed Han Hsin, king of Ch'u, in 201 B.C. Though these transfers of power were done by force, and always affected by the army of the empire on the spot, an army which was much weaker than the combined strengths of the eastern kings, only one king put up a big fight, that was Ch'ing Pu, king of Huai-nan, the next to last general-king deposed. It is a commonplace today, for

commentators to attribute Han's first act of consolidation in the east to a happy blend of compromise and reaction. The two-wing division of the empire was the compromise¹; the rapid, successive defeats of the general-kings was the reaction.² To be sure, some modern commentators do attribute victory over the odd general-king to tactical cunning;³ but none attribute victory in the round to grand strategy; neither, for sure, do they attribute it to a variation on the strategy that brought victory to Han in the civil war. Failure to attribute peacetime victory to a grand design, no a grand design based upon maneuver, is, it would seem, a failure of analysis. Modern commentators have overlooked the systemization of deception thrown up by Liu Pang's "compromises" and "reactions."

Had Liu Pang allowed his conquering generals to occupy what lands were delivered up into their hands in the last months of the civil war, it would indeed be meaningful to talk about Liu Pang's arrangement of the empire in 202 B.C. as a true "compromise." Moreover, all of the empire's subsequent moves would have been true "reactions." Any similarity between Han's early imperial policy and its civil war policy would have simply been gratuitous. After all, if Liu Pang's generals were allowed to keep what lands they conquered, they would have been allowed to keep what lands they wanted: we have seen that Liu Pang's generals picked up their sword with one eye placed on defeating Hsiang Yü, and the other placed on the distribution of power that would prevail after his defeat.

An examination of the actual arrangement of the eastern territories upon Liu Pang's elevation to the imperial throne, reveals significant changes in the central government's favor, however. Most notably, major

alterations were made in the arrangement of kingdoms in the northeast--the scene of Han Hsin's conquests. These adjustments, which affected the estate of Han's most able general, and the estates of his nearest neighbors, granted the central government the initiative. That initiative, on top of one, the powerful defensive strength inherent in the "Land within the Passes," and two, the moral influence that accrued from turning the east back to local rule, meant that Liu Pang had, in reality, laid the foundation for a subtle diplomatic offensive in the east; he must have fulfilled the first stage of the generic maneuver offensive.

The demotion of Han Hsin in 201 B.C., fulfilled the second stage in such an offensive. It should be noted that modern commentators give Liu Pang high marks for the strategem he used to achieve that demotion.⁴ With Han Hsin removed, dramatic improvements could be made in the central government's position in the northeast. These changes put the Dynasty in an easy position to "react" to subsequent rebellions. In effect, the Dynasty was well poised to pursue the surviving generals appointed king. When this pursuit was ended in 195 B.C., seen from a broad perspective, the Dynasty's changes were limited: a generous peace had been fashioned, in full accordance with the usual steps taken in the fourth and final stage of the maneuver offensive.

During the reign of Han Kao-ti (202-195 B.C.), at strategic level, the empire showed a definite preference for flank attack, and concentration of force. Thus, in a number of different settings, great blocks of client state alliances maneuvered with Han against the foe from various converging angles. First, client kings in northeast China succumbed to such attacks. Then it was the turn of a mighty

general and king to have his back pressed against the eastern coast. After that, the battleground, but not the method, shifted to what is today northern Shensi. Soon thereafter, most client kings that ruled in lands contiguous to the borders of the commanderies of the West were squeezed into abdication. Finally, yet another dynast in the northeast was likewise felled.

The maneuver concept that guided the empire's plans at theater level was undoubtedly correct. The theater comprised very few client kingdoms (seven in 202 B.C.), a condition which the empire did little to change (see below); and the theater was vast. To gain the support of one or two client kingdoms was to instantly outflank a third; moreover any given opponent commanded such an enormous following and ruled over such extensive territory that a successful escalation of force had far-reaching effect. Thus the proper way to avoid the strength of the client East as a whole was to "turn" resistance and bring to bear, or threaten to bring to bear, highly concentrated force. It follows then that in electing to advance along the flanks of the client kingdoms, imperial strategy at theater level was based upon appropriate maneuver.

Throughout this campaign little was done to subvert the client state order as such. By the end of the first diplomatic offensive, in striking contrast to the end of the second, the empire had not done much to further reduce the power of the local eastern elite per se. In fact, with the exception of dividing into two parts two of the original client states (Ch'u and Liang), and adding another (Ch'i), most all that the empire revised was the merit for holding royal office. By 195 B.C., with but one exception (the kingship of Ch'ang-sha), all eastern client kings had

henceforth to be sons of the emperor, or born of sons.⁵ First encountered, the failure to subvert, in a major way, the client state structure itself--and by extension the local order beneath it--may seem to have been all wrong: too much risk was continued to be run. As I mentioned above, only a handful of client kingdoms were originally laid out in the east, each one possessed considerable power, and each one was granted considerable latitude in the use of that power. Could not the local eastern families have reasserted their supremacy at the price of provoking a new civil war? There was, however, nothing wrong about it: the vastness of the theater of operations, in comparison to the limited influence of the new order, permitted no other course.

The alternative to the chosen course of internal expansion during the first diplomatic offensive would have been to have divided many client kingdoms into many smaller parts, and, in some areas, to have annexed eastern territory outright. In other words, to have taken major strides towards fragmenting the local interests of the east. The problem with this more "vertical"/social thrust is that it is workable only in so far as the target community craves a liberator.

Even wildly welcomed liberators must be careful in taking hold of the most brutally abused and desperate communities. Thus, for example, Alexander the Great may have advanced quite rapidly to the conquest of the very heart of the oppressive Persian Empire; yet, having seized effective power in the Orient, he still did not hand over local government to all Greek administrations all at once.

By no means was the China of early Han times a community in search of an unitary liberator. To be sure,

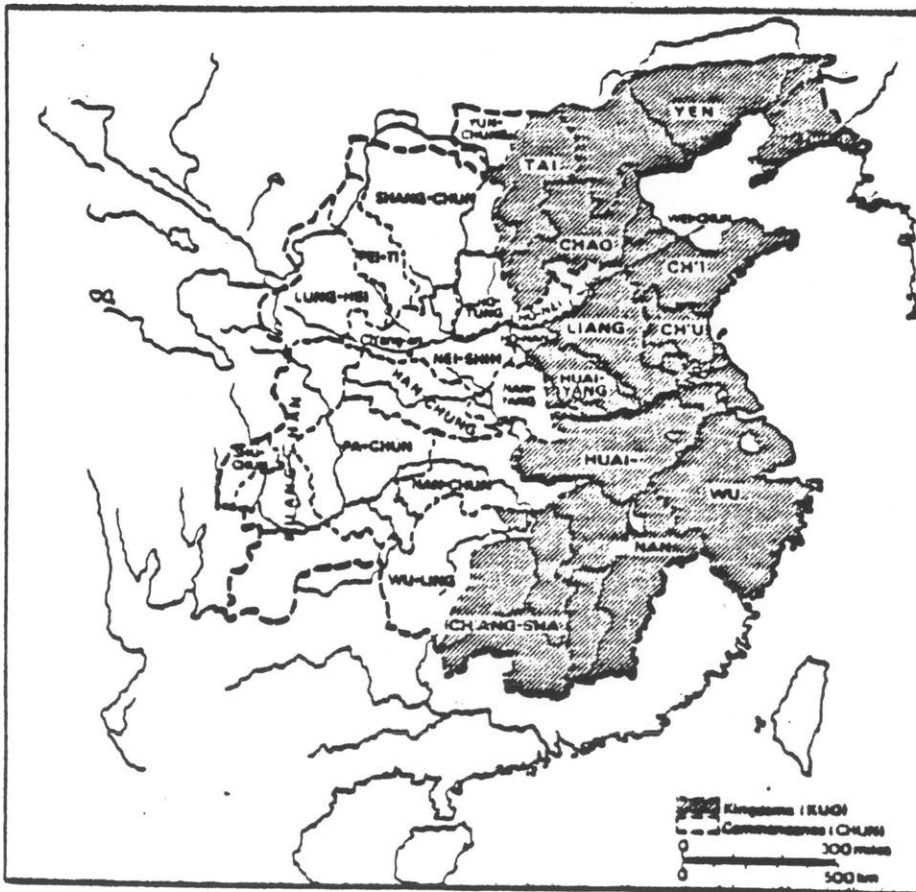
the desire to cast off the hard yoke of Ch'in, and then of Western Ch'u (Hsiang Yü's Empire) was very nearly universal. But as one moved closer to the center of Chinese culture and population, the desire for the return of local, traditional rulerships must have been very strong.⁶ Only in the western periphery of Chinese civilization (the original area of the commanderies) could one assume that the populace would display a more passive attitude to the origin of their governors. There, the populace must have grown accustomed to impersonal, centralized rule. At least in the East then, to have quickly bypassed middle-level, local elites who had wielded influence for centuries would have exposed the new government to considerable hostility, and the very real risk of counter-encirclement in the local community. Before the empire moved in a major way to increase its control in the East, the East would have to grow much more accustomed to an indirect imperial presence. Time to establish the right to rule was what the empire needed.

None of this means, however, that the empire ran an unmanageable risk with respect to resentful local eastern interests while it waited to establish more of a right to rule. The advent of empire had actually given the local east a welcome reprieve. It has been observed that Liu Pang's provincial division of the East approximately reset the old feudal state boundaries, and the power of the commanderies, in combination with the willing cooperation of the old nobility acted as a counterweight against those who would plunge the East back into civil war and anarchy.⁷ For this tremendous act of magnanimity in the aftermath of gigantic victory, Liu Pang surely gained tremendous moral influence in the original natives of the east,⁸ and this influence converted into active local assistance in removing the civil war generals now made kings from their thrones.

In a piece with maneuver principles, Liu Pang then remained on the defensive with respect to the original natives of the east, for the balance of power was adverse for an attack against it yet. Until the emperor had put his own sons upon those thrones and so put down deeper roots into feudal society, roots that would separate local families and make divide and conquer ripe, the time for a general advance against local eastern society was not yet right. Better to stay in moral balance with respect to that society.

If Liu Pang was careful in his treatment of the eastern kingships as a whole, he was manipulative--where it mattered--when it came time to confer high and relevant individual office. Seven kingships were either established or reconfirmed east of the "Passes" at the dawn of the new order. (See Map 17 for the location of kingdoms in 195 B.C.--locations had not changed too much in seven years.) Three of these kingships, those of Chao, Liang, and Ch'ang-sha, were decreed to share borders with the western commanderies. Liang⁹, more or less the same as Honan on the modern map, was made to be the most accessible from Kuan-chung, and could be reached through the Han-ku Pass. As such, it was also richer than Chao and Ch'ang-sha, being composed almost exclusively of rich alluvian plane; it was also wide open to enemy attack. Chao¹⁰, fitting just inside modern day Shansi, was made to lie north of Liang and south of the nomadic Hsiung-nu's summer grazing ground in the central southern steppe. Chao was comparatively rich, and somewhat defensible, being criss-crossed in places by mountains of some altitude. Ch'ang-sha (inside modern day Hupei) was placed south of Liang.¹¹ It was no paradise, for it was full of swamps and its climate was hot. Of Ch'ang-sha it could be said, it made a good place for a penal colony, and a bad place for a fiefdom. To make

Sites of the Client States in 195 B.C.



From CHC, p.125.

matters worse, Ch'ang-sha bordered on Nan-yüeh, the most powerful independent state to reside in the deep south.

The kingdom of Ch'u was set up further east in the North China Plain.¹² Ch'u, overlapping what is today Kiangsu and Anhwei, was the richest kingdom in the East by far. It was also the most revered, for it led the Vertical Alliance of old. Finally it was vulnerable to attack from three sides, and would have been vulnerable from a fourth, had it not been for the eastern sea. With the exception of the many rivers and lakes which abounded in its territory, it had no mountains upon which to anchor a strong defense. Huai-nan was made a kingdom to lie south of Ch'u.¹³ Huai-nan, overlapping parts of today's Chinese provinces of Anhwei, Chekiang, Kiangsi and Hupei, was a tropical version of Ch'u, only poorer. It did boast the best copper mines and silver mines in all of ancient China, however. South of Huai-nan lay the lesser foot barbarian powers of Min-Yüeh and Eastern Ou. Three territorial units were established north of Ch'u. Han_h¹⁴ and Yen¹⁵, made kingdoms both, were carved out of modern day Hopei and part of Shansi. Yen, made to lie east of Han_h, was larger and richer. Both kingdoms were quite poor, however, when compared to the lands of the North China Plain. Both were also protected by mountains in some places. Yen however had drawbacks which Han_h was fortunate to lack. The former had the dubious distinction of sharing long borders with two dangerous foes--the nomads of the steppe and the well armed, relatively civilized independent states of southern Manchuria and northwestern Korea.

I have deliberately left for last the third of the three territorial units established north of Ch'u. This third unit was made and reconfirmed the state of Ch'i.¹⁶

Find Shantung on the modern map, and you find the site for Ch'i. As such, Ch'i was unique among all the eastern territories in that it was both rich and easy to defend. It stood high above the North China Plain and was criss-crossed by mountains. To its south lay Ch'u, to its--Yen. It was also unique among all the eastern territories in that it was not declared a kingdom. It was organized as a commandery in 202 B.C., and came under the direct control of Ch'ang-an and the central government of Han.

This then was how the East was divided at the time Liu Pang ascended to supreme office. This division had served first of all to finalize Liu Pang's conquest of China. Just before Liu Pang's elevation, Hsiang Yü, his rival, still held out in central Ch'u. The investitures of Chao, Ch'ang-sha, Huai-nan, Han_h and Yen had served to cover Liu Pang's flanks and communications as he advanced upon Hsiang Yü from the west. Later, the promised dispensation of Liang and Ch'u brought powerful Han generals into the final drive against Hsiang Yü. In this way, by dividing up the choicest lands of China, Liu Pang came to fulfill the strategy for revolution set down by Han Hsin some three years earlier.

But there was another side to this strategy which Han Hsin and his other colleagues in the field did not foresee. By his peculiar division of the East, Liu Pang (advised by Chang Liang?) had set in train nothing less astounding than this--the eventual absorption of the heart of the known world.

It is difficult to tell where Han's civil war strategy ends and its first diplomatic offensive begins. Modern commentators accustomed to seeing a sharp divide between the statecraft of peacetime and the statecraft of war, say that

Han prepared to consolidate the empire after the defeat of Hsiang Yü, that is, after the official foundation of the empire. But this is a misconception, it seems to me. I make out in the annals that Han prepared for its first advance in peacetime before Hsiang Yü was defeated, that is, before the official foundation of the empire.

The centerpiece of Liu Pang's preparations for victory over his wartime colleagues was the sure control which he artfully won over the kingdom of Ch'i. One year before the official declaration of empire, Ch'i had fallen in the hands of Han Hsin after he had landed his left hook through the northeast. Liu Pang was then asked by Han Hsin to make him acting king of Ch'i. Liu Pang complied with this request, and did him one better, making him permanent king of Ch'i.¹⁷ Ch'i was then turned into a major base by Han Hsin. Shortly thereafter, with the outcome of the civil war still in doubt, Hsiang Yü sought to separate Han Hsin from Liu Pang. A wily rhetorician by the name of Wu She was sent to turn Han Hsin. Wu She's efforts, recorded in the SC, furnish a stunning example of classic rhetoric.¹⁸ But all the forked tongues in the world could not seduce Han Hsin and he remained loyal to his master. Then superseded the battle of Ku-ling, fought between Liu Pang and Hsiang Yü, in which Han Hsin (and P'eng Yüeh) did not rendezvous with Liu Pang as ordered. In the wake of this missed opportunity, Liu Pang promised Han Hsin the kingship of Ch'u, the wealthiest kingship in China. Liu Pang now got the help he wanted: the battle of Kai-hsia and the defeat of Hsiang Yü came next. With the battle won, Liu Pang then surprised Han Hsin and seized his army. To his new estate of Ch'u Han Hsin then retired. Thus Liu Pang had brought defeat down upon the head of Hsiang Yü, and, without a fight, had levered Han Hsin out of Ch'i.¹⁹

Artful manipulation of Han Hsin's excessive trust and excessive greed led to the final defeat of Hsiang Yü, and also led to Han's acquisition of Ch'i, the most defensible province of China outside of Kuan-chung, the "Land within the Passes." With Ch'i now in one hand, and Kuan-chung, the former strong hold of Ch'in, already in the other, Han had fully secured the two best bases in all of China. The annals record that Liu Pang and his closest advisors were fully aware of their achievement. As one advisor put it to Liu Pang, Han now held "an eastern and a western Ch'in."²⁰ Direct control exercised over Kuan-chung and Ch'i, in conjunction with indirect control exercised over the rest of China, assured Han of an adequate defense before the start of its first diplomatic offensive. (See previous chapter for a discussion of the defensive advantages inherent in a security system based upon client states.)

But there was more to Liu Pang's achievement than this. What the annals do not mention, is that Liu Pang's initial settlement of the East, especially his settlement of Ch'i, provided Han with a latent advantage of far reaching consequence. The empire also held the initiative. With Ch'i in the central government's pocket, and with Han Hsin relocated further south, Liu Pang was well positioned to take advantage of the uneven loyalties of his eastern kings.²¹ To be sure, none of Liu Pang's initially appointed kings were especially loyal; but some were decidedly less loyal than others, were liable to revolt first, and were liable, if the right moves were made, to be crushed handily. With the first to revolt out of the way, the odds would then have improved that the remainder could have been eliminated one by one. Thus if he only maintained his moral balance (i.e. acted with cause), Liu Pang would be prepared to exploit in relentless fashion whatever moral imbalances

might appear in his eastern kings: eastern expansion in time of peace would follow apace after the exploitation of Han Hsin's moral imbalance in the civil war.

The least loyal of Liu Pang's eastern kings must have been the kings of Yen (Tsang Yu) and Ch'u (Han Hsin). The first king, whom we have met already, a former king under Hsiang Yu until the very last year of the civil war, had been the only man out of Liu Pang's seven dynastic appointee's who had been compelled by force of arms to join the cause of Han. The second king enjoyed, quite simply, as we have seen, the highest reputation in the whole of China next to that of Liu Pang himself. Not the least of Han Hsin's reputation stemmed from the fact that he had been the only general, besides Liu Pang, to have placed enemy leaders upon thrones. Tsang Yu had been one of those leaders. By levering Han Hsin out of Ch'i and into Ch'u, Liu Pang must have separated Han Hsin from his extended base of support, support which must have been founded upon the ties which Han Hsin had struck with Tsang Yu and lesser leaders in the northeast. What is more, Tsang Yu, and Han Hsin found themselves surrounded by neighbors who were not likely to join any early revolts.

The forces of resistance that surrounded Han Hsin and Tsang Yu were relatively strong. To Han Hsin's north lay the governor of commandery Ch'i, a man directly appointed by Liu Pang and, thus, no doubt, a loyal creature of the empire. To Han Hsin's northwest, sat Hanw Hsin upon the throne of Hanh. Han_w Hsin had been counted a follower of Liu Pang since the very early days of the civil war; had shown significant cunning in the capture of his future kingdom; and had been a trusted king already for four years.²² To Han Hsin's west and south, lorded P'eng Yüeh

(over Liang) and Ch'ing Pu (over Huai-nan). Both men were excellent and proud generals in their own right (Ch'ing Pu had repeatedly led Hsiang Yü's vanguard²³); generals who had no history of working with each other or with Han Hsin, but plenty of envy for each other's achievements. Moreover, had P'eng Yüeh harbored any idea at all of sedition, he must not have been so deluded to actually act: directly to Liang's west lay the strategic reserve of the field army of the empire. As for Ch'ing Pu's chances of gaining a seditious following, it should be pointed out that he was persona non grata to all subjects of the empire, except Liu Pang. Ch'ing Pu, for much of the civil war, had been Hsiang Yü's henchman of choice. It was Ch'ing Pu who murdered Emperor Yi of Hsiang Yü's Ch'u empire,²⁴ and who butchered the 200,000 men of Chang Han's Ch'in army.²⁵

Meanwhile, Tsang Yu's kingdom was encircled this way. To the south, they were bounded by the commandery of Ch'i, and by the kingdom of Han_h; to the southwest--by P'eng Yueh's Liang. No room then for subversion to the south or southwest. Finally, in the west lay Chang Ao's kingdom of Chao. Chang Ao's father Chang Erh had fought against the forces of Tsang Yu and other leaders of Hsiang Yü in the northeast; Chang Erh's hatred for his eastern neighbors must have burned inside Chang Ao too.²⁶ Off in the southwest corner of the East, and in a position that was not contiguous to Ch'u, Han_h or Yen, lay Ch'ang-sha, given to Wu Jui. Wu Jui was probably the most loyal of all Liu Pang's first appointee's. He had been stripped of his kingdom by Hsiang Yü, and cast away. It was Liu Pang who revived his fortunes.²⁷

This then was how Liu Pang partitioned the eastern prizes of empire. This partition must have had a profound

effect on Liu Pang's least loyal king, Tsang Yu. His separation from Han Hsin, tight encirclement and dubious credentials must have reinforced in him the feeling that he, in the overall scheme of things, was somehow different from the other vassal kings and less trusted than the others at central court. It was thus likely that he would soon revolt, rather than live in a state of continual fear of central intervention. Should this happen, Han would have the excuse to put the rulership of the more remote provinces of the East on a more secure footing. That having happened, Han Hsin would then emerge as the next principal threat to empire, if he had not emerged as that already. Like the vassal king of the far northeast, he too then would find himself alone in the East, which could only prey further upon his sense of encirclement, and prompt him to act. His memories of the earlier occasions in which Liu Pang had stripped him of armies (at Little Hsiu-wu and Kai-hsia) certainly could not quiet his unease. Han Hsin's elimination would then pave the way for first the isolation, and then the removal of those vassal kings who ruled close to the commanderies. The entire field could then have been swept clean of men who, by their merits and connections, stood able to outshine the emperor. The dominoes were thus gingerly placed on the board, but would the empire be patient and clever enough to let them fall all by themselves?

Scarcely four months after Liu Pang's ascension, the king of Yen revolted, and swept through Tai. The offensive portion of Han's eastern arrangement was now operational. Leading an army in person, the emperor crushed this first challenge to the new empire, and invested his boyhood companion, Lu Wan, marquis of Ch'ang-an, as the new king of Yen. In the meantime, the Lieutenant Chancellor, Fan K'uai,

was sent to subjugate the region of Tai.²⁸

Liu Pang's riposte to first rebellion was correct--and ominous. Lu Wan was the first person to receive the title of king who had not been greatly instrumental in the conquest of the empire. (Lu Wan had achieved a certain distinction in 204 B.C., having served under P'eng Yüeh, and having harassed Hsiang Yü's line of supply in 204 B.C.²⁹) In comparison to those of the original seven who remained on their provincial thrones, Lu Wan was much more dependent on the pleasure of the new regime. And, yet, he was not of the emperor's own blood line: the emperor had shrewdly stopped short of putting one of his own sons atop the vacated throne of Yen, thus hiding the momentous changes that were to come.

The initiative which the empire held on the basis of its original settlement of the East continued to work its effect: shortly after Tsang Tu rebelled, another former general of Hsiang Yü, this one Li Chi by name, appointed marquis in Ying-ch'uan of Han_h, tried his hand at dynastic overthrow. He too was defeated.³⁰

The rash of revolts in northeast China, and the readjustment of kingly power thus afforded, now made possible a major move, and the turning point in Han's diplomatic offensive in the East.³¹ At the end of 202 B.C., word came that Han Hsin, too, contemplated revolt. As confirmation of this suspicion, he was known to be harboring a fugitive proscribed by Ch'ang-an. Worse, he had been conducting large-scale maneuvers within his borders. Recourse was now made of strategem: the emperor, at the head of an army, feigned a ceremonial visit to the lake district of Yun-meng, and requested Han Hsin's company, among others. Han Hsin, despite misgivings, put his faith once more in the

emperor, and took the bait: he was arrested, then pardoned, but it was a strange pardon: he was stripped of his kingly investiture, made a marquis, and confined to Ch'ang-an, where he could be watched. Amidst much fanfare, a new division of vassal territory now followed on the far side of empire: Ch'u was split into two satraps, Ch'u and Ching. More importantly, three sons of the emperor were appointed kings of Ch'u and Ching, and of Ch'i (central occupation of Ch'i thus ended).

There was still more to this sweeping altercation of eastern power. Both king and kingdom of Han_h were removed from the map "east of the Passes," and reestablished at T'ai-yuan on the Mongolian frontier. The kingdom of Chao thus lost territory to this new kingdom. At one and the same moment, it also lost the province of Tai. Tai was now reconstituted as a full vassal state in its own right, replete with another member of the House of Liu as lord, and a trusted friend of Liu Pang as Prime Minister.

With the sacking of Han Hsin, imperial strategy can be said to have fully matured from a policy which aimed to set up a new unitary regime for China, to a policy which aimed to unify China. The distinction was fundamental--altogether different targets were coming into focus; but the method was still the same. Hence Han was, in Han Hsin's words, still using "men of talent" to carry the day, and such men were still being enfeoffed as before, only now, they were being hurled on each other, not on a rival rebel claimant to the throne.

The subjugation of Han Hsin not only signaled the new, and ultimate, direction in Han internal policy, it also epitomized the four stages of the maneuver process. Thus

the erstwhile king of Ch'u had been engaged by compassion and the promise of eastern wealth; while, at the same time, he was being quietly isolated from his colleagues, and by them. At the right moment, when ostensibly he, and not the empire, had furnished grounds for the act, he was encircled, and encircled not by bloodshed, but by a ruse. Annihilation then followed, but it was not total; moreover, it was an annihilation that was to some degree commensurate with the crime. Those who still remained in power were looking on to see how this man was treated, looking on especially in that Han Hsin had been a principal architect of empire.

The subjugation of Han Hsin also confirmed a new trend in Han's use of instruments. The use of force became more selective and focused. Before, during the civil war, the deployment and commitment of the Han armies had been comprehensive. A great political victory might be won at point X, but at most other points A through Z, the Han army was on the march, in action or preparing for action. Now, Han forces were still committed where the victory was won at X, but elsewhere--in the East--they were not deployed. Instead, the latent threat of the use of the Han armies, and uncalled for trust in Han design, compelled or encouraged Han client kings to do what the Han armies had done before. The instrument of the client state, and the client state army, was complementing the instrument of the Han army in some places; supplementing it in still others. Here was a clear sign that the central government was taking firmer and firmer control of the eastern world; and that, thanks to a grand maneuver strategy, violent resistance was being reduced, the empire's authority spread and its moral balance preserved.

The swift elimination of Han Hsin removed the greatest

single threat to Han rule and aggrandizement in the East. Under the shock of that blow, Han moved "like a thunderclap," to exploit the breach. Hence the broad revision of client rulerships in the northeast and along the coast. Yet, if the empire moved boldly to redress the balance of power in these regions, it still moved slowly elsewhere in the East. Therefore, the latest subdivisions were confined to the area of clear, perceived sensitivity to Han security, and in range of prior illegitimate activity. Moreover, the elevation of imperial kin to offices of king was not proclaimed a universal tendency. Thus deception was continually at work, although in different forms, in accordance with the peculiar strategy of diplomatic maneuver.

Once control over the northeast and east seaboard had fallen to sons of the emperor, the power of the eastern kings, not born of Liu, had been decisively defeated. To be sure, four powerful kingdoms still remained under generals, or descendants of generals who had fought in the civil war. But this vertical bloc of states was now surrounded on all sides, but the south, by commanderies and by client states ruled by Liu Pang's sons. What is more, as said before, the trust among the four surrounded kings could not have been good; none of them had ever worked together before.

It can be said, then, that the culminating point in Han's theater-wide maneuver ended with the first wave of appointments of sons of the emperor to eastern thrones. The first act of the exploitation phase took place in December 199 B.C.³² The HS records the event in these ironic words: "... [the Emperor] removed to Kuan-chung five great clans of Ch'i and Ch'u: the Chao clan, the Chu clan, the Ching clan, the Huai clan, and the T'ien clan, and gave them the

advantage of its fields and dwellings."³³ All told, 100,000 people, members of the kingly clans of the former feudal states, Ch'i, Ch'u, Yen, Chao, Han_h, and Wei_h--all former feudal lands north of Yangste--were relocated to the metropolitan core of empire.³⁴

The dominoes, which Liu Pang had so carefully lined up, now began to crash upon each other with greater speed: relentlessly, the original list of kings was reduced in number.³⁵ Some kings (the kings of Han_h and Tai) fell because of barbarian intervention however. Han_w Hsin had occupied his new kingdom of Han_h, before he revolted (201 B.C.), joining forces with the nomads. His star was eventually extinguished (197 B.C.), but not before the emperor, at the head of an enormous army suffered near defeat at the hands of his allies the Hsiung-nu. Chao Ao was next to rebel (199 B.C.), it is said because the emperor had been discourteous when last passing through his kingdom (a strategem to probe the loyalty of Chao Ao or perhaps to provoke his disloyalty?). He too was deposed, demoted to a marquis, and his clique compelled to take their life, and his land given over to yet another scion of the imperial house. In 197 B.C., Ch'en Hsi, the chancellor of Tai, rebelled and leagued with Han_w Hsin who was still at large in the hills of northern Shansi. This revolt too was crushed, but not before it sparked another: in the call to arms that preceded the attack on Ch'an Hsi and Han_w Hsin, the king of Liang, P'eng Yüeh, lent his troops, but would not come himself. Before the year was out, P'eng Yüeh, too, shared the fate of all the others, and his kingdom was split in two. The new kingdoms of Liang and Huai-yang duly entered the company of Liu overlords.

The last act was not much different from what had gone

before. The king of Huai-nan, Ch'ing Pu, rebelled in 196 B.C., fearful that he was next to be deposed. This king was more able than most, and managed to overrun two neighboring kingdoms (Ch'ing Pu) before he too was felled. Then, to the consternation of Liu Pang, his life long friend, and king of Yen, Lu Wan sought safety in rebellion. Like all others, his cause was lost as well, but unlike most, he found a willing sanctuary across the Great Wall. While wandering in the steppe and looking back at China, he had a change of heart, and wished to amend his relationship with the emperor. But too late, for in 195 B.C., the emperor lay dying, pierced through by a arrow wound sustained in the hard fight against Ch'ing Pu.

In the words of Dubs, "There was now left only one king not of the imperial house--the King of Ch'ang-sha. His kingdom was so small and unimportant that it was not worth while to disturb him."³⁶ Maybe so, but its survival is also in a piece with the last phase of any well led political maneuver. Here is the victorious phase--the phase in which magnanimity shines through--the phase in which a certain quarter is left the beaten foe, lest he rear up at the last minute, rekindle his efforts with superhuman desperation foretold by prophesy, and by sheer exertion of will put at risk what should otherwise be a certain and now peaceful triumph. Thus it could be said at court, "Well we did honor the letter of our original commitments. We did enfeoff forever our most loyal generals who fought for peace and empire in the civil war." In reality, however, Han had done something quite different it would seem. It had mounted a subtle indirect offensive to alter in irrevocable manner the way in which virtually the entire east was ruled.

And yet in the hour of this second glorious triumph,

at the acme of this second great deed, we shall discover that Liu Pang would see fit to devolve power upon the very region he had worked so hard to subvert. Was this not another of Liu Pang's subtle detours? or was it something else--the blind undoing of all his previous works?

FOOTNOTES

First Campaign of Consolidation
Text: pp. 202-223

1. This, for example, is the opinion of Loewe. Twitchett and Loewe, CHC, p. 123.
2. Hans Bielenstein, The Bureaucracy of Han Times (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), p 105.
3. For example, Dubs is impressed by Liu Pang's capture of Han Hsin. Dubs, HFHD, Vol. I, p. 9.
4. Ibid., p. 9.
5. Twitchett and Loewe eds., CHC, pp. 124-125.
6. Ibid., p. 124.
7. Loewe agrees that Liu Pang did well by granting local autonomy to the East. Twitchett and Loewe, CHC, p. 124.
8. On the popularity of Liu Pang see Dubs, HFHD, Vol.I, p. 14-15.
9. On the position of Liang, HS 1A: 2b (Dubs, HFHD, Vol. I, p. 99)
10. On the position of Chao, SC 89 (Watson, Records, Vol. I, p. 182).
11. On the position of Ch'ang-sha, HS 1B: 4a (Dubs, HFHD, Vol. I, p. 103).
12. On the position of Ch'u, HS 1A: 2b Ibid., p. 99.
13. On the position of Huai-nan, HS 1A: 39a Ibid., pp. 92-93.
14. On the first and second positions of Han_h, SC 93 (Watson, Records, Vol. I, p. 234-235).
15. On the position of Yen, Dubs, HFHD, Vol. I, p.9.
16. On the position of Ch'i, HS 1B: 8b Ibid., p. 111.
17. HS 1A: 39b Ibid., p. 92.

18. SC 92 (Watson, Records, Vol., I, pp. 221-227).
19. For the accounts of the dislodgement of Han Hsin from Ch'i and into Ch'u, SC 92 Ibid., pp. 227-228).
20. HS 1B: 8b-9a (Dubs, HFHD, Vol. I, p. 111) and SC 8 (Watson, Records, Vol. I, p. 109).
21. HS 1B: 3a op. cit., p. 99 provides a summary of all eastern kings.
22. Han Hsin was enlisted by Chang Liang. He was appointed Grand Commandant of Han, by Liu Pang on the eve of the breakout from Hans. On December 206 B.C., he struck against Cheng Ch'ang, king of Han, by the hand of Hsiang Yü. HS 1A: 29b-30b (Dubs, HFHD, Vol. I, pp. 72-73) and SC 93 (Watson, Records, Vol. I, pp. 233-234).
23. SC 91 Ibid., pp. 197-198).
24. HS 1A: 30a (Dubs, HFHD, Vol. I, p. 72).
25. SC 91 (Watson, Records, Vol. I, p. 197).
26. Chang Erh (and Chang Ao?) had been dispossessed of their kingdom in Chao (first appointment made by Hsiang Yü) by Ch'en Yu, T'ien Jung (Hsiang Yü's king of Ch'i) and other northeastern leaders. Later they fought with Han Hsin and the forces of Han to regain their estate. SC 89 (Watson, Records, Vol. I, pp. 182-184).
27. HS 1B: 4a (Dubs, HFHD, Vol. I, pp. 102-103).
28. HS 1B: 7a-7b (Dubs, HFHD, Vol. I, pp. 108-109) and see Footnotes #2, p. 108 and #1, p. 109.
29. HS 1A: 37a-37b (Dubs, HFHD, Vol. I, p. 87). It did not hurt Lu Wan's fortunes that he was a great favorite of the emperor. Both were born in the same village, on the same day; were close friends always: prior to Lu Wan's elevation to king of Yen, he had been made marquis of Ch'ang-an. SC 93 (Watson, Records, Vol. I, p. 238).
30. HS 1B: 7b (Dubs, HFHD, Vol. I, p. 109).
31. For the facts behind the "encirclement phase" of Han's first diplomatic offensive see SC 8 (Watson, Records, Vol. I, pp. 109-110) and Ibid., SC 92 (pp. 228-232).
32. For an overview of the last act of Liu Pang's diplomatic offensive see Ibid., SC 8 (pp. 110-118). For the king of Chao's role Ibid., SC 89 (pp. 184-185); king of

Liang's (P'eng Yüeh's) role Ibid., SC 90 (pp. 194-195); and Ch'ing Pu's role, including a discussion of the various plans of campaign that Ch'ing Pu could have used, Ibid., SC 91 (pp. 202-207).

33. HS 1B: 14a, (Dubs, HFHD, Vol I, p. 122).

34. Ibid., footnote # 1, p. 122.

35. For the last stand made by Liu Pang's original set of kings, HS 1B: 14a-17a and HS 1B: 18a-19b (Dubs, HFHD, Vol. I, pp. 122-129 and pp. 132-136).

36. Dubs, HFHD, Vol. I, p. 11.

Chapter Eleven

The Second Campaign of Consolidation, The Attack

EASTERN CLIENT STATES AS CUL-DE-SAC

AND THE LATENT COUNTERCOUP

Elimination of the Empress Threat to the House of Liu

Action in the Regency of Empress Lü (195-180 B.C.)

"I, by the spiritual power of Heaven and by my capable gentlemen and high officials, have subjugated and possess the empire.... Capable men have already shared with me in its pacification. Should it be that [any capable persons] are not to share together with me in its comfort and its benefits?" Thus did Liu Pang speak in his edict of 196 B.C.¹ By this edict, (and by a second one pledging all to unite and punish anyone who would upset the status quo²) the continuity of the Dynasty, from emperor to emperor, was safeguarded--in theory. In practice, the continuity of the Dynasty was put in jeopardy even within one year of this edicts' issuance. In 195 B.C., Liu Pang abandoned his final effort to change the heir-apparency. The incumbent, Hsiao-hui, was a mere boy and a weakling at that: son of Empress Lü, he was at the mercy of his cruel, conniving and immensely powerful mother: "a woman," says the SC, "of very strong will."³ Once upon the throne, Hsiao-hui, and the House of Liu, fell victim to Empress Lü's fifteen year intrigue to unseat the Dynasty, and put her own family born

Lü in its stead. Only upon the death of the Empress (180 B.C.), were the fortunes of the Dynasty saved by a conjoint counterattack launched from all over the empire by loyalist elements. Modern commentators have seen in Liu Pang's tolerance of the heir-apparent yet another gesture of compromise,⁴ this time with powerful Confucian forces (four Confucian wise men rallied to the heir-apparent's defense); and they have seen in the counterattack of 180 B.C., the ultimate source of the empire's reprieve.⁵ Once again, modern commentators have most probably overlooked the subtleties of the maneuver attack.

The obvious alternative to Liu Pang's apparent passivity in the face of the impending crisis of his succession would have been to have moved directly on the heir-apparent, and by extension, the Empress Lü. Indeed Liu Pang had a suitable replacement picked out. It is said that Liu Pang had his eye set on Ju-i, king of Chao, his son by Lady Ch'i.⁶

But a direct assault on Empress Lü and her son would be an awkward affair in the best of circumstances. By reason of her intimacy with the emperor, the Empress was privy to all manner of powerful connections. On top of that, she had put forth no small effort in the civil war, and enjoyed the immense prestige and support that rewarded all who took a personal hand in the victory.⁷ One very telling sign of the immense authority which she wielded was this: around 197 B.C., she compelled none other than Liu Pang's closest advisor, Chang Liang, to protect the heir-apparent! Chang Liang devised the strategem that ultimately led to the survival of the heir-apparent.⁸

Liu Pang's pre-occupation with the undeclared war

against the first set of eastern kings, must have precluded a direct assault on Empress Lü's vested interest before the defeat of the last major extant king (Ch'ing Pu) in 195 B.C. But during this time, Liu Pang did not ignore the impending problem of the succession. While Empress Lü strengthened her base, Liu Pang also strengthened his.

It is beyond dispute that the Dynasty itself enjoyed a strong defensive position in the last years of Liu Pang's reign, and thus was in a good position to bide its time until an opening appeared for attack. The moral side to this defense was inherent in the sacrifices and in the successes that had attended the hand of Han. To overthrow the Dynasty that had thrown off the shackles of Ch'in, and that was bringing a welcome measure of peace and leniency to a country which had known none for many years, was to surely discomfit many elements of society and cast the usurper in a very bad light. Formalizing the moral ascendancy inherent in the Dynasty's position was the heretofore mentioned edicts of 196 B.C., edicts which elevated the continuity of the Dynasty to the plane of supreme principal.

The strategic side to the strong defense inherent in the situation of the empire in the last several years of Liu Pang's life, was the opportune placement of loyalist forces committed to the life of the House of Liu. Extension of the imperial franchise outside the commandery of the West greatly complicated the task of usurpation during the formative years of Han. Not only did an illegitimate claimant have to win control of the central government, he had also to do the same of the client East. A usurper might find considerable support in the West among governmental agencies that were not completely staffed by members of the imperial family. But the task of subverting the client East

would not be easy, for all local courts were in the hands of descendants of the emperor. On top of that, the client East, if united, was stronger than the central government. As long as the client governments of the East were out of the usurper's control, loyalist forces inside the court could take courage by the presence of forces without.

Liu Pang's maneuver of extending the imperial franchise outside the commandery of the West was not without a serious risk, however. Exactly when the commandery of the West was moving from strength to strength, it chose to devolve vital power on the East, the very center of anti-imperialism. By indirectly enfranchising the whole client order in the East, the empire was paving the way for eastern rivalries--and theater-wide instability. But by the close of the reign of Liu Pang, this was a risk for the future, not the present. When this indirect enfranchisement was first made, the loyalty of imperial sons cum client kings was all to the Dynasty. They yet lacked a strong enough political base of their own within their local communities, to risk breaking away on their own: security for any one client king could only be had by relying on all the other client kings, and by relying on the House of Han. In the future, when loyalty to the center would erode, and the risk of rivalry emerge, the Dynasty could look forward to this--to having negotiated its first few successions, hence become more rooted itself, and better able to deal with eastern rivalries no matter what their source.

Liu Pang thus had prepared his defenses well. Then with the elimination of the last major threat in the East (Ch'ing Pu) in 195 B.C., the way was clear for Liu Pang to turn on his domestic foes and the House of Lü. But here chance played its contrary part. Wasting away from an arrow

wound suffered during the last campaign of 195 B.C., Liu Pang was in no spirit to see through to the finish yet another campaign, this one to be fought among the honeycomb of connections that bound up the domestic relationships of the central court. For the time being, Empress Lü's domestic base was too strong. Had Liu Pang moved against Hsiao-hui, and his guardian mother, in the remaining weeks of his life, the very fabric of empire would surely have been put at supreme risk. But does this mean that Liu Pang, conniver extraordinary, went down to his death stymied at last, as modern commentators believe?

An examination of the situation of the empire at the death of Liu Pang reveals that the empire still held the initiative. If Empress Lü was to usurp the government, she would have to supplant Liu Pang's supporters with her own. Moreover, she would have to move relatively fast, once she gathered unto herself the effective power of the emperor: she was getting on in years. But to move fast would provide ample justification for a counter coup. Her conniving spirit, harsh attitude and illegal design would finally be clear for all Han loyalists to see. Moreover, the strong defensive deployments which Liu Pang left behind could be easily turned into the springboard of a massive counterattack. The loyalist forces of Han were well placed to take advantage of the slightest slip: these loyalist forces were elusive 1) because they were dispersed all around the administrative periphery of the empire, and 2) by means of deception--court officials could always say that they sided with the Empress, and await a favorable moment to rally against her. The peripheral dispersement of some combined with the presence of others inside the court meant that the usurper was vulnerable to outflanking attack from a variety of angles, and was subject to covert penetration of

the very highest commands.

For all that, this latent maneuver offensive which Liu Pang left behind did carry the seeds of a major risk. Undoubtedly this risk was greater than the risk which Liu Pang would have courted had he remained alive long enough to attack the faction of Empress Lü himself. By Liu Pang's refusal to change the heir-apparency, he in effect left the family of Liu without an undisputed leader. Once Hsiao-hui attained the throne, Empress Lu became emperor, in all but fact.⁹ If the family of Liu was to depose her, they would have to do so as a coalition without a unitary leader. As long as the faction of Lu remained at large and in power, this coalition would find common ground for action; but remove that common ground, and there was the chance that the members of the coalition would fall out amongst themselves.

After the death of Liu Pang, the imperaturship passed to the boy emperor Hsiao-Hui (r. 195-188 B.C.). On the surface at least, the reign of Hsiao-Hui was peaceful enough: client dynasts of the East died natural deaths and their sons succeeded them.¹⁰ Beneath the surface, trouble was afoot, however: Han Kao-ti's wife, the Grand Dowager nee Lü, was attempting to usurp the throne and change the dynastic line to her own house.¹¹ Thus she appointed more and more of her followers and relatives client kings, marquis and imperial generals.¹² The power of the Dynasty forced her to intrigue with care, however: the election procedure for the title of emperor established by Liu Pang was proving far-sighted. Her very first machinations (187 B.C.) were in fact exceedingly subtle: kingships for Ch'ang-shan and Huai-yang were granted to two boys who claimed to be the sons of the recently deceased Emperor Hui by his ladies in waiting (hence members of the family of

Liu); they were instead sons by other men.¹³

In succeeding years, the Empress became bolder. Successive kings of Chao (born Liu) were deposed. A general of the imperial army, Liu Tse, was appointed king of newly created Lang-ya (land was taken from Ch'i for the purpose).¹⁴

Thus the threat posed by Liu Tse and the king of Ch'i was reduced. Six loyal retainers of the Empress, mostly from her own family, were made marquises.¹⁵ Most ominously of all, sons of the Empress's older brothers were elevated to client thrones. Ultimately, four such appointments were made: Lu T'ai in P'eng-ch'eng (186 B.C.), land taken from Ch'u; Lu Ch'an in Liang (182 B.C.); Lu Lu in Chao; and Lu T'ung in Yen (180 B.C.).¹⁶

The Empress died in 180 B.C., but not before making one last bid to shore up her support at central court: two men born of her house were elevated to the most senior posts possible, Chancellor of State and General of the Army.¹⁷ Encouraged by these latest appointments, the family of Lu moved to seize total power. But their effort was thwarted. A grand coalition of forces of the family of Liu, led by the king of Ch'i, and joined most notably by the Liu kings of Ch'u, Huai-nan and Tai, and by officials working from the inside of Ch'ang-an brought this first coup to an end scarcely six weeks after the chief instigator was dead. The client state order in the East had done its service again, this time as an upholder of Dynastic power.¹⁸

Thus the brilliance of the first emperor's internal moves is manifest in full. By appointing his sons lords of the East, and by making them candidates to succeed him as

well, Liu Pang not only took a giant step forward in consolidating the empire, he also safeguarded and strengthened the domestic power of his own House. These latter benefits were achieved by means that were indirect, just as his consolidation of empire were achieved by means that were indirect. The fact that the empire was devolving power with one hand and taking power away with the other may seem paradoxical. However, it was thoroughly in accord with the maneuver method, which calls not only for indirection in general approach but also flexibility in the particulars. Flexibility, as well as indirection in the particular approach will emerge again as we examine the details of Han's second and conclusive diplomatic offensive.

FOOTNOTES

Second Campaign of Consolidation, The Attack
Text: pp. 227-234

1. HS 1B: 17b (Dubs, HFHD, Vol. I, p. 131).
2. The full text of the second edict can be found in HS 1B: 21b-22b Ibid., pp. 141-142).
3. SC 9 (Watson, Records, Vol. I, p. 321).
4. This is the opinion of Dubs. Dubs, HFHD, Vol. I, p. 22.
5. This is the opinion of Dubs and of Loewe. Dubs, HFHD, Vol. I, p. 172; Twitchett and Loewe, CHC, p. 136.
6. SC 55 (Watson, Records, Vol. I, p. 145).
7. Empress Lu supported two older brothers in the civil war, both of whom were generals, one of whom (Lu Tse) died in the service of the Dynasty. SC 9 (Watson, Records, Vol. I, pp. 321-322).
8. The strategem that won the throne for the heir-apparent, was consistent with Chang Liang's style, indeed. Chang Liang advised Empress Lü to enlist for the heir-apparent the friendship of four erudite, revered Confucianists, Confucianists whom Liu Pang had sought out without success. These Confucianists and the heir-apparent were to live and work and travel together: but Liu Pang was not to be told of this new allegiance. This allegiance, he was to find out for himself. Chang Liang predicted that the shock this discovery would produce would, in turn, melt at once Liu Pang's hatred for the heir-apparent, and assure the heir-apparent of his position. For Empress Lü's imposition on Chang Liang, the strategem that he devised and the successful execution of the strategem see SC 55 (Watson, Records, Vol. I, pp. 145-149).
9. Dubs, HFHD, Vol. I, p. 168.
10. Indicative of this trend was the succession of the king of Ch'i in 189 B.C. See Dubs, HFHD, Vol. I, footnote #5, p. 183.
11. Technically, because the Empress Lü helped found the empire, she could also rule the empire. Her eulogy contains no hint of usurpation. See Ibid., HS 3: 8a

(p.210).

12. The intent to make members of the Lu family kings was revealed to Wang Ling, Chancellor of the Right, and loyal servant of the former Kao-ti in 187 B.C., SC 9 (Watson, Records, Vol. I, p. 325).

13. Ibid., SC 9 (p. 327 including footnote #6).

14. Dubs, HFHD, Vol. I, footnote #2; p. 233.

15. SC 9 (Watson, Records, Vol. I, pp. 326-330).

16. HS 3: 2a op. cit., (p. 192) and footnote #2, p. 192; HS 3.4b (p. 199) and (footnote #2, p. 233). Note that the Empress killed the heir of Liu Chien, king of Yen, to make way for the appointment of Lu T'ung. SC 9 (Watson, Records, Vol I., p. 331).

17. Ibid., SC 9 (p. 406).

18. The account of the counter coup can be found in HS 3: 5a-8a (Dubs, HFHD, Vol. I, pp. 201-210).

Chapter Twelve

The Third Campaign of Consolidation

HEGEMONIC JIG SAW ENVELOPMENT

AND

THE DELIBERATELY PROVOKED STRATEGIC ATTACK

Slow Division and Occupation of the Client States

Action in the Reigns of Emperors Wen-ti, Ching-ti,
and Wu-ti (180-106 B.C.)

The 86 year period that followed the defeat of the Lu family coup (180 B.C.), is marked by the delivery of nearly all of eastern China into the hands of Han.¹ By 106 B.C., 20 tiny and scattered fiefdoms remained in the East. Annexation did not begin in a major way, however, until after the suppression of the famous Revolt of the Seven Kingdoms (154 B.C.). Before that revolt, the increase in central power was minimal. Some of the erstwhile client state territory that adjoined Kuan-chung was annexed. Most of the expansion that did occur occurred in the way of forced divisions of various client states. Most notably the client state of Ch'i was sundered into five parts in 164 B.C. Preceding all this, as one of Han Wen-ti's first acts, was the virtual return to Liu Pang's cleavage of empire. In the west, the hand of the central authorities prevailed; in the east, the hand of the client kings.

From this one may gather the impression that the Dynasty of Han put forth its centralizing hand over the lands of the East in a fashion that was, for the most part, fortuitous. The Dynasty may have owed its conquest of China, its first consolidation of China and its survival in China to the subtle revolutions of a grand design, but it did not owe the climatic absorption of China to yet another variation on the same grand design; or to any comprehensive design for that matter. Indeed this latter conclusion is the opinion that prevails among commentators today: to the extent that they see a design, it is a design of secondary importance, e.g. punishing rebellious kingdoms according to routine.² Thus the triumph of empire in the face of the massive revolt of 154 B.C. is taken to be the main fulcrum of decisive expansion in the East.³ Before that time, the statesmen of Han left, in many particulars, well enough alone. Crown all was Han Wen-ti's resettlement of empire along the lines of Liu Pang's arrangement in 195 B.C.⁴ For sure, here was the stuff of China-wide compromise. After victory in 154 B.C., the field of contention belonged to Han: ever bolder pursuit of the fallen enemy and ever wider occupation of eastern lands was the natural result: power increasing where the going is easy is the one predictable motion of man.

The consummate ease of this analysis, the prevailing wisdom of today, is undoubtedly compelling. It will also be shown wrong. For here manifest again is the same failure to appreciate the subtle process of advance according to strategy grounded in maneuver.

First of all, the empire's great victory in the field in 154 B.C. did open the gates of expansion wide and forever in the vassal East. But there is nothing to be gained by

saying that. This victory, however spectacular it may have been--and it was spectacular--was but the last noteworthy stand of an enemy who was, for all practical purposes, already beaten. The increase in imperial power that preceded the Revolt of the Seven Kingdoms--however minimal it may appear--, ultimately sealed the victory. Most important in this respect was the five-way partition of Ch'i. With Ch'i so dismembered, the best base for rebellion, apart from Kuan-chung itself, was torn to pieces. On top of that, this dismemberment, in addition to a number of lesser dismemberments of other client kingdoms that were made before Ch'i was torn to pieces, fatally divided northeast China from southeast China and, divided also center-east China. Ch'i dismembered was thus the real turning point along the march to Han's direct lordship over all of China. When a number of client kings finally put their common fears to the test, and committed themselves in common cause against the empire, it was too late--the winds of eastern loyalty were blowing in countervailing directions: the seven rebel kingdoms lacked a center of gravity, were scattered all over the eastern Chinese map and were surrounded by client kings that remained staunchly behind the imperial throne. Defeat in detail was but a matter of course.

If the defeat of the broad rebellion in 154 B.C. was all but a foregone conclusion before the fact, it follows that the empire hardly left the East basically alone in the 25 years preceding the rebellion. That the empire did not face a sizable revolt at any time during this 25 year period, a period in which it was expanding its power in a decisive way, implies that the empire increased its power in a subtle way. Indeed a more careful examination of the facts will show that the empire mixed justifiable

counterattack with swift fait accomplis. Ch'i was dismembered by the latter approach, several other kingdoms were dismembered by the former. The effect was to deceive the client kingdoms as a whole, and to enlist their cooperation in the empire's expansion.

Circumstances made an oblique, deceptive advance in the East possible. But careful scrutiny of the empire's first moves at the start of the reign of Han Wen-ti, should show that the auspicious nature of most of these circumstances was broadly pre-arranged. Han Wen-ti's reestablishment of two wing empire was by no means a compromise, struck between the central government and the eastern kings. Instead, this reestablishment put the central government in a strong defensive position, moral and strategic; while, at the same time, granting it retention of the initiative. By reaffirming the seat of highest government in the lands west of the mountains, the empire reestablished itself in the fastness of China's stoutest natural stronghold. By regranteeing local autonomy to most all lands east of the mountains, the empire won for itself again the gratitude of most all of the eastern dynasts and noble families. Yet, the reestablishment of two winged empire did not stop there. A certain number of new dynastic appointments were made. (The chaos that prevailed in the East after the suppression of the Lu family coup made these appointments possible.) These new appointments put the empire in an excellent position to exploit a second time the uneven loyalties of its eastern kings.

Here then in outline, is the profile of yet another offensive that was informed by maneuver. The broad relationship of events in Han's second and final diplomatic offensive in the East corresponds nicely with the broad

relationship of events in all of Han's previous, successful maneuver offensives. Thus what I take to be the initial move in the offensive provides the empire with powerful defensive and offensive advantages moral and strategic. The decisive turning movement against the enemy (the dismemberment of Ch'i) consumes little force; for the strength of the enemy is avoided, and his weakness precisely attacked. Then comes the one relatively bloody episode in the offensive (the Revolt of the Seven Kingdoms), which in spite of the spate of heavy fighting is a foregone conclusion. Next there comes the broad pursuit of the stricken enemy (the virtual annexation of the East after 154 B.C.). Finally, the pursuit is not pushed to its limit--a peace is made that calls for the victor and a remnant of the defeated to exist side by side.

It remains to be seen if the details of Han's second diplomatic offensive also are consonant with maneuver attack.

Here are the moves that the empire made at theater level. After reestablishing virtually the original client structure in the East amidst much fanfare (edict of 179 B.C.), the Dynasty now operated, for the most part, from interior lines, spreading its influence eastward from western Honan along two main axes, one following the course of the Yellow River and the other following the course of the Huai. See Map 18. Some of the advance was affected by annexation, most by the subdivision of kingdoms.

From this it follows that the maneuver concept at theater-level that guided the empire's second and conclusive diplomatic offensive in the east (180-106 B.C.), was the very opposite of the concept that guided the first: whereas

Map 18

The Third Campaign of Consolidation:
Axes of Advance



flank attack and concentration of force guided the first, central attack and dispersion of force guided now.

The decision to switch maneuver concepts at the start of the second episode of eastern expansion was clearly a good one. The previous articulation of forces in the East no longer applied. Before the East was made up of whole blocks of client states that were loyal to the empire, blocks that gave the central government extensively connected footholds in the East, footholds that left the position of rebellious client states turned. Now a strong suspicion hung over much of the East. As the CHC says, by the advent of the reign of Han Wen-ti, many of the eastern client kings were tempted toward independence. For some eastern kings their remoteness from the Center and the wealth and independent tradition of their lands spurred sedition (for example, the kings of Ch'i and Wu). For most eastern kings, the passage of time had altered their relationship with the emperor. Whereas under Kao-ti most of the kingdoms had been entrusted to his sons, by 170 B.C. only three of the kings were the sons of the reigning emperor.⁵

In much of the East, then, Han faced a solid front of resentment, anti-imperial in breadth and in depth. Since a solid front cannot be turned, Han had two options. Either it could advance along a broad front, or it could breach a hole through the front, and exploit the breach, rolling up the flanks of the enemy from the rear areas. The first option would tip the attacker's hand immediately, and for that reason is only appropriate if the attacker enjoys a crushing preponderance of strength. The empire clearly did not enjoy such a preponderance. It was thus well advised to expand by breaching a hole in the client state front--to

rely upon central attack.

A second major change had also come over Han's predicament in the client East, this one a result of earlier success. Having won the right to place sons of the emperor upon local eastern thrones, the Dynasty no longer had available a number of options for tighter, intermediate control. A deposed eastern king of the Liu family could not very well be replaced with another king not born of Liu; to do that would have been to have taken a step backward and to have broken Kao-ti's pledge that eastern kingships would only go to family members. Henceforth dethronement would have to be followed by subdivision of the kingdoms or else outright annexation. But, the latter method of extending influence, if relied upon too much, would alienate completely those eastern kings who remained. Until the imperial power was measurably stronger, it was necessary to advance less forcibly--to fragment local eastern power, not eliminate it. In its own way, however, fragmentation was an imperfect way of proceeding: when several client kings were set up, where before there was only one, the loyalty of the newly enfeoffed could not be guaranteed: some were likely to side against the empire, some for it (witness what happened in the Revolt of the Seven in 154 B.C.); hence vassal subdivision amounted to a dispersion of influence.

Thus, at the beginning of the reign of Han Wen-ti, a maneuver concept founded upon central attack and dispersion of force was the best way to engage the eastern client order as a whole. Although the execution of this concept would soon alter the balance of power in each of the East's three regions (one kingdom was divided in the northeast (179 B.C.) and one in the southeast (164 B.C.)), the principal initial thrust was made in the central-eastern region. Between 180

and 155 B.C., six of the eight kingdoms that were subdivided were kingdoms situated in the North China Plain. Only in the last decade of the second offensive in the East would the empire turn upon the other regions in a major way, assaulting first the southeast (155-154 B.C.), and then the northeast (145-144 B.C.).⁶

Certainly the decision to engage one region at a time was consistent with a maneuver strategy, and eminently rational. However, seen from the perspective of the regional level, the choice of the sequence in which to engage, most notably the choice to engage the central-East first, would seem to have pitted the empire against the greatest concentration of client state strength, without weakening that strength in advance, a clear contradiction of the maneuver principle. The local eastern forces were strongest in the central-eastern region. There the old feudal ways had been most respected and there the majority of Chinese were settled.⁷ On top of that, the center-east boasted the mountain strong hold of Ch'i, the best base of resistance in all of China outside of Kuan-chung.

Broadening our field of view to take in the predicament of the empire in the round, we discover that the sequence in which the eastern regions were attacked was rational and was consistent with maneuver principles. To begin with, the East was most vulnerable to military pressure in the central region. Access to the East was easiest through the Han-ku Pass-Lo-yang corridor, which connected in a direct fashion with the North China Plain. Direct access to the northeast could only be found via the Ching Gorge, and that gorge was 350 km further away from the base camp of the central field army than was the Han-ku Pass. Meanwhile, direct access to the southeast was almost an impossibility; the dense jungles

of the Yangste region precluded the launching of invasions of large-scale from that quarter.

Additional reasons that undoubtedly persuaded Ch'ang-an to direct its principal opening thrust into the central-East sprung from the situation of the empire at theater level. The presence of powerful and aggressive barbarian powers on the northeastern and southeastern borders of China made the conduct of a protracted campaign of encirclement in the northeast and southeast problematical. To have significantly fragmented the power of the border kingdoms would have deranged the precarious equilibrium of power prevailing between the northeastern Chinese and the Hsiung-nu,⁸ and between the southeastern Chinese and the Yueh peoples. Moreover border kingdoms were best placed to invoke the countervailing power of the barbarian should the empire expand into northeastern or southeastern China. Given this infringement of the strategic balance on the regional balance, the only feasible way to reduce the essential power of the border kingdoms would have been to have made a broad annexation--and on its heels to have brought in powerful imperial forces to garrison the borders. Clearly such dramatic altercations in the theater balance could only have been made after the client East had been seriously weakened elsewhere, weakened in the central-East. For to have reversed the sequence would have been to have alerted the central-East, the most powerful region in the East, to the imminent intentions of the empire.

Finally, while it was true that by the time of Wen-ti's ascension to power the interests of many of the leaders of the East were beginning to diverge from the interests of the empire, this divergence was most pronounced, indeed quite pronounced, among client kings in the central region. Thus,

at regional level, it was the center-East which presented "soft" targets for immediate attack. This was the region where rebellion was most likely: this was the region where justification for advance must have been most easily had. The empire could advance here in the aftermath of rebellion, and still preserve its own moral balance. It could claim that it was only punishing the evil doer; and setting an example to deter further rebellion. Surely all this was in the interest of all the client states in the other regions, north and south. Surely too the longer-term excessive trust of these other client states could continue to be exploited.

It will be recalled that the king of Ch'i had done more than any other eastern dynast to foil the dynastic coup of the Lu family and revive the Dynasty in 180 B.C., and yet he had been passed over when it came time to select the new emperor. This supreme slight was not easily forgotten by the king of Ch'i, the most powerful dynast in the East, nor by his regional neighbors, the king of Ch'u and of Huai-nan, who had joined in the countercoup also.⁹ (Important assistance in the countercoup has also been provided by Liu Heng, the king of the northeast kingdom of Tai. But, as it was Liu Heng, who became the new emperor (posthumous Han Wen-ti), the new leadership of Tai bore no grudge.)

Thus Han internal policy from 180-144 B.C. showed a high and proper quotient of maneuver at theater and regional level. It remains to examine policy at the level of the client states themselves.

First of all, we must examine the circumstances that brought Liu Heng, king of Tai, to the imperial throne. Dubs tells us that Liu Heng, Han Kao-ti's oldest living son, "came to the throne under exceptionally favorable

circumstances, for he was chosen for the place by the most influential person in the empire, who consequently took the responsibility for him."¹⁰ Besides Liu Heng, only one other man stood in serious consideration for the throne, that was Liu Hsiang, king of Ch'i, the oldest son of Han Kao-ti's oldest son, and leader of the client state wing of the Liu family faction that had just crushed the usurpation of Lu.¹¹

Observing all this, it appears odd indeed that Liu Heng was chosen. Had Liu Hsiang been chosen instead, the Dynasty could have advanced its interests in the East so much faster than was actually the case. The vacuum that would have resulted from Liu Hsiang's ascension would have offered the Dynasty greater scope for advancement than the vacuum that did result from Liu Heng's ascension. After all, it was only rational that the first important target of a diplomatic offensive launched in 180 B.C. would be Liu Hsiang's home kingdom of Ch'i, not Liu Heng's home kingdom of Tai.

The Dynasty's choice of Liu Heng was perfectly rational, however, and is seen that way by modern commentators.¹² Look at this additional and crucial fact. Between the two serious contenders for the throne, Liu Heng and Liu Hsiang, it was the former who's mother enjoyed a pleasant reputation; the reputation of the mother of Liu Hsiang was quite the opposite: for Liu Hsiang's mother was cut out of the same conniving cloth as the Empress Lü. Thus, by elevating Liu Heng, the Dynasty protected itself against another repetition of the intrigue just crushed.¹³ Here is an instance where the object of grand strategy conflicts with the object of strategy: better to seek victory in the East in due process of time, rather than gain victory in the field instantly and return the nerve center

of empire to the paralysis of conflicting dictats.

Within the first four years of Han Wen-ti's reign (180-176 B.C.), the empire engaged in considerable diplomatic activity. First of all, there was the revival of Han Kao-ti's original eastern client state structure. The three kingdoms which had been created by his predecessor, Empress Lü, and granted to men born Lu were dissolved; the lands taken from the kingdoms of Ch'i and Ch'u were returned; and the kingship of Chao, which Empress Lü had dragooned for Lü, was granted to Liu Sui.¹⁴

The empire also conducted its first expansion into the central region. Originating from the vicinity of Lo-yang, the empire annexed and divided client state territory extending along the Yellow and Huai River valleys. Along the Huai River, recent annexations of the southern lands of Liang (Ju-nan and Ying-ch'uan commanderies) and a recent division of the same (Huai-yang kingdom) were reconfirmed. Along or nearby to the Yellow River, Tung commandery was detached from northern Liang, and the small kingdoms of Ho-chien, Ch'eng-yang and Chi-pei were set up at the expense of Chao and Ch'i. These last mentioned creations were granted to three nephews of the emperor. The nephew who received the kingship of Chi-pei, Liu Hsing-chu deserves special mention. He played a critical role during the counter-coup, helping from inside the imperial capital. Finally, rulership of the now greatly truncated Liang was taken over by an imperial son.¹⁵

Changes in the distribution of power in the center-East were also accompanied by changes in the northeast. A son of the new emperor was appointed king of Tai, and, Liu Tse, a foe of the Lü family, and an able general who served under

Kao-ti, was appointed king of Yen.¹⁶ On top of that, Tai was subdivided to make way for the new kingdom of T'ai-yüan; kingships for both T'ai-yüan and Tai passed to imperial sons.¹⁷

All these developments bear the imprint of a great beginning, the beginning of a new long-range diplomatic offensive, a beginning which would prepare the way for a major disconnection of client state power in the center-East region. First of all, there can be no question that the timing of these moves was clearly auspicious. A host of developments encouraged Han to revise the East at the beginning of Wen-ti's reign: the commotion left in the wake of the family of Lü's attempted coup; the fact that participants in the countercoup deserved territorial rewards; and the vacuum left behind by the elevation of the king of Tai to emperor. At a moment of such widespread flux, widespread rearrangements of power could be amply justified.

If Han Wen-ti's very first diplomatic moves were well timed, they were also well placed. The Dynasty did what it had to do to rebuild a broad defense. Towards this end, the empire did well to broadly reaffirm the balance of power that had existed in the East at the time of the death of Han Kao-ti. The prestige of the Dynasty, and hence the power of the empire, must have been badly shaken by the attempted coup. If that was not enough, the new emperor had no friends among the clique of kings who had just foiled the coup and saved the empire. By generally reaffirming Han Kao-ti's promise of perpetually shared imperial power and guaranteed local privilege (confirmed by edict, 179 B.C.¹⁸), the empire revived its moral influence in the East as a whole, and moral influence as we have seen was an

indispensable element of commandery defense and imperial stability.

Yet, in the first years of power, the government of Emperor Wen did more than merely rebuild a broad defense: in a piece with a maneuver design, it fashioned a specific defense to contain the outbreak of rebellion in the center-East, the region where revolt was most likely to first occur. At the same time that it fashioned this specific defense, the empire prepared the ground for a major advance without revealing its intent. It regained the initiative that had been lost during the reign of Empress Lü: it "targeted" the center-East. Thus the empire exploited the opportunities--the power vacuums and the uneven loyalties--that existed in the East in the wake of the defeat of the Lu family coup in indirect fashion, and did so properly.

Containment of latent rebellion in the center-East was achieved, in part, at the regional level. Substitution of imperial sons for the kings that had been appointed by Empress Lu, and elevation of an imperial son to rulership over the local throne vacated by Wen-ti's elevation to supreme rule were moves that drove a reliable wedge between the northern nomads and less reliable client kings to the south. At the same time, these were moves that were perfectly legitimate. In the absence of a heir to a local throne, the emperor had the right to intervene, and designate his own men. What is more, the reappointment of the demoted king of Chao could not but help to win the Dynasty support from this important northern kingdom. In the southeast, support for Han was already in place. The mighty kingdom of Wu and the kingdom of Ch'ang-sha had sat out the counter coup. By doing nothing they separated

themselves from the fortunes of those kings in the center-East (including Huai-nan) who marched on the usurpers in the imperial capital.

Containment of latent rebellion in the center-East was also achieved within that region. Annexing client state territory part of the way down the valleys of the Yellow and Huai Rivers, and appointing an imperial son to the kingship of Liang threw up a patchwork glacis between the West commandery and the other client states of the center-East; it also separated the potentially seditious kingdoms of Huai-nan and Ch'u. The placement of three small new kingdoms around the northwestern and western borders of Ch'i would break up a possible client state alliance in the other area where it was most likely to form. Like the changes that were made in the northeast, the changes that were made in the center-East could also be justified, and must not have appeared threatening to the client state structure as a whole. The throne of Liang became vacant with the overthrow of the clique of Lü; moreover, the men who were newly appointed kings of Ho-chien, Ch'ang-yang, Chi-pei did deserve substantial territorial rewards for the important roles each of them played in the counter coup.

Yet, these very same moves that buttressed imperial defense of the center-East, also laid the foundation for subversion of the center-East. For these moves laid the foundation of a double envelopment of the central-East. Central maneuver against a continuous front presumes first the ability to mass overwhelming power against a point on the front, and then the ability to penetrate the breakthrough as far as is necessary to turn the enemy from behind his own lines. The neighborhood of Lo-yang, the pivot of the pincers, was the best available staging area

along the East/West divide to assist in the fulfillment of both conditions. As a strategic base to support the consolidation of the whole of eastern China, Lo-yang was clearly of no use, but as a forward tactical base for the support of a regional offensive, it could be of great use indeed. The valley in which Lo-yang sat may have lacked the depth to afford adequate protection for the seat of imperial government against a concerted eastern rebellion, but it did possess sufficient depth to serve as a very defensible sally point and supply depot for a large imperial army. Moreover, it commanded the central eastern gate to the imperial metropole and oversaw the crossroads connecting the Han-ku Pass to the Yellow and Huai River valleys, the principal east-west highways connecting the North China Plain to the commandery of the West.

Looking beyond Lo-yang, the decision to spread imperial influence along the approximate course of the Yellow and Huai Rivers was correct also. To begin with, by following the course of these rivers, the empire was advancing along the best line of communications in the East; along these lines imperial forces could be most easily deployed, and the neighboring client kingdoms would have understood this, thus giving the empire maximum political leverage along these rivers. Of equal importance was the fact that the course of the Yellow and Huai Rivers passed through the nexii of the northeast region/central east region and of the central eastern region/southeastern region. Thus as the empire advanced eastward it was able one, to separate the three regions from each other without incurring the undue resentment of any one region--the imperial advance could be fueled by detaching territories from the corners of client states that lay astride the nexii; and two, to threaten the central-eastern region indirectly. Yet at the same time,

the empire's advance was ambiguous. It could always claim that it was merely improving its military access to the East, access that could improve its ability to suppress unprovoked rebellion, and so preserve the peace of China.

Prepared to surround the center-East by a double pincer, the empire held the initiative in the center-East as a whole. But this was by no means the extent of the initiative held. The empire also held the initiative in all three regions. Once the empire had greatly expanded its power at the expense of the center-East, the southeast (minus Huai-nan) would probably be the next to rebel. Although the kings of Wu and Ch'ang-sha did not especially resent the king of Tai's ascension to the imperaturship in 180 B.C., their ties to him were not especially close either: they owed their appointments to the long deceased Han Kao-ti. A favorable improvement in imperial power in the center-East could only serve to further alienate the kings of the southeast. If the king of Wu or Ch'ang-sha or both of them rebelled, the empire could count upon the support of the kings of the northeast, as they, by contrast, had been appointed by Han Wen-ti. Moreover, what support the rebels of the southeast would get from the center-East would be support very much divided. The odds were thus good that the empire could expand into the southeast too. That having been done, the kingdoms of the northeast as drawn up around 180 B.C. would be of less use to the empire, and would also be highly vulnerable.

The empire actually broke into the center-East between the years 177-174 B.C. In the first several years of Han Wu-ti's reign, it must have been known that rebellion was brewing in the East, yet nothing was done by way of pre-emption: Liu Hsiung-chu, the recently appointed king of

Chi-pei, was known to be highly dissatisfied with his reward for his role in the counter coup of 180 B.C.; and Liu Ch'ang, king of Huai-nan, another participant in the counter coup, was known to have been fancying himself emperor for many years.¹⁹ It was in 177 B.C. that the former struck. At a time when much of the imperial army had been committed to the defense of Tai, then under concerted attack by the Hsiung-nu, Liu Hsiung-chu revolted, and marched on the understrengthened garrison of the imperial capital.²⁰ This revolt was suppressed, but at great expense. The army sent to Tai was quickly disbanded, and a new force of 100,000 was raised (forces transferred?) and sent to Chi-pei. Three years later, it was learned that Liu Ch'ang was plotting rebellion: this time, the empire stepped in before the plot matured.²¹ In between these two seditious acts (176 B.C.), the Marquis of Chao, Chou P'o, who was living in Chiang, also plotted to revolt, but was arrested before he could act.²²

The empire's policy during these years was correct, and consistent with beginning stage of their diplomatic offensive. To be sure, Han ran a certain risk by not precluding the outbreak of rebellion by the kings of Chi-pei and Huai-nan. But this was a risk well worth taking; to have removed these kings from power when the evidence against them was not overwhelming would have been to have jeopardized the empire's credibility as upholder of the status quo. Having said that, it is also correct to say that the empire was well advised to pre-empt the king of Huai-Han's revolt. By 174 B.C., the evidence against him was considerable; moreover, by this time, Han had firmly established its credibility by absorbing Chi-pei's blow; it no longer had to remain in as vulnerable a posture.

Encirclement got underway right after the suppression of the revolt of Huai-nan. In the wake of Liu Ch'ang's arrest, Huai-nan was apparently occupied by the central government. (Chi-pei had also been occupied post revolt--in 177 B.C.) Two years later, Emperor Wen enfeoffed the four sons of the disgraced Liu Ch'ang as marquises in and around Huai-nan.²³ The emperor's response to recent rebellion provoked anger at court: some ministers, most notably Confucianist (?) and court tutor, Chia I, who was the first to publicly criticize the emperor (172 B.C.)²⁴ and Ch'ao Ts'o, who expressed his dissent in 10 memorials, felt that it was time to reduce client state power in a major way.²⁵ But the emperor would not change his policy. Vassal kings were honored as before, and their prerogatives upheld: for instance, in 175 B.C., a proposal to centralize control of copper was rejected,²⁶ even though several client kings like Liu P'i of Wu were accumulating vast fortunes from their untaxed mines.²⁷ If anything, the emperor's trust in the loyalty of his eastern retainers seemed to build: identification checks were ended at most passes, and garrison strength at customs barriers reduced throughout the territory of the commandery in 168 B.C. What is more, sometime before 164 B.C., Emperor Wen had the outspoken minister, Chia I, exiled to Ch'ang-sha, far from the imperial capital.²⁸

In 164 B.C., Liu Fei², king of Ch'i died. His kingdom was then divided among his six sons; in that same year, imperial occupation of Huai-nan ended, as it was divided among three sons of King Li.²⁹ See Map 19. On a different note, occupation of Chi-pei was ended. Modern commentators have criticized Han Wen-ti's policy in the years after the revolt of Huai-nan as too cautious. Chia I has been seen as an unheeded prophet.³⁰ This criticism has undoubtedly been

Sites of the Client States in 164 B.C.



From CHC, p.138.

influenced by hindsight--the massive revolt that followed in 154 B.C.

What Chia I did not understand, was that the empire's power in the East still depended on broad appeal, and on the maintenance of the empire's moral balance. To have summarily reduced the power of the client states would have been seen as an act of excessive harshness, and would have provoked a theater-wide backlash that the imperial army would have had difficulty suppressing.³¹ This especially when the Hsiung-nu were launching their most dangerous offensives since the Dynasty had been founded. (These offensives occurred between 177 B.C. and 158 B.C.) Instead of reducing client state power all at once after the revolt of Huai-nan, the proper course was the one taken. The years of tranquillity, in fact the projection of an image of imperial restraint and relaxation, and the muzzling of out-spoken ministers like Chia I, were the right things to do to mask further plans of revision. At the same time, the temporary occupation of Huai-nan and Chi-pei was a sufficiently ambiguous move to weaken the center-East without revealing more ambitious goals. (This move was reminiscent of a move made during the first diplomatic offensive, when the empire temporarily occupied Ch'i, 203-201 B.C., until it had sufficiently weakened other client kings to afford to reveal real policy.) Moving on Ch'i when the king died, caught Ch'i and his latent alliance of supporters when they were most vulnerable, their leader being dead. Han ran a risk, as Chia I and others alluded to: but it was a risk worth taking, one consistent with the indirect approach. By not taking further action after the occupation of Huai-nan, Han was outwardly reaffirming its support for the status quo, and so cutting in to that support that the king of Ch'i might otherwise have

anticipated. Here good use was made of deception.

Thus Han had decisively fragmented the power of the center-East; in the process, it had also crushed all who harbored resentment after the countercoup of 180 B.C. Ch'i was the least assailable of all the client kingdoms, this because its borders were flanked by mountains and rivers. Meanwhile, Huai-nan, except for Yen, had been the largest. The king of Ch'u who also had joined in the countercoup died in 179 B.C.³² All this had been achieved with very few losses indeed. With the power of the central-eastern client states in shatters, and the loyalty of the northeast client states still assured, the empire was now poised for what would surely come next: a major counterattack led by one or both of the southern client states that had remained uncommitted during the countercoup.

After Huai-nan and Ch'i were reduced, no further reductions were made during the final years of Han Wen-ti's reign (r. 180-155 B.C.). At the same time, the client East was quiescent with but one exception: King Liu P'i of Wu declined to attend the mandatory, annual religious ceremonies at court. Liu P'i claimed illness for his absence, but that was not the immediate reason for this serious indiscretion. The heir apparent of Liu P'i was murdered at a "dice" match by the heir apparent of the emperor, and the murder went unpunished.³³ Han Wen-ti did overlook Liu P'i's absence at central court, however, bestowing on the aging dynast stool and cane, symbol of infirmity. The magnanimous response to Liu P'i's absence was certainly shrewd: under the circumstances, the central government lacked moral ascendancy over Liu P'i; if anything, it was Liu P'i whose prestige was in the ascendant: better for the empire to retreat and await

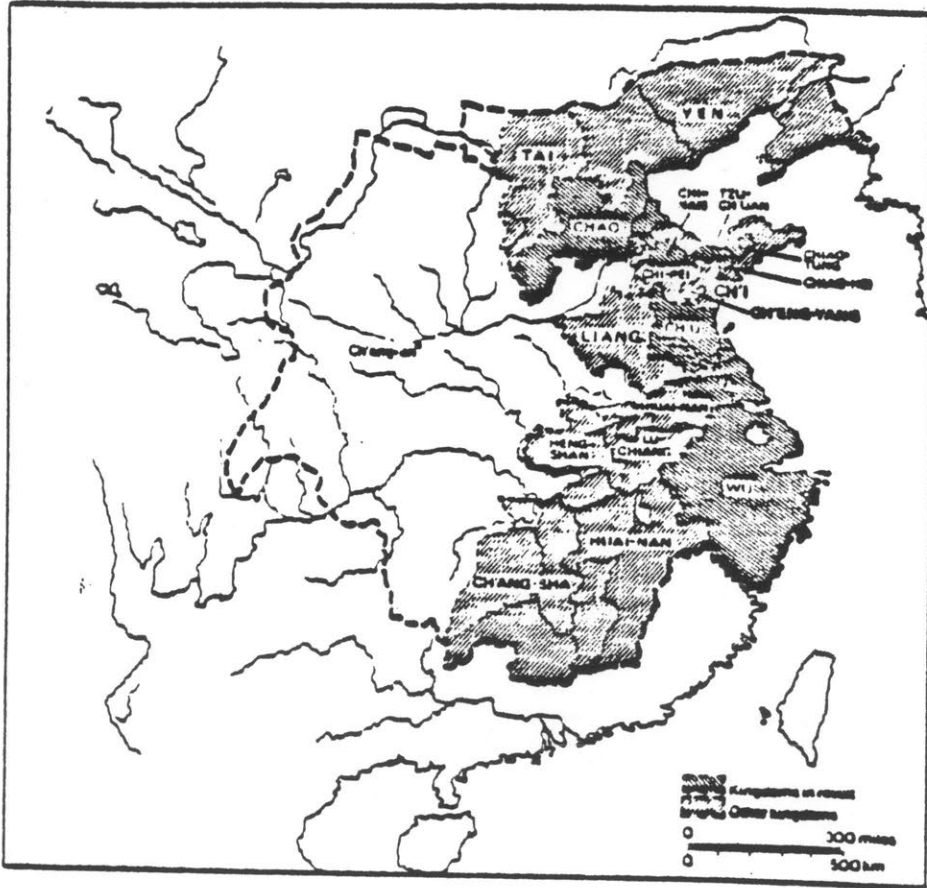
developments.

Early in the reign of the next emperor, Han Ching-ti (r. 155-140 B.C.), the empire moved quickly to reduce the power of the client states of the southern region.³⁴ In 154 B.C., Chao, Ch'u and Chiao-hsi were divided. Orders then went out to divide Wu as well, but before they took effect, Liu P'i ignited the famous Revolt of the Seven Kingdoms. Forewarned of the impending division of his kingdom, Liu P'i declared himself "Eastern Emperor," sought to build a great rebel alliance, and contacted every king in the east, and all major barbarian powers as well, seeking all the help he could for his cause. Liu P'i's efforts produced the gravest crisis of the empire: seven client states took part--namely Wu and Ch'u in the southeast, Chao in the northeast and Chi-nan, Tzu-ch'uan, Chiaotung and Chiao-hsi in the far east. See Map 20. The barbarian state, Eastern Yueh, fought against Han too; and the Hsiung-nu promised to join if the revolt prospered.

It is the conventional wisdom today to applaud the empire's efforts to break Wu and its allies, exactly as the failure to do so earlier is held up to criticism.³⁵ Certainly however, no one sees a pattern in the slow pace of Han Wen-ti and the fast pace of Han Ching-ti. But there is a pattern there nonetheless. The very difference in the approaches is critical to maneuver. In the case of 154 B.C., it was essential to move faster than the enemy expected, conversely it was essential earlier to move slower than they expected. In the earlier case, there was no active alliance building; but, in the later case, there was: it was widely known that Wu had been preparing for years to revolt.³⁶ The ascension of Ching-ti, the murderer of his son, merely prompted him to quicken his preparations. Thus

Map 20

The Revolt of the Seven Kingdoms in 154 B.C.



From CHC, p. 142.

are there many signs that the empire continued to make an ally of deception throughout the reign of Wen-ti, and into the reign of Ching-ti.

The moves which the empire made at the tactical level of diplomacy supports the belief in deception by design. Shortly before reductions were actually made in any of the client states, the king of Liang was promised to be made heir apparent to the throne.³⁷ A series of charges, entirely false, were trumped up prior to the reductions of the client states.³⁸ Several client states were divided in the center-East before the writ to divide was issued upon Wu. Finally, the writ for Wu to divide was issued in winter.³⁹ One slip was made by central court, however: Chao Ts'o, the minister most closely identified with the policy of eastern revision, was executed in broad daylight, on a crowded street, in the imperial capital. The orders for execution came from the emperor himself.⁴⁰

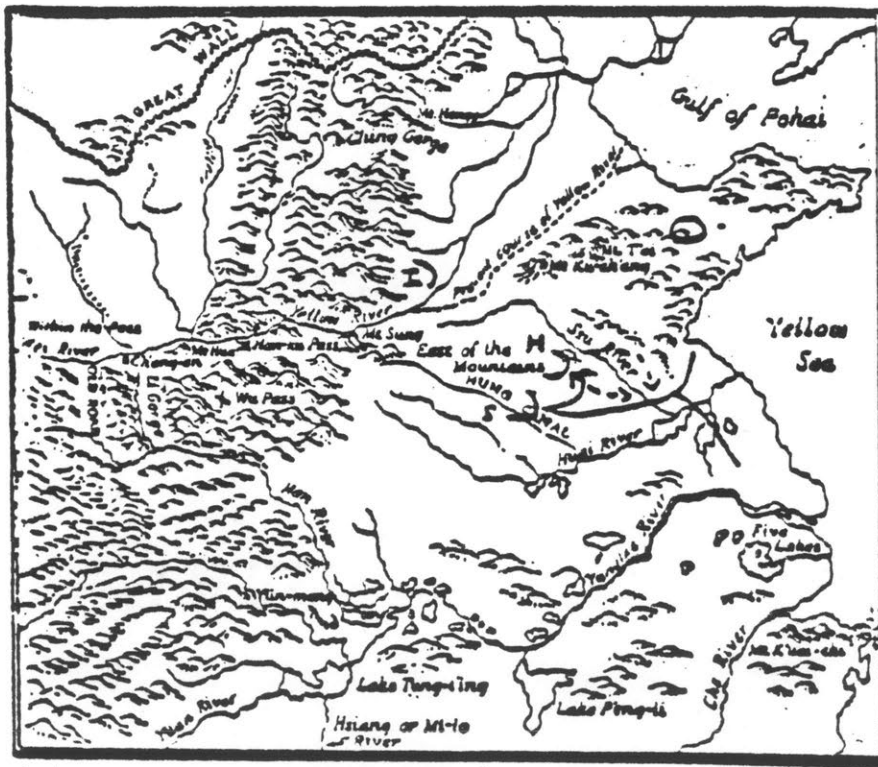
Promising the king of Liang the imperial throne, after the death of Ching-ti, secured the defense of the Han-ku Pass-Lo-yang corridor: it was critical that this corridor be kept open if the imperial army was to deploy eastward in time. Forcing several client states in the center-East to divide before trying to force Wu to divide improved the empire's resistance in depth. Had the empire forced the main issue from the very beginning, had it forced Wu to divide immediately, Wu might have found additional sympathy in the center-East: the empire's supporters in the East, not Wu's, might have been decisively encircled. Issuing in winter the order for Wu to divide, must have caught the king of Wu by surprise at the tactical level, and jeopardized the success of his impending rebellion. To stave off a serious reduction in his strength, the king of Wu would have to

rebel at once, that is to say, rebel in winter: military operations are hardest to conduct in winter, for food is not readily at hand. Of the two commissariats, Wu's and the empire's, the empire's would be better able to provide food. Han's manufacture of cause prior to issuing the orders for the divisions of eastern client states would seem to undo Han's moral economy. True at the regional level. But at the theater level, this was most probably surpassed, in that the empire did not mobilize until Wu did. Finally, the execution of Chao Ts'o was done so as to appease the rebels that is true, but this was the panicked act of an emperor whose character was not the best.⁴¹ Very quickly he realized the folly of his act, and put back on track preparations for counterinsurgency.

Han's counterinsurgency went this way.⁴² At first, no commandery forces were sent to fight the rebel pocket of four small kingdoms in Shantung; the other three kingdoms that occupied Shantung and that remained loyal to the empire were left to fight alone. Commandery forces were sent against Chao, Ch'u and Wu. A detachment invested Chao; meanwhile, the main body of the commandery army marched eastwards into northern Ch'u. Under the command of Chou Ya-fu, generalissimo of all imperial armies in the East, the infantry of the main body then entrenched themselves south of Chang-i, while the cavalry of the main body harrassed the Wu army's supply lines at the juncture of the Huai and Ssu Rivers. See Map 21. Despite receiving repeated calls for help from the king of Liang, then under concerted attack from Wu and Ch'u, and orders from the emperor to help Liang, Chou Ya-fu would not alter his dispositions.⁴³ Unsuccessful in forcing their way through Liang, rebel forces then tried to bypass Liang, marching on Chou Ya-fu's main body instead. But this route proved no more passable than had Liang's:

Map 21

Chou Ya-fu's Defense of Han



- = Advance of Combined Rebel Armies of Ch'u and Wu
- H) = City of Hsia-i, site of Chou Ya-fu's stand
- S) = City of Sui-yang, capital of Loyal Liang
- = Cavalry sent behind Rebel's lines by Chou Ya-fu
- I) = Imperial Army blocking Rebel Chao
- = Loyal Ch'i under siege

(From CHC, p. 25)

Chou Ya-fu's fortifications withstood all attacks; the rebel's supplies ran out, depleted by the winter weather and by the interdiction of the commandery cavalry. Starving and demoralized, the armies of Ch'u and Wu collapsed; the end of the revolt was not long in coming.

The king of Ch'u committed suicide. The king of Wu abandoned his army, fled south, and sought to gather a new force in Eastern Yueh. The natives of Eastern Yueh would have none of it, however. Instigated by imperial agents, they beheaded the leader of the great revolt instead. In the meantime, the loyalist king of Ch'i had been resisting a siege of his capital for three months by the combined armies of Chi-nan, Tzu-ch'uan, Chiaotung and Chiao-hsi when relief arrived from the empire. The rebels broke off the siege, and then sought pardon; pardon was granted--except to the leaders of the revolt. News of the defeat of Wu and Ch'u dissuaded the Hsiung-nu to join the revolt; Chao was now left alone. For seven months, the king of Chao withstood a siege of his capital city, before he too faced the end, and suicide. The Revolt of the Seven Kingdoms was now over.

The plan of campaign of Chou Ya-fu displays indirect military method once more. First of all, in not drawing up a precise plan of campaign before reaching the actual theater of war, Han's commander in chief of all forces East, remained flexible in his deliberations for the right length of time. At theater level, the armies and territory of the loyal client states were used to pin down and distract the enemy, and the field army of the commandery army was used to deliver the telling blow. Then, at the operational level, when the main commandery army was engaged, the commandery infantry became the force that would engage, and the commandery cavalry became the force that would outflank. In

disobeying the emperor (Chou Ya-fu was not punished for disobeying Han Cheng-ti's order to assist Liang), and leaving Liang to its own devices, Chou Ya-fu was putting the troops of Liang in a desperate situation, from whence they would have to fight. Finally, in a piece with the principle of taking the enemy intact and dividing his forces, honorable terms were offered to all who would surrender, except to the actual leaders of the revolt.

The military plan was apt. To begin with, the empire did well to place primary attention upon the armies of Wu and Ch'u. The epicenter of revolt lay in the south: Wu and Ch'u possessed the only disposable force in the hands of the rebels--and what they disposed of was significant, 100,000 troops according to the SC.⁴⁴ Chao in the northeast, and Liu Ang's combined army in the east were isolated from Wu and Ch'u, and immediately pinned down by loyalist client state forces.

It was also correct for the empire to rely upon the defensive. It was the rebels who had to reach Lo-yang and seal off the imperial metropole from the East, and this they had to do quickly, owing to the thinness of their supplies. Moreover, in letting Liang absorb the first blows of the rebellion, Chou Ya-fu made sure that Liang would fight. Had he rushed to their assistance, many of the troops of Liang might have returned home, fighting as they were close to their homes.

Thus, having fought but one major battle, and that on the defensive, behind fortified lines, the empire had now survived a major counterattack. It now began the long process of exploiting its victory.

Pursuit after the defeat of the Seven Rebel Kingdoms spanned the years 154-108 B.C. Reliance upon central attack and dispersion of force was taken to its ultimate conclusion.⁴⁵ This is how the SC describes the outcome: "The Han court administered eighty or ninety provinces, disposed here and there among the domains of the feudal lords and interlocking with them like the teeth of a dog, and kept a hold on strategic defense points and particularly profitable lands."⁴⁶ To get to this outcome, it became, in 148 B.C., "the set policy of the [empire] to enfeeble the vassal kingdoms by dividing the territory of a kingdom among all the heirs of a king, and by taking away some territory whenever a king committed a misstep."⁴⁷ In addition, vassal kingdoms were abolished when a king died without heirs. The prerogatives of all of the eastern royal families were also infringed shortly before 122 B.C.--the marquissettes, which were held on a hereditary basis, were henceforth conferred on the younger sons and brothers of the kings; in 112 B.C.--all but 7 of the original marquises enfeoffed by Han Kao-ti were purged; and in 106 B.C.--11 regional inspectors were assigned to the East.⁴⁸

At first inspection, Han policy, after the Revolt of the Seven Kingdoms, no longer appears to be deceptive, and hence does not appear to be based upon maneuver either. Had not a certain routine set in? Both suppositions are mistaken however. Although not as extensive as before, deceptive measures were still employed, and the advance was maintained in good maneuver fashion.

To be sure, frequent expansion was now the order of the day, and the overall course of imperial policy was no longer disguised. However, the precise ways in which the empire expanded could not be predicted by its victims in advance.

In addition, the empire made no preparations to eliminate all of the client states. Quite the contrary, for the duration of the second diplomatic offensive, imperial sons continued to be enfeoffed, and enfeoffed on substantial plots of land. In fact, they continued to receive lands even at the height of the so called "Modernist" period, 120-80 B.C., and beyond to the very end of the Dynasty.⁴⁹ See Map 22. In a piece with maneuver principles, and the final act of the diplomatic offensive, the empire always offered some of the eastern elite sanctuary of some kind, they never pressed for the eastern elite's total surrender. The ultimate limit of imperial expansion was not disclosed.

Thus it is reasonable to conclude that the empire practiced a modicum of deception during the final phase of its second and final diplomatic offensive. This modicum was appropriate. It is widely recognized that the defeat of the Revolt of the Seven Kingdoms dealt a decisive blow to the cause of localism, and the advocates of a mixed imperial order: expansionary design no longer had to be very circumspect nor deceitful. With the consensus among the eastern lords smashed; the bravest leaders of the East dead, imprisoned or exiled; and the compactness and depth of territory which the vassal kingdoms once enjoyed no more; further imperial expansion almost developed an unstoppable momentum of its own. In the accounts of the history after 154 B.C., the annals reveal something all together new: members of eastern royal families intriguing at central court against their relatives, and intriguing in great numbers. Where before, easterners usually broke ranks with their neighbors over the timing and best means of resisting imperial encroachment, now they broke ranks to resist each other. Before the East sought safety in their own latent conjoint power, now they sought safety in the empire.⁵⁰ All

Sites of the Client States in A.D. 2



From CHC, p. 195.

this meant that the empire was offered vast new chances for exploiting local jealousies--and anarchy; that it could advance eastward all the more openly, that it could easily justify its role as liberator and keeper of the peace. Proof of the difficulty that now beset easterners contemplating revolt is found in the strategic deliberations of the king of Huai-nan, c. 130-122 B.C.⁵¹

However, it is a mistake to say as one modern commentator has, that the defeat of the Revolt of the Seven Kingdoms "permanently broke the power of the kings."⁵² [my italics] Deception of some kind was still required. Even after the empire had been exploiting the great victory of 154 B.C. for over 30 years, it came face to face with the makings of a broad revolt. In 122 B.C., the large kingdoms of Huai-nan, Heng-shan and Chiang-tu were about to overturn imperial order everywhere south of the Yangste, only to be pre-empted by imperial troops and internuncios. And although the overall power of the empire had increased dramatically with respect to the remaining kingdoms of the east, only a fraction of this power could have been safely committed against them: beginning in 144 B.C., more and more imperial armies were being committed to steppe frontier defense; beginning in 133 B.C., the empire was involved in a major war with the northern nomad; and by 112 B.C., after having engaged in sporadic fighting on every front for 26 years, the empire was involved in major wars everywhere at once. Throughout the period of pursuit, new external commitments magnified the lingering danger of eastern revolt.

If deception continued to be practiced at theater level, it was also still practiced where needed at sub-theater levels. Also eastern strategy continued to be

subordinated to empire-wide strategy. To demonstrate the second assertion first, I turn now to the details of the history of Han exploitation. Five distinct periods can be discerned:

Period 1, 154-148 B.C.

Contiguous annexations were made down the Yellow and Huai River Valleys all the way to the sea. Lu-chiang was annexed. Virtually the entire seaboard of what is today the Shantung Peninsula was annexed also. (The territory of truncated Ch'i did remain.) Numerous subdivisions were made of the client state kingdoms that remained in the region of the center-East. See Chart.

Period 2, 148-141 B.C.

Reorganized was the cluster of client states that existed north of the Yellow River. As part of this reorganization, virtually all of northeast China was annexed east of the kingdom of Tai; Tai itself was reduced in size. Liang in the center-East was split into five kingdoms. See Map 23.

Period 3, 141-123 B.C.

The northern cluster of kingdoms was reduced in size, and kingdoms were subdivided. The central cluster also had territory annexed and kingdoms subdivided: several very small clusters were left. See Chart.

Period 4, 122 B.C.

Most of the southern cluster of kingdoms was annexed. Three small isolated kingdoms remained. See Chart.

Period 5, 121-106 B.C.

The northern cluster of kingdoms was reduced in size, and all but the truncated kingdom of Chao moved to the east.

Chart
Changes in the Eastern Map¹

Period 1, 154-148 B.C.

- 154 B.C. All seven kings who had rebelled committed suicide.
Rebel kingdoms of Chi-nan, Tzu-ch'uan, Chiao-tung and Chiao-hsi were occupied and/or annexed.
Kingdom of Wu was renamed Chiang-tu and a new royal family put in charge.
- 151 B.C. Kingdom of Lu-chiang was annexed.
Kingdom of Chao occupied; reestablished in 143 B.C. in much reduced form.

Period 3, 141-123 B.C.

- 135 B.C. Ch'ing-ho, Shang-yang, Chi-ch'uan annexed.
- 132 B.C. Chiao-tung annexed in full (?)
- 128 B.C. Yen annexed in full.
- 128-123 B.C. Liang lost 10 of 40 cities.
- 127 B.C. Ch'i annexed; Tzu-ch'uan got part of Lin-tzu province from Ch'i; only Ch'eng-yang left from Ch'i.

Period 4, 122 B.C.

- Heng-shan reorganized as Liu-an
Huai-nan annexed
Chiang-tu reduced to Kuang-ling.

1 See SC 11, 52 and 59 (Watson, Records, Vol. I, pp. 369 and 371; 412, 416 and 419; 450-451, 453).

Sites of the Client States in 143 B.C.



From CHC, p. 147.

See Map 24.

In summary, major annexations and reorganizations of client state territory were made in this sequence according to regions: center, north, north and center, south and finally north and center. This sequence was rational, as were the respective dates of the reorganizations.

Imperial advance in the center-East in the wake of the suppression of the Revolt of the Seven Kingdoms was proper. This, after all, was one of the major areas of the revolt: advance was justified. It was also proper not to advance in a major way in the south: large southern kingdoms could still provide border defense against likely foot barbarian attack.

The advance in the northeast of Period 2 was long overdue. Ever since the Hsiung-nu had united the nomadic world of Inner Asia and concentrated their considerable fury against China, client state defense of the borders had become problematical. The empire did well to wait to advance when it did. (See below.)

The advance of Period 3 and 5 were logical culminations of the implementation of the empire's original theater-level maneuver concept (central attack and dispersion of force).

When the empire finally did annex most of the territories belonging to the large kingdoms of the south, its southern theater predicament had been transformed for the worse. As happened earlier in the north with the nomads, by the 120s B.C., the foot barbarians of the south were forming into larger tribal conglomerations. Client state defense was no longer practicable.

Sites of the Client States in 108 B.C.



From CHC, p. 167.

Finally, to mention tactical craft. Despite the fact that the king of Liang ordered the assassination of a central court minister (150 B.C.), the empire did not punish him and reduce its kingdom. Instead, they waited until after he died (Period 2). Moreover, only at that time did they make major annexations of the northeast. This was correct: the king of Liang played a critical role in the suppression of the Revolt of the Seven Kingdoms: to reduce his kingdom in his lifetime would have been an act of supreme ingratitude. Also, it is said that virtually all would-be rebels were in touch with him.⁵³ Better to strike when he was dead, and his latent alliance most vulnerable. It should also be mentioned that reductions of the remaining large kingdoms (they were all in the south) were not made until the rulers of these kingdoms had been implicated in revolts (Period 4). That was wise also. The occasional reduction of small kingdoms was too unimportant for client kings to risk all on resistance; the reduction of large kingdoms would improve imperial power dramatically, hence sufficient grounds for revolt could obtain.

Thus did the consolidation of empire come to an end, and none too soon: for by 106 B.C., and even before that, the Dynasty was locked in a different, but none the less ferocious kind of war with all its barbarian neighbors. In bringing to virtual conclusion the consolidation of empire, it appears that the latest line of emperors, Wen-ti, Ching-ti and Wu ti, continued to abide by the grand strategy of their predecessors, with but sub-grand strategic variations attuned to the new realities of their day and hour.

FOOTNOTES

Third Campaign of Consolidation
Text: pp. 237-276

1. For a summary of this period see Twitchett and Loewe, CHC, pp. 136-149, 152-153, 156-157.
2. Ibid., p. 140.
3. Hans Bielenstein, The Bureaucracy of Han Times (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1980), p. 105; Twitchett and Loewe, CHC, pp. 141-142; Dubs, HFHD, Vol. I, p. 297.
4. Loewe says that, "In 179 B.C. the Han Empire had largely reverted to what it had been at the end of Kao-ti's reign." Twitchett and Loewe, CHC, p. 139.
5. Twitchett and Loewe eds. CHC, p. 140.
6. For a summary of these changes in the eastern map see Ibid., pp. 139-144.
7. On the strength of the feudal tradition in the center-East see Dubs, HFHD, Vol. I, p. 14. Even mighty Ch'in had been cautious in the face of central-Eastern feudal interests. Lu near Ch'i had been the long-time home of Confucius; and Ch'i, itself, had always provided a home for Confucian schools. Undoubtedly, there were thousands of scholars living in the East. John F. Shyrock, The Origin and Development of the State Cult of Confucius, (New York: Paragon Book Reprint Corp., 1966), p. 21.
8. The winter camp of the leader (Shan-yu) of the Hsiung must have been located in the steppe of Inner Mongolia opposite Tai. It is said that the Shan-yu directly controlled the center of his empire. Twitchett and Loewe eds. CHC, pp. 384-385.
9. Ibid., p. 137.
10. Dubs, HFHD, Vol. I; p. 215.
11. Ibid., p. 216.
12. Ibid., p. 216; and Twitchett and Loewe, CHC, p. 137.
13. Twitchett and Loewe, CHC, p. 137.

14. HS 4: 5b (Dubs, HFHD, Vol. I, p. 233).
15. Ibid., HS 4: 10a (p. 243).
16. Ibid., HS 4: 5b (p. 233).
17. Ibid., HS 4: 10a (p. 243).
18. Ibid., HS 4: 6a-6b (p. 235).
19. For Liu Hsiung-chu's dissatisfaction see Dubs, HFHD, Vol. I, footnote #1, p. 248. For Liu Ch'ang's imperial dreams, SC 118 (Watson, Records, Vol. II, pp. 360-363).
20. HS 4: 11b-12a op. cit., (pp. 247-248).
21. Ibid., HS 4: 13a (p. 250).
22. Ibid., HS 4: 12b (p. 249). Apparently, this plot began as a personal vendetta against Yuan Ang, a palace counselor who masterminded Chou P'o's demotion from the post of imperial chancellor. SC 101 (Watson, Records, Vol. I, p. 518).
23. HS 4: 13b (Dubs, HFHD, Vol. I, p. 251).
24. SC 84 (Watson, Records, Vol. I. p. 515).
25. SC 101 Ibid., p. 528.
26. HS 24B: 5a-5b (Swann, Food and Money, pp. 238-239).
27. Ibid., HS 24B: 5b,6a (pp. 176-177).
28. For reduction of garrisons and inspectors at the passes--HS 4: 14a (Dubs, HFHD, Vol. I, p. 252). For Chia I's treatment--Ibid., (p. 293).
29. HS 4: 16a (Dubs, HFHD, Vol. I, p. 259).
30. Twitchett and Loewe eds., CHC, p. 108.
31. Dubs does agree that Han Wen-ti was right not to move against the East after the revolt of Huai-nan. Dubs, HFHD, Vol. I, p. 293.
32. HS 4: 8a (Dubs, HFHD, Vol. I, p. 238).
33. Liu P'i's grievance was compounded since the body of the Crown Prince of Wu was not buried in Ch'ang-an as befitted a member of the dynastic family. SC 106 (Watson, Records, Vol. I, pp. 466-467).

34. For an account of the actions taken in the East in the first two years of Han Ching-ti's reign see Ibid., SC 106, pp. 466-467).
35. Twitchett and Loewe eds., CHC, pp. 141 and 149. The annalist, Ssu-ma Ch'ien, did not applaud Han Ching-ti's policy, which we are told was really Ch'ao Ts'o's policy, to reduce the power of Chao, Ch'u and Chiao-hsi in 154 B.C. (prior to the outbreak of revolt). SC 11 (Watson, Records. Vol. I, p. 374).
36. The leader of the revolt, the king of Wu, boasted that he had been preparing for precisely such action for some 30 years. Ibid., SC 106 (p. 474).
37. Ibid., SC 58 (p. 442). It is said that this was a slip of the tongue on the part of the reigning emperor. But was it?
38. Ibid., SC 106 (p. 467).
39. Ibid., SC 106 (p. 467).
40. Ibid., SC 106 (p. 476-477).
41. On the depths to which Han Ching-ti had brought the imperatorship see Dubs, HFHD, Vol. I, pp. 297-299.
42. The best account is in SC 106 (Watson, Records, Vol. I, pp. 475, 478-485).
43. See Ibid., SC 106 p. 478 for Chou Ya-fu's plan of campaign.
44. Sun Tzu XI.37 (Griffith, Art of War, p. 135).
45. SC 106 (Watson, Records, Vol. I, p. 480).
46. For a very brief summary of the reductions in eastern kingdoms see Twitchett and Loewe eds., CHC, p. 156.
47. SC 17 (Watson, Records, Vol. I, p. 490).
48. Dubs, HFHD, Vol. I, p. 297.
49. Twitchett and Loewe eds., CHC, pp. 156, 157 and 159.
50. Ibid., pp. 156 and 199-200.
51. For instance, the Crown Prince intriguing against the king of Huai-nan SC 118 (Watson, Records, Vol. II, p. 370).
43. SC 118 (Watson, Records, Vol. II, pp. 372-385).

52. Hans Bielenstein, The Bureaucracy of Han Times,
(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), p. 106.

53. SC 58 (Watson, Records, Vol. I, pp. 443-445).

Chapter Thirteen

The Campaigns of Consolidation

CONCLUSION

Han's consolidation of the East did not stop when its second diplomatic offensive came to a stop. Annexation and subdivision of client state territory went on upto the very last days of the Dynasty in A.D. 8, albeit at a very much reduced pace. Thus by A.D. 2, only 1 client state of appreciable size (Ch'ang-sha) remained with life east of the mountains; and only 6 client states out of another 19 still shared borders with each other (Chen-ting and Chung Shan; Kao-mi and Chiao-tung; Kuang P'ing and Chao).¹

The ongoing life of some 20 vassal kingships, however modest their dominions, and impaired their rights, expressed in vivid fashion the Dynasty's will to dwell indefinitely with autonomous forces. Thus sanctuary continued to be offered to the beaten foe, but as long as the hand of Han kept on moving from strength to strength, the provision of sanctuary did not matter: the forces of decentralized rule could not catch their breadth, and work up the wind they needed to mount a comeback. But not long after the end of the second diplomatic offensive, the power of the empire stopped ascending, bloody war fought beyond China's borders in the Mongolian steppe, in alpine Tibet, in jungle infested China south of the Yangste, and in the mountains of Korea, exhausted the empire, and left it prostrate. Thus it was that the forces of autonomous rule--local forces and client

state forces--found the respite they needed to go on the counterattack. The state did stagger on, but its end was drawing near.²

But ours is a story of an acquisitive state forever acquiring more and more. The process whereby this acquisition went on in the century of "peace" that followed the seven years of civil war bears striking resemblance, in its essence, to the process whereby this acquisition went on during the civil war. As in the civil war, so in the first century of peace that followed, advance was achieved by the maneuver approach.

Thus, after 202 B.C., the empire avoided the strength of its internal foes--be that the latency of a eastern-wide rebel alliance, or the potential of pervasive intrigue in the capital city--and relied upon deception. The power of local eastern forces was gradually broken up by a series of successful ambushes that smashed weak fractions of the enemy one fraction at a time. The empire staked out the high moral ground and maintained itself in moral balance by dissembling to uphold the status quo, and thus won the allegiance of most forces in the East at any one time; and staked out the high strategic ground by basing the central government in the strong hold inside the Passes and by arranging the forces of the east in a way that would surely break up rebel alliances. It then waited for sporadic rebellion, crushed it each time it happened and advanced each time into the resulting vacuum. Meanwhile, the power of Dynastic intriguers was broken up by forcing them to move out beyond their base if they were to topple the Imperial House. By placing part of the pool of imperial candidates outside the capital, any would-be intriguer had no choice but to leave his source of strength and throw off his cloak

of secrecy--the labyrinth of loyalties inside the imperial bureaucracy--, and expand into territories where loyalty to the Imperial House was high, and where too many changes in power were sure to expose the intriguer's full intent, and thus, by means of the resulting alarm, call in empire-wide countervailing forces.

As in the civil war, so after the civil war, it should be clear that Han sprung many a trap on its way to victory. However, in springing these traps after the civil war, Han enjoyed the help of certain third forces. The process had become easier. During the period of consolidation, the armies of the client states complemented the army of the Dynasty. At first, during the course of the first diplomatic offensive, the former complemented the latter only in depth: the army of the Dynasty continued to be the military instrument of choice at the point of attack. By the time of the second diplomatic offensive, the importance of the armies of the client states loomed still larger, and the physical use of the army of the Dynasty declined. There were even times during the second offensive when the army of the Dynasty was not used at all, and the armies of the client states did all the fighting for the empire. Thus did the armed suasion, and moral influence, of the empire go from strength to strength.

So potent was the empire's grand strategy of consolidation that the empire could, despite being consistently outnumbered, bring unity to the whole Chinese world and, on top of that, only have to fight two hard fought campaigns. The campaign fought against Ch'ing Pu (in 196 B.C.) and the one fought against the Seven Rebel Kingdoms (154 B.C.) were, in effect, over before they started, so desperate and so encircled had the forces of

local rule become.

FOOTNOTES

Campaigns of Consolidation: Conclusion
Text: pp. 281-284

1. Twitchett and Loewe, CHC, p. 193-195.
2. For a summary of these momentous conquests see Witold Rodzinski, A History of China (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1979), pp. 62-64.

PART THREE

THE DEFENSE OF THE EMPIRE'S FRONTIERS
(202-133 B.C.)

Chapter Fourteen

THE NOMADIC THREAT

The early Dynasty's China-wide maneuver required taking a supreme risk, that the nomad would not join forces with a powerful eastern coalition. Imperium had scarcely been fact a single year when the realization of this great risk was narrowly missed. Barely nine months after the Dynasty disposed of Han Hsin, and the more powerful of Hsiang Yü's former governors in the northeast, the Hsiung-nu launched repeated attacks into northern and central Shensi. No Chinese client state could resist alone the determined onslaught of the Shan-yü's army: this much was made quite clear when nomadic hordes erupted into Han_h and Tai in late 201 B.C. Both invasions were so overwhelming that it was impossible to provide local security of the crudest kind, simply protecting the local dynast behind stone and masonry until help arrived from the core of the empire: on the first occasion, the king of Han_h, Han_w Hsin was captured in his fortified capital city of Ma-i a whole month before a relief army arrived from the imperial reserve;¹ on the second occasion, the king of Tai, Liu Hsi chose the ignominy of flight to the certainty of capture, fleeing with his immediate entourage to the safety of commandery territory.² In between these two major defeats, less dramatic penetrations of Chinese territory occurred as well as small nomadic raiding parties successively plundered Han_h. Nowhere else but in the north could client kings be so easily humiliated.

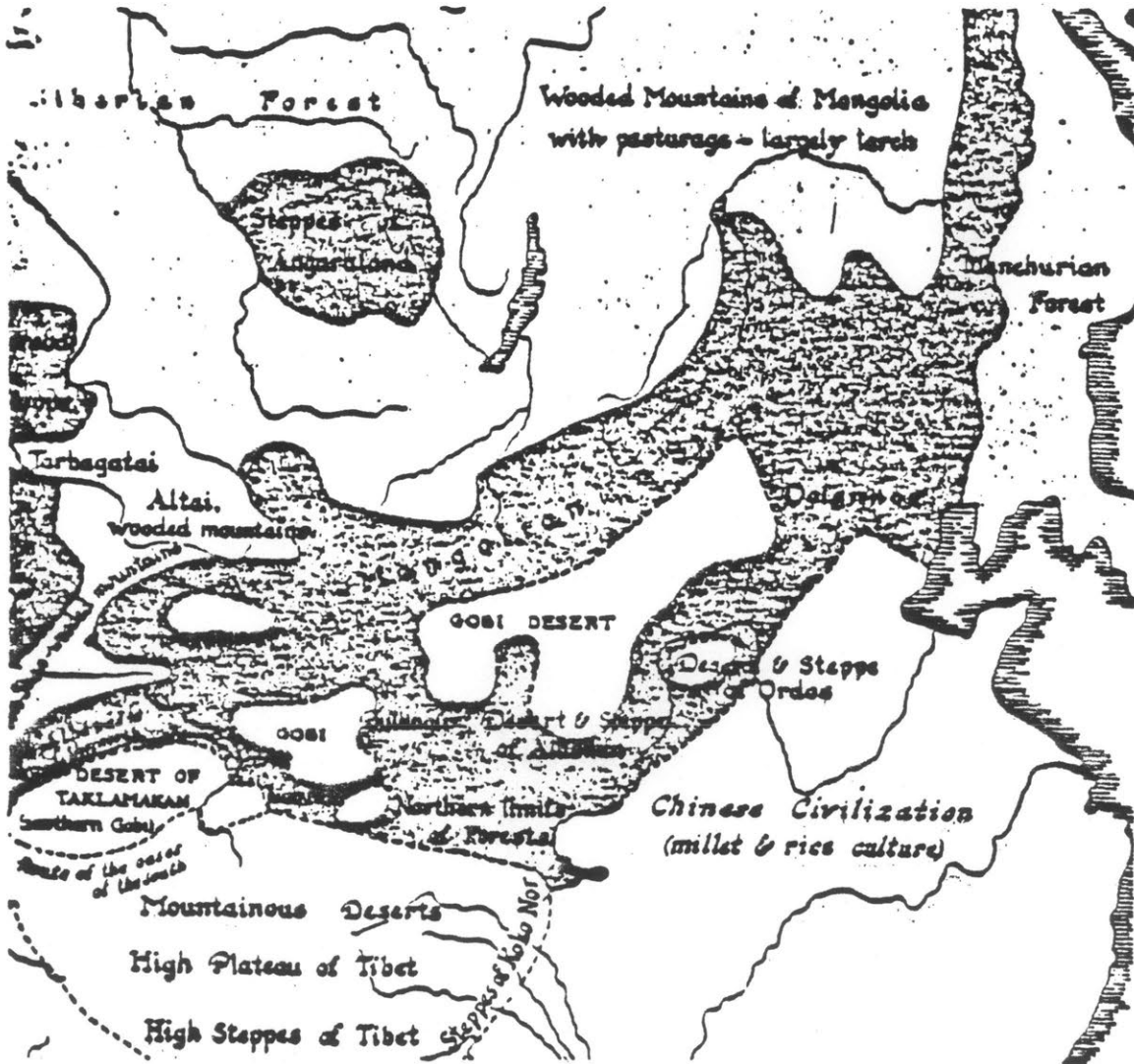
A few days after Ma-i fell to nomadic attack, Han_w Hsin joined forces with Mao-tun, the Shan-yü, or Supreme War Lord of the Hsiung-nu, (did Han_w Hsin invite the attack?), and together they marched on Ch'ang-an: it was the first grave crisis facing the young empire. See Maps 25 and 26.

The spectacle of a barbarian power and a Chinese client state in open alliance was bad advertisement for the new order. The enemy knew this and tried to broaden the revolt, fomenting sedition in the kingdom of T'ai-yüan. So dangerous was the threat to empire, that a counterattack was hurriedly launched, despite the onset of winter; what is more, the emperor himself would lead the troops. Near the city of Chin-yang in T'ai-yang, 600 kilometers northeast of Ch'ang-an, battle was joined, and the empire emerged a modest victor: Han_w Hsin's faction suffered a defeat, his army scattered, and he himself took refuge with the nomads. The sources are silent about the losses which the Hsiung-nu suffered; it is possible that they chose not to fight at all, the prerogative of a cavalry army enjoying superior mobility.

In the aftermath of the battle of Chin-yang, a successor was named to take the place of Han_w Hsin; and duly entitled king of "Chao." With the foe unrepentant, Han Kao-ti renewed his own resolve. Ignoring the weather, which had gotten worse, and the protests of those advisors at court who knew their Inner Asian history, Han Kao-ti took his troops further north in search of rebels and the Shan-yü's forward base camp in the Ordos/Tai salient. What followed would caution Han policy for nearly a century.

In late 201 B.C., on one of the blackest days in all of Chinese history, the empire escaped total disaster

Map 25
The Steppe of Inner Asia



From Grousset, Empire of the Steppes, Endpaper

Map 26
Hsiung-nu Raids on China
(in B.C.)



shamefully and by the slimmest of margins, at the little town of P'ing-ch'eng in northern Shansi. Han Kao-tsu's enormous, veteran army (the sources put its number at more than 320,000) was handily confounded by a Hsiung-nu horde inside imperial territory.³ With the son of Heaven leading the vanguard, forces of the Shan-yü succeeded in dividing the Chinese army in two, and lured emperor and vanguard into a trap. There at P'ing-ch'eng in the dead of winter, the column under the emperor's personal command was rapidly depleted by cold and starvation during a seven day siege. Yet, just when all seemed lost, the Hsiung-nu abandoned the siege and withdrew from Chinese soil. Only the terms of a humiliating peace, or perhaps some diplomatic chicanery implied, but not revealed in the sources, had saved the dynasty, and had saved China a fresh outbreak of anarchy, if not the worse fate of submission to the Shan-yü.⁴

The campaign of 201 B.C. taught Liu Pang a hard lesson of profound significance. The army of the early empire, composed primarily of infantry, may have been an effective instrument for the domination of the eastern Chinese. It was not so for the domination of the nomads. Infantry was a poor instrument for the pursuit of an enemy as elusive as the Hsiung-nu. What is more, if such pursuit was this difficult inside Chinese territory, how much more difficult could it have been on the outside, in the steppe, the nomad's homeland? At least for operations inside China, Chinese forces had the benefit of fixed defenses, stockpiled food and intimate knowledge of the terrain (witness that the town of P'ing-ch'eng had provided all these benefits for the imperial vanguard). In the steppe, none of these benefits obtained: instead, Chinese forces would have found themselves in an alien and inhospitable land. What is more, the steppe was not only devoid of fixed defenses to provide

refuge, and well stocked commissariats to provide refreshment; in contrast to the sedentary world of China, it was also devoid of fixed assets to threaten. Nomadic society, being almost completely pastoralist, was rural, diffuse--and mobile. It followed that the army of the early empire, an army geared to high-intensity warfare (see Tactical Organization of the Imperial Army), could do little to coerce the nomad. To the extent that the empire remained committed to an army composed primarily of infantry (and chariots), it could not provide an indirect defense of China's steppe frontier, that is to say, it could not deter nomadic attack. The nomadic threat issued from sanctuary.

The agreement reached between Emperor Kao-ti and Shan-yü Mao-tun near the snow-swept town of P'ing-ch'eng did not remain in force for very long. Within a month, the nomad raided once more: the withdrawal of the empire's central reserve from the border provinces following the debacle of P'ing-ch'eng was taken as the cue to renew the pressure upon the empire. Another month after that, Tai was overrun as already mentioned. The emperor called out the imperial army again, although this time he stayed put in the imperial capital, and this time only part of the central reserve was committed. Imperial troops remained in Tai until the incursion was repelled and order restored. No effort was made to retaliate.

Over a period of six months, a standoff had emerged between Hsiung-nu and Han. The empire could not deter the nomads from attacking its soil. In turn, the nomads could not convert their battlefield advantage into political gain because they could not shake the empire's grip upon its client kingdoms. However, the empire achieved this standoff at an outlandish price: it had surged sizable, sometimes

enormous relief armies from the core of empire to outer provinces at frequent intervals. Thus, another lesson, also hard, was manifest in full. Not only could the nomad pillage where he willed with impunity, the early composition of the imperial field army being what it was, the nomad could also wear out that same army as long as Chinese command pinned almost all its hopes for border defense upon a mobile reserve camped far behind the border. (Static forces of modest size were also deployed along the borders.)

The nomadic threat that gave Han Kao-ti such trouble remained fairly constant in potential from about 175 to about 125 B.C. (Before that time it was rising, after that time falling.) As such, this threat was out of all proportion to the nomads' population base. Chia I addressing Emperor Wen (c. 175 B.C.), equated the size of that base to a single Han district (hsien)--about 200,000 people?⁵ And, yet, "The situation of the empire may be described just like a person hanging upside down ... The Son of Heaven is the head of the empire. The barbarians are the feet"

The extreme militarism of nomadic society accounted in large part for the extraordinary magnitude of the Hsiung-nu's latent threat. Although the ratio of Chinese to nomads most probably exceeded 50 to 1 and may have been closer to 100 to 1, the ratio of men under arms must have been much less heavily stacked in China's favor: nomadic society enjoyed a vastly superior mobilization capacity per head of population. For, as the SC tells us: "all the young men [of the Hsiung-nu were] able to use a bow and act as armed cavalry in time of war."⁶

The precise size of the Hsiung-nu army is unknown. The

SC says that during Han Kao-tsu's ill-fated campaign of 200 B.C., the Shan-yü fielded "400,000 of his best cavalry."⁷ Modern historiography does not accept this figure, still we can be confident that the forces available to a ruler who held much of Inner Asia were considerable. In another early passage in the annals which comes closer to the truth, undoubtedly because this passage was intended to serve more as hard intelligence rather than as rationalization of a Chinese defeat, we are told that at about the time the Hsiung-nu reached their "peak of strength and size," Mao-tun elevated 24 men to the command of "toumans" (traditionally units of 10,000) giving a maximum ceiling of 240,000 cavalry (an unspecified number of less important commanders received "several thousand" troopers not 10,000).⁸ Later passages occasionally speak of nomadic invasion forces equal to or in excess of 100,000 men (for example, 140,000 Hsiung-nu are said to have attacked China in 166 B.C.,⁹ 100,000 in 134 B.C.¹⁰). Then, there are the more accurate figures for the size of the army of Genghis Khan (13th century), when he held all of Mongolia too, and these figures imply a mobilization capacity of the Mongolian steppe, Inner and Outer, of 129,000.¹¹ No other barbarian kingdom of Eastern Asia could field an army of this size.

The militarism of nomadic society was manifest not only in the size of its army, but in the skill of its troops. Since at least the time when records were first kept, the Chinese had always spoken in awe of the nomads' individual talent for combat,¹² by the end of the Dynasty of Ch'in they began to speak in awe of the nomads' collective talent for war. Long before Mao-tun's ascension to power over the Hsiung-nu nation, most Inner Asian nomads were noted for their horsemanship and marksmanship,¹³ but most Inner Asian nomadic tribes fought individually and in open order.¹⁴

After Mao-tun's rise, much had changed on the latter score. Under the pressure of Ch'in encroachment, and the inspiration and pressure of Mao-tun, the Hsiung-nu reformed their lax military ways. At the tactical level, in the open field, they developed a capacity for intricate and swift maneuver.¹⁵ The account of Mao-tun's use of "whistling" arrows to inculcate coordinated movement among his retinue suggests this;¹⁶ so too, bewildered Chinese accounts of nomadic movement at close range when the Hsiung-nu were in a combat mode. However, when they were not, when the nomads had a chance to plunder, the Chinese gave them poor marks. On such occasions, they lacked cohesion, and they became the rabble of bygone days, although, it must be noted, poor discipline, under such temptation, is not unusual for any army.

Although ineluctable proof is wanting, it is quite likely that they also developed a workable, if unorthodox, method for reducing small cities protected by walls. The sources are replete with instances in which client kings perished or were captured in their provincial capitals in the wake of nomadic attack: the fate of Han_w Hsin (201 B.C.) is only one of many lamentable episodes.¹⁷ We know that a certain number of Chinese defected to the nomads, or were captured. Out of this array of talent, the Hsiung-nu would have acquired the services of the odd engineer.¹⁸ This transfer of expertise was surely sped up when resistance to nomadic incursion began to crumble.¹⁹ A certain measure of success, in overwhelming fortified places, can probably also be attributed to the coup de main, a tactic made possible by the panic which the nomads could induce by the suddenness and terror of their invasions. For example, returning again to the Hsiung-nu incursion of 201, the SC tells us that they "surrounded Ma-i and attacked the city in great force,

whereupon [the local king] surrendered to them."²⁰

On the operational level, the Hsiung-nu posed a great challenge too, applying with consummate skill the lessons which they learned from their great pastime, the hunt.²¹ Like the hunter, the nomad commander would only strike when the quarry was most vulnerable, and extensive maneuvering across great distances was seen as an excellent means of weakening the enemy. What the SC said of nomadic conduct on the field of battle applied equally well to their conduct between engagements: "If the battle is going well for them they will advance, but if not, they will retreat, for they do not consider it a disgrace to run away."²² Nomadic columns deployed within the same sector displayed an enviable mastery of the craft of coordinating engagement and disengagement, enticement and counterencirclement. Retrograde movements that tired out an impatient pursuer and which induced him to prematurely disperse his forces followed by clandestine and sudden marches setting up devastating flank attacks, could all be encountered by a Chinese task force when on campaign against its nomadic counterpart. Witness what happened to the unfortunate Han Kao-ti in 201 B.C.²³

Given then the size of the Hsiung-nu army and its generic capabilities, the defense of North China would have been poorly served, in the long run, by the early empire's infantry field army centrally deployed. For all that, the early empire need not have taken action that was too drastic in order to adequately upgrade its northern border defense. The threat that the Hsiung-nu posed was serious, but not too serious.

To begin with, the Hsiung-nu need not have enjoyed

moral ascendancy over the Chinese. Nomadic culture was inherently inferior to Chinese culture. A civilization founded upon sedentary farming constituted a revolutionary advance over a society founded upon migratory grazing. To be sure, Chinese groups did give up their way of life and "defect" to the steppe, but unless they were very harshly treated, the great mass of the Chinese preferred the life of the "cap and girdle" to the life of the mounted herdsman.

The cultural dimension of the nomadic threat was not the only dimension that was not comprehensive. The military dimension was not comprehensive either: the nomads were not capable of conquering China in a single leap as, by way contrast, a powerful alliance of eastern Chinese rebels might have been. To begin with, although the operational conduct of Hsiung-nu troops at sector level was often excellent (for instance, Mao-tun's clever frustration of Emperor Kao-tsu's punitive campaign of 201 B.C. was played out over the better part of the territory of the client state of Han_h), it is doubtful if they ever mastered the operational art of war in its most subtle and breathtaking form, as the Mongols did centuries later. Exquisite coordination among Hsiung-nu forces at theater level (let alone at continental level) is nowhere apparent in the sources. Moreover, it seems that the Hsiung-nu did not use the hunt as a military exercise on the scale in which the Mongols did.²⁴

If it is likely that the Hsiung-nu were unable to wield their military instrument with consummate skill on the grand scale, then it can be said with certainty that a number of lesser limitations precluded altogether their direct conquest of China. Most important of these was the modest size of their manpower pool. At the outbreak of

hostilities, the Hsiung-nu Empire might have been able to field a force comparable in size to a major Chinese army, but they could not replace losses in the ranks at anything approaching their opponent's rate. The nomads, unlike the Chinese, were highly sensitive to a war of attrition. Despite the battlefield superiority of nomadic arms in a mobile engagement, a dragged out campaign waged across northern China would quickly deplete the Shan-yü's command. Moreover, for every province which the Shan-yü might have conquered, it would have been necessary to detach from the offensive spearhead a sizable number of nomadic troops for occupation duty. Only a massive defection of dissatisfied Chinese would have made possible the nomads participation in a war of attrition. Ch'ang-an's policy of peripheral rule was managed, in large part, to deny the nomads, or any other barbarian power for that matter, significant native assistance.

In a slightly less important way, the unbalanced composition of the Hsiung-nu army also made difficult a direct conquest of China. Composed exclusively of mounted warriors, a typical Hsiung-nu battle group might reign supreme in open field warfare, but without engineers and foot soldiers, they were often hamstrung in the conduct of special operations. Lacking infantry to provide enfilading support, Hsiung-nu forces would have had great difficulty forcing passes in the mountains which had been garrisoned by Han foot soldiers, and with so much of northern China crisscrossed by mountains, especially the metropolitan area which was surrounded by mountains, the movement of Hsiung-nu forces could be easily impeded at critical places. Then too, without the assistance of sappers and shock troops on foot, the Hsiung-nu army could not seize major urban centers of the empire. Heavily fortified, Chinese cities could be

turned into unshakable islands of resistance and sally points by even small detachments of imperial troops. Even if the Hsiung-nu succeeded in controlling many of the towns and much of the countryside of northern China, their failure to conquer the cities too would leave their tenure south of the Great Wall everywhere vulnerable to pinprick counterattack.

Thus, the Hsiung-nu army was not a suitable instrument for the orthodox defeat of a major sedentary state. Destruction of the armed forces of a great sedentary power, followed by the occupation of that power's territory, was not a realistic goal for the nomads to aim for.

For China, the really great danger of all out nomadic invasion lay in the unorthodox dimension. In the context of warfare in China proper, the Shan-yu's army was not so much geared to territorial conquest as to the capture of property that was not tied down.²⁵ For the purpose of raiding the Chinese sown, the Hsiung-nu army was a highly capable instrument. Its size, mobility, and firepower were far more than adequate for the task. When up against Han's small client state armies, the Hsiung-nu could quickly secure monopoly of the ground at minimum loss to themselves. As a testament to the efficiency of the suppression tactics of nomadic forces, the sources never speak of nomadic casualties during the break-in phase of a Hsiung-nu incursion. Once having defeated and/or scattered the field elements of the local opposition, the great mobility of a Hsiung-nu raiding party permitted rapid exploitation of the breakthrough. Quick dispersal of that party assured the capture of local peasants and livestock before they could find refuge in nearby strongholds or before reinforcements could arrive from the interior. What is more, even if the

local populace and its livestock could be bunkered in time, their safety was not always assured: it should be recalled that they could reduce more modest defensive networks. Thus, while the primitive nature of the Hsiung-nu's siege capability precluded a unilateral nomadic conquest of China, it was adequate enough to give nuance to a campaign of piracy.

Judging from the record, Hsiung-nu raiding parties were also able to exit cleanly from stricken Chinese territory. The Chinese might berate the nomads for their disunity when presented with an opportunity to plunder, yet, for some reason, the early empire was never able to capture Hsiung-nu tribesmen who had fallen in greedy confusion upon a Chinese province. Hsiung-nu tactics during the extrication phase of a typical incursion are unknown, but in light of their superb record of disengagement, it seems quite likely that the evacuation of tribesmen, weighed down with booty, was organized and shielded by a force kept separate for the purpose--by no means the behavior of an army intoxicated by the prospect of loot. At any rate, the high mobility of the Hsiung-nu army was as much an asset in retreat as in penetration and exploitation.

The actual effect of a nomadic incursion could spread considerable harm. On a typical drive, the SC speaks of 2000 peasants being captured, countless numbers of livestock must have also been lost, and then there was always the collateral damage associated with the invader's efforts to extract his plunder. Not without reason, the emperor often complained bitterly to the Shan-yü about the fire and slaughter his raids produced.²⁶

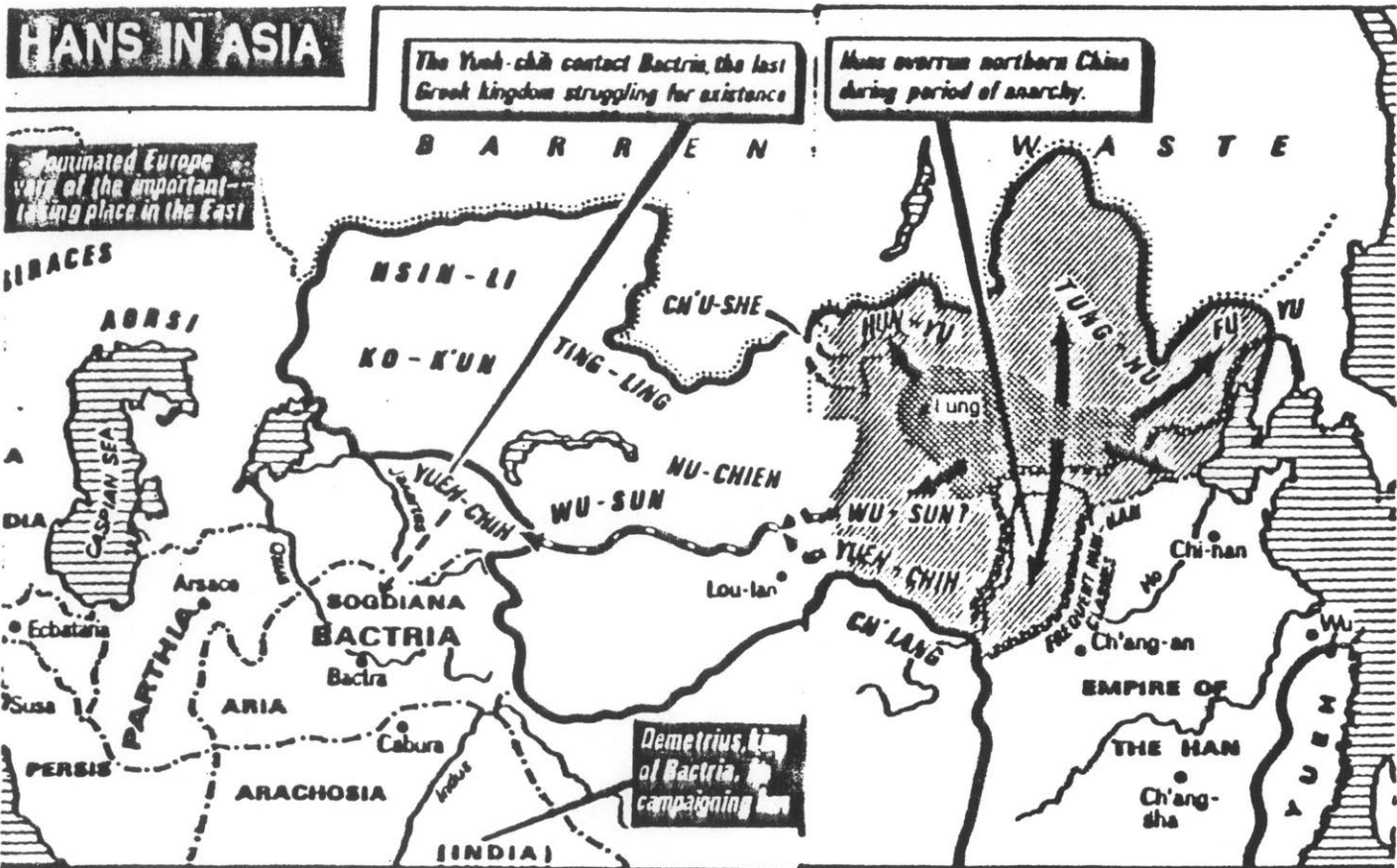
This then was the broad spectrum of hostile action

which the Hsiung-nu could have taken against the empire. As such, this threat was clearly significant, but limited nevertheless. This being so, it would have been unfortunate if Han had sought to redress its inferiority along the steppe frontier by doubling its field army, or massively upgrading its cavalry forces. North China would have been made more secure, but at what price empire-wide? Was the loss of domestic tranquillity a price worth paying to foil what was ultimately a second-order, guerrilla foe?

If these were the thoughts of the central government when considering the magnitude of the nomadic threat on paper, how much more so, when considering the magnitude of the nomadic threat in practice. In practice, the Hsiung-nu threat was even more limited, more limited at least into the first few years of the reign of Han Wen-ti (r. 180-155 B.C.).

During Han's formative years, during the years of the civil war, of Liu Pang's struggle with his generals and of Empress Lü's slow intrigue to unseat the House of Liu, the Hsiung-nu were mostly preoccupied consolidating their own domain. In the time of the civil war, the Hsiung-nu were fighting a two front war in Mongolia. When Han's China-wide empire was officially founded, the Hsiung-nu had narrowed down their enemies: Tung-nu in the east lay beaten and absorbed, the Yueh-chih remained, and stubbornly fought on.²⁷ See Map 27.

Refocusing upon their Inner Asian war, the nomads did not attack during the remaining years of Han Kao-ti's reign (200-195 B.C.). In fact, during this period, the only disturbance that did occur was of Chinese origin: Lu Wan, king of Yen, defected to the Hsiung-nu (195 B.C.).²⁸



Circa 214-175 B.C.
Map 27
The Situation in Inner Asia

From Banks, A World Atlas of Military History, pp. 69-70.

Peace in the north continued well into the regency of Empress Lü. The Hsiung-nu were still deeply embroiled in their Inner Asian war. Only once during the reign of the boy emperor Hsiao-Hui did Mao-tun make trouble. At that, his intervention was strictly diplomatic, even if outrageous. Circa 193 B.C., he proposed to wed the empress and jointly rule the world! The empress tactfully declined the offer, proffering one of her own daughters instead, but only after the court cooled her anger and refuted the advice of Fan K'uai to invade Inner Mongolia and punish Mao-tun for his impertinence.²⁹ Some ten years later, near the end of Empress Lü's reign, Mao-tun finally resumed the attack,³⁰ raiding Tik-tao in present day Kansu (182 B.C.), and again more intensely, 12 months later.³¹

It would be the fate of Empress Lü's successor, Hsiao-Wen, to face nomadic attack when it was most intense. Three years into his reign (177 B.C.), the Hsiung-nu Wise King of the Right (the most powerful man in Inner Asia next to the Shan-yü, lord over all nomadic tribes in the western half of the Hsiung-nu Empire) crossed the Yellow River in great force, smashed the nomadic client tribes shielding the Great Wall in Pe-ti commandery, and looted throughout the Ordos. For the first time in nearly 25 years, a major Inner Asian army stood on the outskirts of the capital of China.³² Eventually, a chariot/cavalry commandery army, 85,000 strong, marched north towards the central Ordos in search of the enemy. They found none. The emperor himself then favored T'ai-yüan with a visit, showering his munificence upon the locals.³³ It was at this time that the king of Chi-pei rebelled.

In the short space of a single month Hsiao-Wen had repulsed two disparate thrusts aimed at the very heart of

the imperial state (the other was posed by Chi-pei). But he had done so not without appreciable cost: the nomads made permanent their occupation of the Ordos.³⁴

Sino-Hsiung-nu relations were now at the dawn of a new age. Circa 177 B.C., the Shan-yü Mao-tun completed his conquest of Mongolia, driving the Yueh-chih westward--most fled to what is today Soviet Turkestan; a splinter group sought refuge amongst the mountains of northern Tibet. On top of that, his hordes were closing in on the conquest of what is today Chinese Zhungaria and Turkestan. For China, the effect of all this was not good. The Shan-yü's dominion now stretched from Kansu in the west to the western fringe of the Manchurian forest in the east, and abutted everywhere along the northern perimeter of the empire. The excellent quality of lateral communications on the nomads' side of the line, the high strategic mobility of nomadic forces, and the basic invulnerability of nomadic society to Chinese attack enabled the Shan-yü to concentrate overwhelming force along any chosen axis of advance leading into China. In the context of a guerrilla strategy of thievery, the inability to coordinate operations at theater level became now less of a handicap. Although the Shan-yü might indeed be unable to coordinate his forces at theater level once such operations had begun, there was no reason why he could not derive maximum benefit from launching independent raiding parties against several Chinese sectors simultaneously.

Although the Hsiung-nu could now bring more of China under threat than ever before, their actual threat still did not reach its full potential: the Hsiung-nu would now attack China in sporadic fashion well into the reign of Han Wu-ti (c. 130 B.C.). This new chapter in China's tale of woes began some time after the death of Shan-yü Mao-tun (died c.

174 B.C.). His son, Chi-chu took his place as "Old Shan-yü." No doubt informed of Han dispositions by a famous Chinese turncoat, Chung-hsing Shuo, a eunuch of Yen, the Hsiung-nu launched their greatest raid against the empire in 166 B.C. Horsemen numbering 140,000 under the command of Chi-chu, broke through the Ch'ao-na and Hsiao passes in present day Kansu, killed the chief commandant of Pei-ti Province, and carried off large numbers of people and animals. More ominously, the Shan-yü rode as far as the town of P'eng-yang, then sent a flying column to sack the Hui-chung imperial palace. Scouts were also dispatched as far as the Palace of Sweet Springs in Yung bringing them within sight of Ch'ang-an. Confronted by a deep barbarian penetration of massive proportions, the emperor ordered the largest commandery mobilization since the ill-fated campaign of 201 B.C. 1000 chariots and 100 times as many cavalry were called out to protect the capital. Heavy levies of troops were made in the provinces of Shang, Pei-ti, and Lung-hsi. The nomads remained in and around the metropolitan area a little over a month before they withdrew. The imperial army finally pursued them beyond the frontier, but could not bring any of them to battle.

For the next several years, the Hsiung-nu raided the north-central front of China heavily. Yun-chung and Liao-hsi commanderies suffered most severely, and for added emphasis, the SC reports that over 10,000 persons were killed in the client state of Tai alone. Apparently too, defections from north China to the steppe were mounting, although in an edict to the imperial secretary, the emperor discounts these losses as significant.³⁵

In 158 B.C. the Old Shan-yü Chi-chu died and his son, Chun-ch'en succeeded him. To China's sorrow, Chung-hsing

Shuo continued to act as advisor to the new Shan-yü. Chun-ch'en wasted little time in proving that he was as bellicose as his predecessors: in 156 B.C., the arrangement with Han was broken. Two Hsiung-nu raiding parties of 30,000 men each fell upon the provinces of Shang and Yun-chung respectively, with harsh effect. When the news of the double penetration arrived in Ch'ang-an, the empire braced itself for a major nomadic attack along the lines of the offensive of 166 B.C. Six imperial armies and some client detachments were deployed in depth throughout the north west of Yen.³⁶ Another nomadic force of indeterminate size debouched from the Chu-chu Pass in Tai presumably before all the emperor's dispositions were ready. But Han's initial deployments may have been enough to have deterred the enemy, for this incursion was short-lived and unspectacular. After several months, imperial forces reached the frontier, but by then the nomads had long since vanished.³⁷

Hsiao-Ching came to the throne of Han the next year. Before he could resolve the border war which Hsiao-Wen had left him, the great Revolt of the Seven Kingdoms broke out. The SC speaks of a conspiracy between Chao, one of the seven, and the Hsiung-nu, but the empire defeated the insurgents before a link up with the nomads was affected. Unlike his immediate predecessor, he was more fortunate in that the threat of nomadic attack subsided. No major invasions were launched against the empire during his rule, and only a small number of limited transborder raiding took place. In 148 B.C. the nomads attacked Yen, four years later the commandery of Chang, and in 142 B.C., the commandery of Yen-men.³⁸

Given the infrequent, then sporadic, limited threat

that the Hsiung-nu posed for the early empire, a strategic redeployment of the central field army of the empire was unnecessary. Unnecessary, too, was a massive increase in the imperial army, or a major improvement in its mobility. The same army that made possible the subversion of the Chinese feudal order could also do double duty as a spoiler of nomadic expansion into Han's northern frontier. It was necessary, however, to make several significant changes in the early and aggressive steppe frontier policy of Liu Pang (c. 202-200 B.C.). Rather than try to dominate the nomad, or at least preclude nomadic intercourse with China, Han had to deflect nomadic ambitions with a conciliatory foreign policy supported by subsidies. What is more, it had to be willing to absorb the occasional nomadic incursion--even major incursions--and court the risk of nomadic-eastern client state collusion. In the final analysis, however, a policy of appeasement and borders softly defended was worth the cost, for in return the empire received this: uninterrupted moral ascendancy over China.

FOOTNOTES

The Nomadic Threat
Text: pp. 287-307

1. HS 1B: 11a (Dubs, HFHD, Vol. I, p. 115) and SC 110 (Watson, Records, Vol. II, p. 165).
2. HS 1B: 12a (Dubs, HFHD, Vol. I, p. 117).
3. For a brief account of this campaign see HS 1B: 11b-12a (Dubs, HFHD, Vol. I, pp. 115-117) and SC 110 (Watson, Records, Vol. II, pp. 165-166.)
4. The diplomatic chicanery refers to "the secret plan of Ch'en P'ing," HS 1B: 12a (Dubs, HFHD, Vol. I, p. 116) a plan conceived by one of the emperor's lieutenants. Explanations of this plan are many. Huan T'an (died 29 A.D.?) in his Hsin-lun says that some claimed the plan was "marvelous" and "surpassingly good," and hence kept hidden out of humility. This was the party line of Ch'en P'ing, who wanted to make people think that his strategem was a "supernatural marvel." On the contrary, argues Huan T'an, the plan made use of deceit. Jealousy was provoked in the empress of the Shan-yü (the Yen-chih) by threatening to send beautiful Chinese women to the Shan-yü. The Yen-chih then prevailed upon the Shan-yü to lift the siege of the imperial army. Huan T'an reveals his Confucian training by labeling this plan "shabby, mean, awkward, and evil." It is conceivable that this was the plan of Ch'en P'ing. However, it is more likely that this explanation was meant to be an allegory. At the brink of total victory over China, the Shan-yü was dissuaded to cash his chips in out of fear of being coopted by the vanquished. See Dubs, HFHD, Vol. I, footnote #2, pp. 116-117. The SC 110 (Watson, Vol. II, p. 166) claims that the plan was based upon heavily bribing the Yen-chih, and that the Shan-yü feared the arrival of imperial reinforcements. According to this explanation, the siege was abandoned for tactical reasons. This seems to me to be the best explanation.
5. For Chia I's remark see Yu Ying-shih, Trade and Expansion in Han China (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967, p. 11 and HS 48: 6a-b. On the size of a hsien see Twitchett and Loewe eds., CHC, p. 476. Note that Chia I's reckoning of the number of the Hsiung-nu people seems quite low. It may have been 5 times larger, or more. The size of the Hsiung-nu army probably approached 150,000 men. Most probably, the nomads would deploy one man for every

nuclear family of five or six.

6. SC 110 (Watson, Records, Vol. II, p. 155).
7. Ibid., SC 110 (p. 165).
8. Ibid., SC 110 (p. 163).
9. Ibid., SC 110 (p. 172).
10. Ibid., SC 110 (p. 176).
11. John P. Greer, The Armies and Enemies of Ancient China: 1027 B.C.-1288 A.D., (USA: Wargame Research Group & Heritage Models, Inc.), p. 44.
12. It was said that the annals mention these peoples (and their skills) "as early as the time of Emperors Yao and Shun and before" (c. 2000 B.C.). SC 110 (Watson, Records, Vol. II, p. 155).
13. Michael Loewe, "The Campaigns of Han Wu-ti" in Chinese Ways in Warfare, eds. Frank A. Kiermann and John F. Fairbank (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1974), p. 79.
14. William M. McGovern, The Early Empires of Central Asia (Chapel Hill, The University of North Carolina Press, 1939), p. 117.
15. Owen Lattimore, Inner Asian Frontiers of China (Irvington-on-Hudson: Capital Publishing Co., 1951), p. 454.
16. De Groot, Chinesische Urkunden, Erster Tiel, pp. 49-50.
17. Surely, not every local ruler who had suffered such embarrassment had risked regal life and limb in the open field at the head of his local army. More than likely, it was the reverse which had occurred: like a good Chinese bureaucrat, the client dynast would have found others to do the fighting; at most, he might have observed the mayhem from the fastness of his citadel. Yet, many a northern sovereign still wound up in the hands of his assailants--evidence, of sorts, that the nomads were occasionally besieging Chinese fortresses.
18. Wolfram Eberhard, A History of China (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1950), p. 74.
19. Genghis Khan relied quite heavily on this tactic.
20. SC 110 (Watson, Records, Vol. II, p. 165)

21. Luc Kwanten, Imperial Nomads (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1979), p. 11 and SC 110 (Watson, Records, Vol. II, p. 155).

22. Ibid., SC 110 (p. 155).

23. When Liu Pang won his final victory over rebellious client armies at Lou-fan, at the edge of the Inner Mongolian steppe, and set out for the Shan-yü's forward base camp in the Ordos/Tai salient, he did so at the head of an enormous and well prepared army combining all arms. At once, the Shan-yü exposed a small and weary column to the emperor's scouts. (I am following the account of the campaign in SC 110 (Watson, Records, Vol. II, pp. 165-166). For some reason, the account of this campaign differs from the account in SC 99 (Watson, Records, Vol. I, pp. 288-289). Instead of the emperor's scouts encountering a deliberately weakened column of the enemy, they actually enter a deliberately weakened camp of the enemy.) These scouts, and the emperor, in turn, considered this depleted nomadic battle group to be indicative of the general state of the Shan-yü's army. (One advisor of the emperor, Liu Ching, saw this deployment for the trap which it truly was, but his counsel went for naught.) The emperor immediately sent his more mobile forces in hot pursuit, as the Shan-yü hoped, and the nomadic decoy group retreated at equal speed northward. Only after the imperial vanguard became fatigued and stricken by frostbite, and only after the gap between it and the main force of imperial infantry became greater than a week's march, did the Shan-yü encircle the vanguard with another column of his best cavalry, which up until then had been kept out of sight of the emperor's forces. On this occasion, flawless execution of a feigned retreat nearly brought the empire's death, as we seen.

24. In striking contrast to what Sung annalists say about the Mongols' training methods, that it was often carried out over thousands of square miles, Han annalists simply say that the Hsiung-nu army patterned its operational conduct after the hunt, nothing more.

25. Michael Loewe, "The Campaigns of Han Wu-ti," in Chinese Ways in Warfare eds. Frank A. Keirman, Jr. and John F. Fairbank, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1974), p. 79; SC 110 (Watson, Records, Vol. II, pp.164-165); and for a Roman account of the similar military ways of the Huns see J. Otto Maenchen-Helfen, The World of the Huns, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973), pp. 201-203.

26. The record of one such complaint is in SC 110 (Watson, Records, Vol. II, p. 174).

27. For an account of this war see SC 110 (Watson, Records, Vol. II, pp. 160-163.). About 202 B.C., Mao-tun also conquered most of the tribes of Outer Mongolia and beyond. Ibid., SC 110 (p. 165).

28. HS 1B: 23a (Dubs, HFHD, Vol. I pp 143-144).

29. See HHS 94a (De Groot, Chinesische Urkunden, Erster Teil, pp. 72-74), for the account of Mao-tun's "courtship," and the letters that passed between him and the empress. De Groot doubts the authenticity of the letters.

30. Perhaps the Shan-yü was taking advantage of a lull in his war with the Yueh-chih. Perhaps he hoped to exploit the recrimination surrounding Empress Lü's court as the Lu family made its bid to supplant the family of Han.

31. De Groot, Chinesische Urkunden, Erster Teil, p. p. 74.

32. The significance of this event was not lost on Hsiao-Wen. His first thought was to relocate the imperial capital to Kan-ts'iu'en, a city southeast (?) of Ch'ang-an. Chavannes, MH, Vol. II, p. 468.

33. The motive for this tour, which was conducted in the midst of the theater of operations, is not clear. Perhaps it was simply a preventive move designed to keep the natives in the fold (T'ai-yuan comprised much of the former state of Han_n, a state which had rebelled before in the face of nomadic invasion). Or perhaps the emperor wanted to make certain that T'ai-yuan could be used as a forward base for the continuation of the counteroffensive launched against the nomads.

34. Presumably, some or all of those forces that would have conclusively expelled the Hsiung-nu from the Ordos had to be reallocated to suppress the client army of Chi-pei. When the latter task was done, either the energy of the imperial army was spent, or else the emperor withheld the imperial army from another northern campaign because he feared another outbreak of rebellion in the client East. In any case, the nomads remained in possession of the steppe south of the Yellow River.

35. SC 110 (Watson, Records, Vol. I, p. 175).

36. Three imperial armies were dispatched to defend Pei-ti, the Chu-chu Pass in Tai, and the Flying Fox Pass in Chao. Stand and fight orders were issued to border garrisons already positioned farther forward. In addition, to garrisoning the Tai salient, forces were positioned to repel a direct attack on Ch'ang-an. Three additional imperial

armies were stationed around the capital at Hsi-liu, at Chi-men north of the Wei River, and at the Pa River.

37. SC 110 (Watson, Records, Vol. I, pp. 172-176).

38. The raid of 144 B.C. led to the capture of horses in the imperial pasturage. HS 5: 8b (Dubs, HFHD, Vol. I, p. 325).

Chapter Fifteen

THE STRATEGY OF NORTH FRONTIER DEFENSE

APPEASEMENT OF THE NOMADS,

SOFT DEFENSE-IN-DEPTH,

AND MOBILE ARMIES

Despite the gravity of the nomadic threat, the northern frontier policy of the early empire was that of almost total retreat. Diplomatically, everything possible was done to conciliate the powerful Hsiung-nu. A number of treaties of peace and friendship were signed, the Shan-yü was treated with the greatest respect, and untold treasures were conveyed to his people. This, even though the Shan-yü's demands increased all the more, and his attacks mounted in frequency and intensity. At the military level, border defenses opposite the Shan-yü's domain were weaker than those in place farther down the line. What is more, the great central field army of the empire was encamped well out of touch with the frontier. Only at the lowest tactical level, the level of border security against petty intrusion, was a stout defense in place in the manner of long walls, forts and watchtowers; yet, even here too, effective defense against transborder infiltration was not what it could be: up and down the Great Wall, the nomad was free to come and go as he liked amid the many trade marts. Surely, in light of the danger posed by nomadic attack, early Han's theater policy was wholly irrational. But then the needs of theater

policy did not inform empire-wide policy. In light of the latter, the ultimate arbitrator of all secondary strategy, early northern strategy was very rational indeed. Moreover, it too was founded upon maneuver principles.

Because the first nomadic invasion of China enlisted the help of a Han client state (Han_h), and contained within it the germ of unraveling the entire client state structure in the East, the empire did counterattack, and in a massive way. The near disastrous campaign of 201 B.C. was the unexpected outcome.¹ After the Hsiung-nu displayed their power a second time, ravishing with ease another client state (Tai) in 200 B.C., the early empire gave their power its due, and gave up all hope of subduing them. From that moment on, the empire followed a consistent course seeking a long lasting partnership with the Hsiung-nu.²

A division of power was negotiated in 198 B.C., a division which duly pronounced the nomads' superior arms. But as was the case with all subsequent treaties signed with the nomads, treaties which always favored them too, violation was a only a short time away. Each time when this occurred, and nomadic hordes descended upon China, the empire repeated the same tiresome procedure, expelling the intruders from its soil (but often not before suffering appreciable damage), then suing for peace until it got it--always a peace on terms more onerous than ever. Despite the spiraling humiliation and loss associated with this practice, every sovereign who served the early empire, from Han Kao-ti to Hsiao-Ching, never once deviated from the strategy of renting a peace from the nomads. Never once during this long period of 63 years was anything done by way of reprisal or conquest. Thus, in the wake of major nomadic incursions in 201, 183, 177, 166 and 158 B.C., one sided

treaties were signed with the Hsiung-nu in 198, 180, 174, 162 and 155 B.C. The threat of nomadic attack led to additional one-sided treaties in 192, 158, 151, 138 and 135 B.C.³

All treaties with the nomads were sealed by the system of "ho-ch'in" (harmonious kinship). "Ho-ch'in" encompassed, at the very least, the following terms of agreement: first, a Han princess would be wed to the Shan-yü;⁴ second, Han would send a fixed quantity of "gifts" including silk, liquor, rice and other kinds of food to the Shan-yü each year; third, both signatory states would become "brotherly states," equal in status, and finally, neither side would venture beyond the frontier as marked by the Great Wall.⁵

Except for trying to pass off an impostor the first time a Han princess was to be served up to the Shan-yü,⁶ the Chinese were scrupulous in their observance of the "ho-ch'in" protocols. With the nomads, it was different. The usual mechanism for the lodging of greater demands was the nomad's exploitation of the state visit. It was understood that each nomadic delegate who visited Ch'ang-an during treaty renegotiation would be amply rewarded. Over time, the Shan-yü swelled the size of his delegations, dispatching--and thus singling out for special treatment--greater and greater numbers of his nobility.⁷ In addition to the routine inflation of demand, it seems likely that a specially excessive demand was lodged during the reign of Wen-ti--the time when nomadic raiding was heaviest. A great deal of evidence suggests that Han acceded to this demand as well, instituting a large-scale government-sponsored market system. The principal beneficiaries of this system were surely the ordinary Hsiung-nu.⁸ To be sure, from the very beginning of the

Dynasty, trade of a non-strategic nature, like food and clothing, went on regularly between nomads and merchants.⁹ Even a good deal of trading in contraband, including weapons and iron farm tools, went on as well.¹⁰ But now with the new market system in place, special exertions were made by the authorities as well.

This then was the diplomatic content to Han's theater policy. As such, appeasement was its centerpiece, but this was an appeasement in which the empire suffered not one Munich, but many. Seen in the light of the needs of Han's northern populace, the logic of appeasement was all wrong, for it only encouraged the Hsiung-nu to attack all the more, and to make new demands again and again. Not for nothing then, successive emperors, Wen-ti in particular, were pressed at court to end appeasement and trade blows, not grain, with the nomads. Yet our opinion is reversed as soon as the field of view is raised to take in Han policy in the round. Now, we notice that Han's concentration of effort in the East, required a minimization of friction and commitments elsewhere. The best way to achieve that was precisely what Han did--the transmission of a stream of pacific overtures and goods to the Hsiung-nu. The key to the viability of this theater policy was the Hsiung-nu's own strategic predicament. Throughout the reign of Mao-dun, as well as during the early years of the reign of his successor, Chi-chu (r. 172-158 B.C.), the Hsiung-nu were generally tied down with their own troubles. They were either embroiled in heavy fighting in Inner Asia, or else involved in consolidation. Such must have been obvious to the Chinese: surely some of the hundreds of merchants and defectors who passed to and fro across the northern long walls must have been summoned to court and interrogated on a routine basis.

At least one modern commentator has categorized early Han steppe frontier policy as Confucianist.¹¹ This categorization is mistaken. It is true that the Chinese tried to pacify the nomad with gifts and peaceful talk in a Confucianist manner, and employed go-betweens who styled themselves as Confucianist.¹² While these go-betweens may have seen themselves as tools in a sacred effort to bring about the spread of the Confucian world view, it is hard to believe that those who sent them on their way shared in their enthusiasm. After all, Liu Pang and his supporters, men took their inspiration from a different source, had a history of using the pacific services of Confucianist to fool their fellow Chinese; they would have felt none the worse for deceiving a barbarian in a similar manner.¹³ Rather than believing that Han's "Confucianist" conciliation of the nomad sprung from "Confucian" strategy, it makes infinitely more sense to believe that this conciliation was a deliberate attempt to deflect the nomad, to avoid having to fight his undivided strength. A strategy eminently informed by maneuver precepts.

Quite apart from the risk of encouraging mounting nomadic pressure, in and of itself, Han did court an altogether greater risk by its policy of northern disengagement. The Hsiung-nu were given a free hand, in effect, were supported, in their unification of Inner Asia. The day might come when the Hsiung-nu could turn the considerable resources of Asia from Turkestan to Manchuria against China. But this was a risk which Han was willing to accept, for it hoped to have unified all or much of China by that time. As it turned out, it was the Hsiung-nu who "won" the race: c. 180 B.C. they had conquered all of Inner Asia east of Kazakhstan and the Pamirs. But Han had made much progress too, having completed its first diplomatic

offensive in the East, and having started the "breakthrough" phase of its second offensive. In this, we see, from another angle, Han's emphasis upon maintaining empire-wide moral authority, even at the cost of courting relative military insecurity. It must have been understood that even a partially unified China was no moral inferior of a completely unified barbarian world. Han, not the Hsiung-nu, was really the stronger party.

Han's diplomacy might have been unduly diffident, but one would at least expect a better accounting to have been offered by its military disposition. This was not the case however. First of all, the empire failed to maintain a uniform defense along the full length of its northern frontier. The initial military disposition of the empire left the east more vulnerable to invasion than the west. To begin with, the principal field elements of the empire, the mobile elements of the commandery army, were not uniformly distributed throughout North China, but were rather concentrated in the west.¹⁴ In the east there were only small and divided client state armies to immediately contend with, not a unified force of considerable size recruited from all over much of China, equipped with the best and the latest weapons from China's diverse arsenals. Also, it seems that the border defense of the West was stronger than the border defense of the East. Although nothing in the sources makes possible a quantitative comparison between the strength of imperial forces routinely deployed on the border and northern client state armies, an edge in the relative combat effectiveness of northern-based Chinese forces seems to have existed. The evidence for this assertion is this: initially, the northwestern flanks of the client state of Tai came under heavy nomadic attack, attack which the client forces of Tai could not handle. In 196 B.C., this western

sliver of territory was taken over by the imperial core, and provided with an imperial garrison.¹⁵

From the point of view of the defense of North China, the unevenness in the capability of border forces, and in the disposition of central field forces was most unfortunate. For the principal southern staging area of the Hsiung-nu (until c. 175 B.C.) lay directly opposite northern Shensi, the less well guarded stretch of the frontier, both in terms of forward and reserve forces.¹⁶ Again, however, the hierarchical priorities of Han's China-wide maneuver, made allowance for the trouble. Han could hardly have carried forward the subterfuge of a historic compromise between traditionally centralized West and traditionally feudal East, if it deployed imperial reserves in the east as a backstop to the northeast frontier. Moreover, at the provincial level, to have granted equally matched armies to client state kings and commandery governors would have overthrown the critical equilibrium established between West and East. What is more, from the perspective of the imperial core, the unevenness in frontier defense was not unacceptable. After all, at least until the beginning of Han Wen-ti's reign (c. 177 B.C.), the client states were interposed between the Hsiung-nu and the center of empire--the classic profile of an empire in hegemonic mode. It was they, and not the central soil of the imperial state, that would have to absorb the first blows of nomadic attack.¹⁷ Thus at theater level, the strength of the nomad was avoided.

The softness of north border defense also prevailed at operational level. To be sure, it was not realistic to expect early Han to have provided the kind of border defense which Ch'in had recently footed. Ch'in had driven the

Hsiung-nu out of the two best staging areas for an invasion of China--the Ordos and steppe just beyond in Inner Mongolia; and had kept major garrisons in place all along the frontier to prevent their return.¹⁸ In effect, they had implemented a preclusive defense of the sown. But the effect all this had had on the Chinese economy was profound. Much of Chinese production was drained in order to provide supplies for the imperial army of the north, while scores of fertile fields lay fallow for want of men to till them, so excessive was the draft of manpower to fill the ranks of the armies and their baggage trains alike.¹⁹ There is no question that the Ch'in security system in the north had contributed mightily to the collapse of economy and government. Then too, the theater predicament of China had grown worse since the time of Ch'in. When Ch'in launched its northern security initiative in 214 B.C., it did so against a nomadic world greatly divided and caught off guard, and capable of only posing moderately intense threats at provincial level; whereas, the new empire of Han faced not a disjointed array of regional and sector level threats, but a nearly full blown theater-wide threat. The cost of achieving a preclusive defense of the sown had never been higher.

If it would have been unrealistic for Han to have provided a strong perimeter defense of the sown, one would at least expect that they would have provided a moderately strong one. This was not the case however. See Diagram 3. The indispensable element of any stout defense--the central field army of the empire--was kept far behind the frontier, too far behind to be of immediate use in the event of a major penetration of the border. What is more, when word of a major incursion did arrive at Ch'ang-an, no effort was apparently made to send a flying column. Instead, the

Diagram 3

Steppe Frontier Defense: The Operational Dimension
Defense Against Major Attack

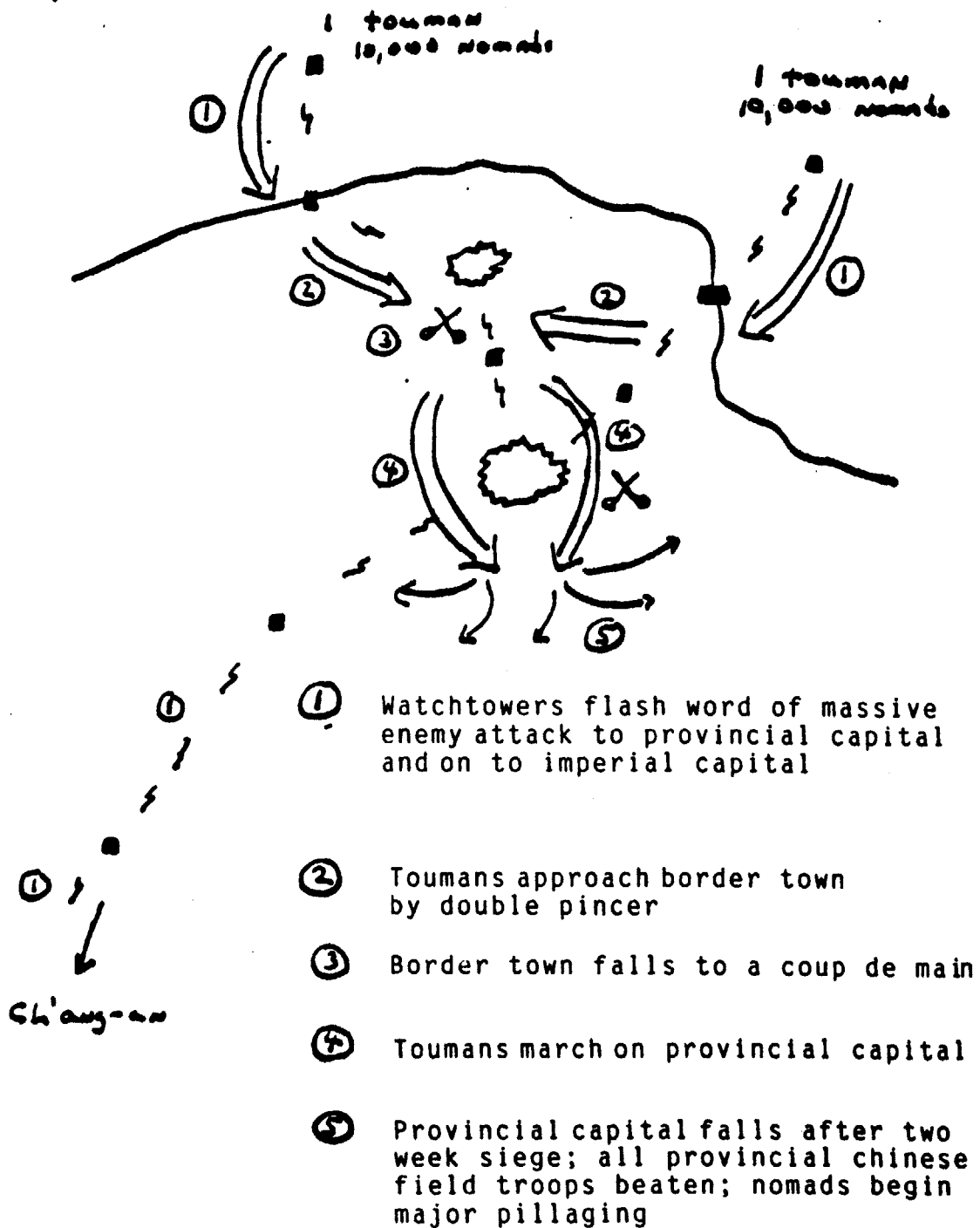
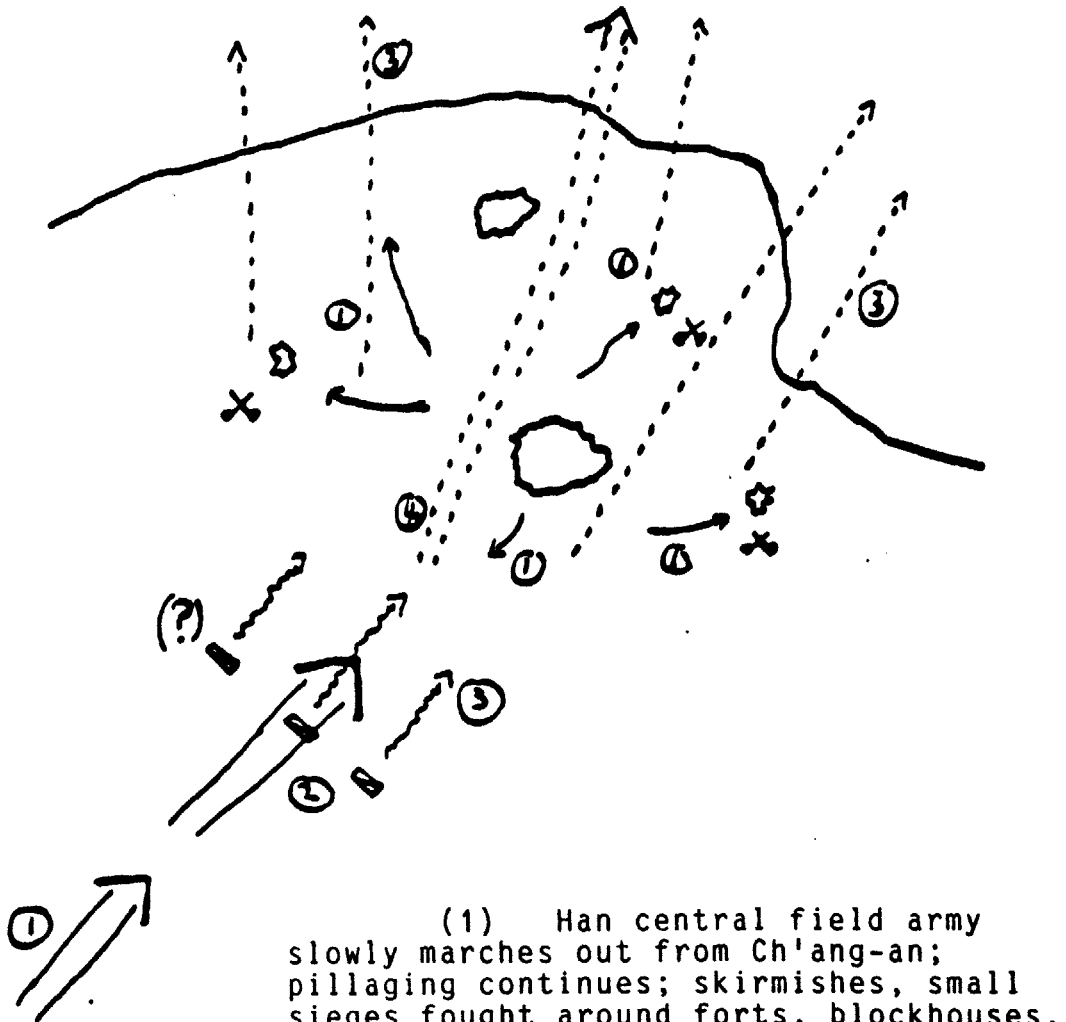
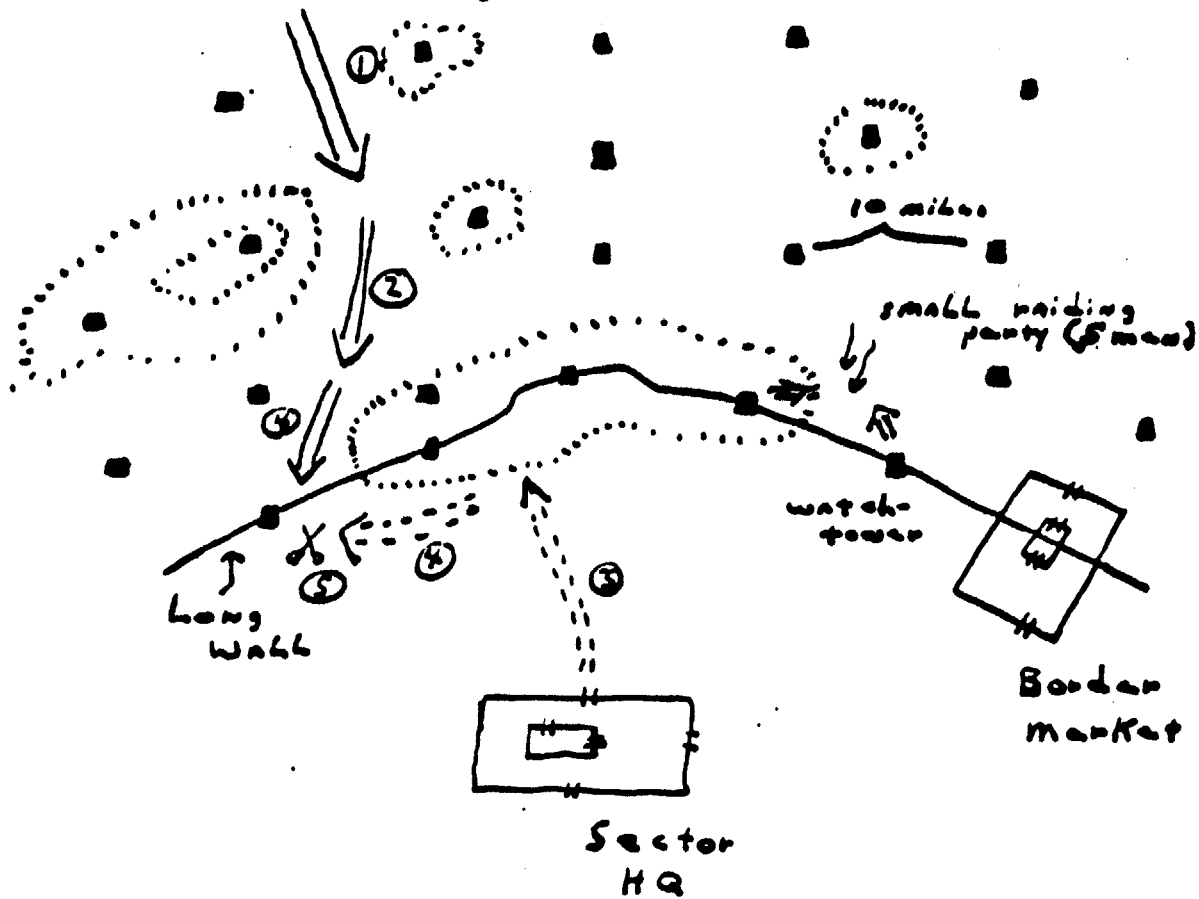


Diagram 3



- (1) Han central field army slowly marches out from Ch'ang-an; pillaging continues; skirmishes, small sieges fought around forts, blockhouses, and farms
- (2) Nomadic scouts look for relief army (?); Han relief army (central field army) finally reaches province
- (3) Nomadic scouts warn their comrades; Nomadic raiding party escapes with booty
- (4) Nomadic scouts retreat, Han relief army arrives too late to engage

Diagram 3
Steppe Frontier Defense: The Operational Dimension
Defense Against Minor Attack



- (1) Watchtowers signal Nomadic Attack, 100-250 men
- (2) Raiding party, really 75 strong, advances
- (3) HQ commits 50 cavalry
- (4) Perimeter towers signal enemy has veered; so cavalry veer
- (5) Enemy penetrates long wall as cavalry approach, skirmish is fought

imperial army which actually marched out in relief only left the safety of Ch'ang-an after its numbers had swollen to such a size that it could count on overwhelming numerical superiority in the sector brought under attack. For example, when this enormous expeditionary force finally arrived in Pei-ti one month after the incursion began (166 B.C.), the Hsiung-nu raiding party left of its own accord; no battle was ever fought by the relieving force; little of value remained to be saved anyway.²⁰

The deep deployment of the central field army, and the deliberateness of its mobilization meant that Han had given up any pretense of a defense-in-depth in the face of major nomadic attack. By the time, a powerful imperial task force arrived at the frontier, often one month after the attack began, local border forces had long been turned, and their forts long overrun. Nowhere could the task force confidently rely on defensive positions prepared in advance, positions in which to find rest, resupply and sanctuary. In effect, in the event of major invasion of the north, Han had virtually chosen the operational method of elastic defense.²¹ This was truly an extraordinary decision since one, elastic operations were the enemy's forte, and two, the principal component of the imperial army was the infantry/chariot team, forces ill-suited for fluid operations. In this instance, if in nothing else, Han had seemingly challenged the opponent's strength, not avoided it.

Yet, again, considerations of empire-wide policy, and in this case, peculiar local circumstances, combined to make sense of imperial actions. First of all, the logic of eastern expansion made it imperative that the central field force of the commandery army preserve its freedom of action.

This way imperial forces would also be ready to swing into action if revolt broke out. Of equal importance was the deterrent side to this deployment. It was equally important that Chinese client kings in the east perceive that Han's central army was freely disposable, lest they seize on weakness and revolt. As it was, the dual, and really trilateral mission of the central field army entailed a considerable risk when operational on the northern (or southern) front. Witness Chi-pei's rebellion when imperial forces were preoccupied for a brief few weeks in the north (177 B.C.).

Meanwhile with regard to northern conditions as such, while it was true that at face value reliance upon elastic defense meant playing the enemy's game, in reality this was not the case. Rarely did imperial forces ever have to fight nomadic forces in pitched battle; by the time the former arrived on the scene, the latter had been pillaging for some time, and most of their forces must have lost their cohesion. What is more, although the empire did expose its frontier to large-scale break-in, they did not really jeopardize it to occupation: the nomadic threat did not encompass a significant occupation capacity. And the risk of frequent break-ins, which could have had serious effect, were usually covered by subsidies. When this did not work (c. 158 B.C.), the empire called up additional forces and switched over to prepositioning strategies--in effect, maintaining two armies for a time.²²

Given the trend thus far established, it may come as yet another surprise that, at sector level, determined resistance was offered. Here, defense was offered against petty transborder raiding on a routine basis. Presumably, this was offered by way of the patrols maintained along the

Great Wall. We first hear of the existence of the Great Wall, in the wake of the great nomadic offensive of 158 B.C., when beacon fires sounded the alarm of the enemy's advance.²³ It is inconceivable however, that the long walls were not in service long before then.

By no means did the provision of a strong defense at sector level contradict the priorities of imperial policy. Quite the contrary, at this level it was acceptable to provide a uniform defense: the forces necessary to provide it could not have overturned the East-West military balance. In fact, it was essential to overall strategy. The provision of sector level security also guaranteed the work of the border watch--essential for timely reaction in the event of high-intensity attacks. Also the existence of the Great Wall provided critical services of a symbolic kind. First, it reinforced Han's claim to be pacific, demonstrating an actual limit to imperial expansion. Second, it provided serendipitous benefit to the Shan-yu, helping him delineate his sphere with respect to his people. Both ways enhanced the credibility of Han's conciliatory diplomacy. And three, the Great Wall was critical for deception. The very existence of an imposing, unbroken barrier, however ineffective in a strict military sense--still spoke for the reality of Chinese unity, when that unity was in fact very precarious. It was the intangible measurement of imperial cohesion that more than anything else must have done so much to complicate the nomad's planning.

Thus the empire's steppe frontier policy, strong at sector level, weak at operational level, uneven at theater level, and conciliatory at the political level, all derived from internal policy, the dominant policy of the empire.

Moreover, this was a a policy artfully founded upon The Great Intangible--the empire's moral authority, and aimed at the avoidance of the nomad's strength. All was in accord with a maneuver grand strategy.

FOOTNOTES

Strategy of North Frontier Defense
Text: pp. 313-327

1. See De Groot, Chinesische Urkunden, Erster Teil, pp. 63-70 for a German translation of all accounts about this campaign.
2. Michael Loewe, "The Campaigns of Han Wu-ti", in Chinese Ways in Warfare, eds. Frank A. Kierman, Jr. & John F. Fairbank (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1974), p. 67.
3. For the record of all these unequal treaties see SC 110 (Watson, Records, Vol. II); HS 5: 4a and 5a (Dubs, HFHD, Vol. I, pp. 313 and 315). Twitchett and Loewe eds., CHC, p. 386 confirms that 10 unequal treaties were signed between 202-133 B.C.
4. For details see Twitchett and Loewe eds., CHC, p. 386.
5. SC 110 (Watson, Records, Vol. II, p. 173).
6. On the occasion of the first treaty, Liu Ching originally proposed that the emperor send his own daughter. But Empress Lü would not suffer such a loss, so an impostor was sent instead. As Liu Ching predicted, the deception was discovered. SC 99 (Watson, Records, Vol. I, pp. 289-290).
7. Alastair Lamb, Asian Frontiers (London: Pall Mall Press, 1968), p. 27.
8. Twitchett and Loewe eds., CHC, p. 388.
9. Contraband trade noted in Yü Ying-shih", Trade and Expansion in Han China (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), pp. 120-121.
10. Ibid., p. 125.
11. Ibid., p.3 and passim.
12. See the proposal of the Reformist Tung Chung-shu. Ibid., p. 38.
13. The deceptive uses to which the Confucianist Master Li I-chi were put by Liu Pang best supports my point. See Chapters Four and Five of the dissertation.

14. See Chapter Nineteen of the dissertation on strategic deployments.
15. HS 1B: 17a (Dubs, HFHD, Vol. I, p. 129). See Loewe, RHA, Vol. I, p. 48, on principal nomadic invasion axes, i.e. via Ordos or Tai/Yen.
16. Rene Grousset, The Empire of the Steppes, trans., Naomi Walford, (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1970), p. 20.
17. Twitchett and Loewe eds., CHC, p. 124.
18. Chavannes, MH, Vol. II, pp. 168-169, and SC 6 (De Groot, Chinesische Urkunden, Erster Teil, pp. 39-40). And for details of Ch'in border defenses in the Ordos see Ibid., p. 39.
19. Wolfram Eberhard, A History of China, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1950), p. 68.
20. For an account of the empire's performance on this occasion see SC 110 (Watson, Records, Vol. II, p. 172-173). For the accounts of similar performances in 177 and 158 B.C. see Ibid., SC 110 (pp. 167 and 175-176 respectively).
21. For a detailed discussion of the meaning of the operational methods of defense-in-depth and elastic defense see Edward N. Luttwak, Grand Strategy of the Roman Empire: From the First Century A.D. to the Third, (Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University, 1976), pp. 130-131 and 136-145.
22. SC 110 op. cit., (pp. 175-176).
23. SC 110 (Watson, Records, Vol. II, pp. 175-176).

Chapter Sixteen

THE SOUTHERN THREAT

THE STRATEGY OF SOUTH FRONTIER DEFENSE

AND HONORARY VASSAL STATES

In comparison to the great threats of feudal rebellion in the east and mounted invasion from the north, the threat of attack from the south was of tertiary concern for Han. On the basis of population alone, the southern theater might have ranked second in gravity only to the eastern, but a whole host of attenuating circumstances placed it behind the northern, and last of all three. The southern theater was hopelessly divided both between peoples and within governments. Then too, the armed forces of individual southern kingdoms lacked the range or the mobility to battle far behind the Chinese border. Finally, the array of targets that were within reasonable reach of these southern armies were hardly of foremost value to China. Even so, the empire could not wholly neglect its southern defenses; the barbarian powers of the south were not wholly dwarfed by Han.

Because of the paucity of good communications in the south, owing to the region's mountainous terrain and severely dense vegetation, the people of the south did not present a unified front to the Chinese, as the Hsiung-nu eventually did. See Map 28. Instead, the theater was divided among scores of petty tribes, and a handful of small

Map 28
The Topography of Southeast Asia



From Wiens, China's March Towards Tropics,
p. 397.

powers. To the southwest of Han, it is said that a dozen chieftains ruled. The most powerful of these were the chiefs of Ch'iung-tu, Tien and Yeh-lang. Tien was situated around Lake Tien on the Yunnan Plateau, Ch'iung-tu lay to its west and Yeh-lang, the largest of these kingdoms lay to its east. To the southeast of Han, there were fewer petty states: most of the land was controlled by one of three regional powers. Bordering on Yeh-lang on the east, and on the Han kingdom of Ch'ang-sha on the north was Nan-yüeh, the greatest of all the powers of the south. Its capital lay at P'an-Yu, site of present day Canton. East of Nan-yüeh lay Min-Yüeh, in Fukien; and east of that lay the small state of Eastern Ou.¹

The SC tells us that most of the barbarians of the south "work the fields, and live in settlements," with scattered pockets of pastoralists dwelling in some of the western spheres.² This set description of a dual life in the south misses the rich variety of genuine living. Wiens, the best of the modern commentators on ancient cultures beyond Yangste, corrects this impression.³ For our own purpose, it is sufficient to know that another whole culture occupied the south, a culture based on slash-and-burn farming. "Slash and burners," from very ancient central China, in addition to nomads and semi-nomads from Kansu and Tibet first trickled into Szechuan and parts south of Yangste well before 1000 B.C. The slow, refracted exodus of northern peoples continued, reinforced by the arrival of Chinese migrants.⁴

Because of the rich mixture of cultures and nationalities in the south, and the poor communications prevailing within local areas too, those local kingdoms that did emerge were not centralized states but sludgy amalgams

of local governments. In a typical southern kingdom it would not be unusual to find nomadic clans grazing what modest alpine pasturage they could find, these clans ruled by nomadic chieftains; Chinese and half Chinese settlers working scattered pockets of recently cleared valley floors to the rhythms of Chinese custom; and slash and burn farmers dwelling in the hills above them in primitive townships--the whole only loosely connected by jerry-rigged bridges, mud roads tenuous mountain footpaths, and the odd waterway. Under such circumstances, it would surely have been difficult to wield these diverse peoples into a harmonious force.

Fragmented in their home bases by terrain, vegetation and culture, each southern kingdom was also hampered in its ability to pose an offensive threat against China owing to the climate and the topography of southern Han. The oppressive heat, and dampness of the tropical climate that prevailed south of Yangste severely restricted military operations throughout southern China.⁵ Then too mountainous terrain and thick jungle growth also came to the aid of the Chinese. Without the deployment of a major engineering force of tens of thousands of men, most of southern Han was virtually inaccessible to major attack. Across most of these borders, contacts between Chinese and barbarians in the first 75 years of Han's existence were restricted to merchant traffic, and migrations. (In this regard, a very lively traffic was maintained between Shu and Pa and Tien and Yeh-lang.⁶) There were however three main invasion axis into China.⁷ Two of these were not particularly good: the western axis started in Yunnan, followed the course of the Yangste and ended in Szechuan; the eastern axis began in Min-Yüeh and Eastern Ou skirted the banks of the Kan River in Chiang-hsi province, then winded down the shores of Lake

P'o-yang finally debauching in present day Chekiang. The best of the three was the central axis. This axis began in Kwangsi and then followed the waterway conduit of the T'ung-t'ing Lake/Hsiang River.

It was particularly unfortunate that the best invasion axis into China was the central one, for it originated in the land of Nan-yüeh, Han's most serious southern rival. Of all the southern kingdoms, Nan-Yueh must have certainly been the best managed, and possessor of the best generals, or at least generals who understood Chinese ways in warfare. Nan-yüeh was ruled by a Chinese oligarchy. For 28 years (234-206 B.C.), Ch'in armies and colonists totaling some half a million men, had campaigned and put down roots along the "central" axis as far as P'an-yu.⁸ When the empire of Ch'in collapsed, Nan-yüeh with its cadre of Ch'in leaders broke away from China's tutelage, and reconstituted itself as an independent state under the former Ch'in officer, Chao T'o. The only other kingdom that could boast of having Chinese generals and a Chinese administration was Tien. Almost a century (?) before Ch'in invaded Kwangsi, the state of Ch'u had sent a large expedition far down the Yangste. When Ch'u fell to Ch'in forces, this expedition found its ties to its home country severed; like Nan-yüeh, Tien then converted itself from being a Chinese colony to being a state in its own right.⁹

The size of the armies of the southern kingdoms is virtually unknown. We do know these two things however: in 135 B.C., a Han envoy reported the size of the army of Yeh-lang as numbering more than 100,000 troops;¹⁰ and circa 110 B.C., it is said that the king of Tien possessed 20 or 30,000 soldiers.¹¹ From this, it is probably fair to say that any army of four of the five major southern powers,

Ch'ing-tu, Tien, Yeh-lang, and Min-yüeh was comparable in strength to the army of a southern Han client state or commandery. Nan-yüeh must have been somewhat stronger still. Certainly of all the southern powers it could draw on the largest manpower pool, controlling as it did the two major rice basins in the southeast Asia of that time, the basins of the "Canton" and Haiphong Deltas.

The great strength of the southern barbarian armies must have been river piracy and petty transborder raiding. It seems likely that light infantry was their principal arm. While such a force must have enjoyed great tactical and even operational level mobility, its strategic mobility must have been lacking: without the vast horse armies of the nomads of the north its speed of movement could not have been great; moreover, economies that were predominantly slash and burn could hardly have supplied long range penetrations. Only by receiving logistical assistance from rebel Han client states could southern foot barbarian armies have seriously threatened imperial territory (such assistance was proffered in 154 B.C. by the kingdom of Wu¹²). It is also quite probably that the weaponry of southern barbarian armies was inferior to the weaponry of Chinese forces: southern states were always quite anxious to trade for Chinese iron.¹³

This then was the threat posed by the southern barbarian kingdoms, divided, short ranged, mostly of low-intensity, and of little staying power. Throughout almost the entire first 70 years of the Dynasty's existence, the sources report no fighting along Han's southern border, although it is hard to believe that Han's southern governors and client kings were not bothered by endemic skirmishing. The one great mobilization of southern barbarian power came towards the end of Empress Lü's reign and the first few

years of Han Wen-ti's.

Ever since the collapse of Ch'in and the reorganization of the Ch'in colonies of Nan-hai (Southern Sea), Kuei-lin (Cassia Forest) and Hsiang (Elephant) as the state of Nan-yüeh, the king of Nan-yüeh, Chao T'o, had encroached bit by bit on the kingdom of Ou-lo, occupying what is North Vietnam on the map today. Circa 183 B.C., this invasion of Ou-lo seemed to be gathering speed, which, in turn, sowed concern at the court of Empress Lü that the equilibrium then prevailing in the southern theater would be overturned. Han's initial response was to embargo all trade with Nan-yüeh. It was hoped that this would stun Chao T'o into passivity. It had the opposite effect. Chao T'o now turned his victorious forces on the empire. Known as "Commandant T'o" in the Han bureaucracy, Chao T'o now styled himself the Emperor of China¹⁴, and launched a propaganda campaign in neighboring Ch'ang-sha. Therein the powerful Chuang chieftains of Ling-nan joined his cause.¹⁵ Two years later (181 B.C.), after his fifth columnists had softened resistance, the armies of Chao T'o invaded Ch'ang-sha, doing harm to several border towns.¹⁶

China was now embroiled in a major war in the far south. Imperial forces were soon dispatched to the mountains of southern Ch'ang-sha.¹⁷ Either they had been instructed to remain on the defensive, or else their commissariat was not up to the harsh conditions of the south: the empire's field army never crossed over into enemy territory.¹⁸ For the next two years, stalemate reigned along the Ch'ang-sha/Nan-yueh frontier, although forces of Nan-Yueh did attack Ch'ang-sha from time to time. Then, the year 179 B.C. ushered in a new Chinese emperor (Wen-ti), and a new Chinese strategy--or rather reversion to the old one

(see below). For four years, Empress Lu had put her trust in force of arms to no avail. Her successor returned to the diplomatic approach, and diplomacy won. The object of a remarkable display of courtesy and conciliation, Chao T'o called off his war on China and renounced his title of emperor. The fact that his persistent attempts to win converts within China had all failed (he did succeed in making nominal vassals out of Min-Yueh, Western Ou and Lo-lo¹⁹) must have played a not insignificant part in turning Chao T'o back to peace, a peace not to be broken for another half a century.

The theater strategy that contained so well the foot barbarians of the south throughout almost all the formative years of the Dynasty was similar, in its essential features, to the theater strategy that contained the nomads of the north. So too then in the south, at the political and military level, disengagement was the predominant operative concept. Once more, theater strategy derived from grand strategy, a grand strategy shaped, above all, by the requirements of offensive maneuver among the feudal lords of the East.

From the very founding of the empire, every effort was made to minimize friction in the south, and to forge alliances where broad contacts were inevitable. Thus in the southwest where topography precluded passage of all but the most determined armies, the empire did nothing to disturb the tranquillity and isolation of its neighbors. In fact, it would not be until 135 B.C. that an imperial mission would wake the southwest from its diplomatic slumber.²⁰ Meanwhile, in the southeast where transborder contacts were more feasible, a mild appeasement was the order of the day. When Han's first envoy (Lu Chia) to the court of Chao T'o,

was met with impertinence on the part of Chao T'o,²¹ the insult to imperial might was ignored, and the empire proceeded with its plan to award "honorary vassal status" (and presumably favorable trade terms) on Nan-yueh, a plan which came true in 196 B.C.²² Min-yüeh (and Eastern Ou?) received their "honorary" status four years later at the hands of the new emperor, Hui, and Nan-yüeh's honorary vassal status was reconfirmed.²³

Of all Han's moves on the southern diplomatic chessboard, none rival's the scope of Han Wen-ti's successful attempt to woo Chao T'o back into quiescence in 179 B.C. It helped immeasurably that Wen-ti selected for the task, the former envoy, and original architect of southern appeasement, Lu Chia. On top of that, all of Chao T'o's relatives who could be found in China were "summoned and honored;" moreover, tombs were erected to the memory of Chao T'o's ancestors. Finally, as the crowning gesture of reconciliation, the emperor honored Chao T'o with an elegant and ingratiating letter, a letter famous in Chinese annals.²⁴ The SC says that Wen-ti "enveloped" Chao T'o in his "goodness:" the standard Confucian formula for winning the peace.²⁵ In reality, however, this acquiescence to external pressure, like all of Han's other submissions in the south, sprang from a different motive--the motive of power. Just as it was essential to free imperial forces from commitments along the steppe frontier, so was it essential to free them from commitments in the swamps and mountains of the south. Imperial troops that were pinned down policing Han's southern frontier, were forces unavailable for eastern armed suasion, and fighting.

The paramount needs of Han's eastern offensive duly found their expression at the military level also. Thus all

imperial forces were confined to the west of the southern theater, while the responsibility for immediate border defense was split between commandery governors in the southwest and client kings in the southeast. Once more, this arrangement meant that the imperial core was kept back from the theater's primary threat; client kingdoms were interposed between the imperial core and the most serious threats in the theater. Once more, nothing was done to interfere with the fiction that an historic compromise prevailed between centralized and feudal authority.

At the operational level, the ultimate backstop of the southern frontier, the backstop provided by the central field army of the empire, was held well to the rear, just the situation that prevailed in the north.²⁶ It is doubtful, however, if this was done out of fear of the potency of southern armies: instead the operative fear here must have been the climate. Anything that would save the mainstay of the empire's army from the damp and malaria ridden conditions of the south would help. The deep rear-ward deployment of the imperial army did not have the same consequence as it had for the northern theater: not so much an elastic defense, as a defense-in-depth must have prevailed in the southern theater. Southern armies simply lacked the mobility to exploit the imperial army's remote deployment.

Sector level is the one level where there was a formal difference between southern and northern theater strategies: the south lacked a Great Wall. This does not mean however, that the southern perimeter was wholly denude of border defenses. Mention is made of scattered perimeter defenses in the southwest,²⁷ more than likely, a porous perimeter defense existed in the southeast, porous only in the sense

that it was not continuous. Likely crossing points were most probably covered by watchtowers and fortlets.

Thus the empire's frontier policy in the south was similar to its policy in the north. Border defense was strong at sector level, weak at operational level, stronger in the commandery of the West than in the client state East at theater level and conciliatory (though not to the same degree) at the political level. As in the north, so too in the south, frontier policy derived from internal policy and the dominant agenda of internal, empire-wide consolidation. Moreover, in imitation of northern policy, southern policy was founded upon moral authority and aimed to avoid the barbarians strength. Once more maneuver principles prevailed.

FOOTNOTES

Southern Threat, Strategy of South Frontier Defense, and
Honorary Vassal States
Text: pp. 330-340

1. For the southwestern states see SC 116 (Watson, Records, Vol. II, p. 291); for the origin of Nan-Yüeh, sometimes called Southern Yüeh, see Ibid., SC 113 (pp. 239-242); and for the southeastern states see Ibid., SC 114 (p. 251).
2. Ibid., SC 116 (p. 290).
3. Herold J. Wiens, Han Chinese Expansion in South China, (U.S.A.: The Shoe String Press, Inc., 1967), pp. 29-54.
4. Ibid., pp. 95 and 113.
5. Ibid., pp. 131 and 335.
6. Yü Ying-shih, Trade and Expansion in Han China, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), pp. 111-117.
7. Op. cit., pp. 121-122; see same for subsidiary routes.
8. Ibid., pp. 132-133 for a summary of all Ch'in military operations in the south, ground and river.
9. Ibid., pp. 145-146.
10. SC 116 (Watson, Records, Vol. II, p. 291).
11. Ibid., SC 116 (p. 295). Also in 180 B.C., a small imperial task force (about 30,000 men?), under the command of Chou Tsao, reinforced local forces of unknown size belonging to the kingdom of Ch'ang-sha. The combined force was able to repel a determined assault from Nan-Yüeh. HS 3: 5a (Dubs, HFHD, Vol. I, p. 200).
12. SC 106 (Watson, Records, Vol. I, p. 473)
13. Yü Ying-shih, Trade and Expansion in Han China, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), pp. 119-120.
14. HS 3: 4a (Dubs, HFHD, Vol. I, p. 198), and footnote #3 for "Commandant T'o," p. 198.

15. Herold J. Wiens, Han Chinese Expansion in South China, (U.S.A.: The Shoe String Press, Inc., 1967), p. 135.
16. HS 3: 5a (Dubs, HFHD, Vol. I, p. 200) and Wiens, op. cit., p. 135.
17. HS 3: 5a op. cit., (p. 200).
18. Dubs believes that the latter explanation applies. (Dubs, HFHD, Vol. I, p. 168).
19. SC 113 (Watson, Records, Vol. II, p. 241)
20. The mission was led by T'ang Meng. SC 116 (Watson, Records, Vol. II, pp. 291-292)
21. The king of Nan-yüeh demanded to know of Lu Chia, who's kingdom was the stronger, his or Kao-ti's? Herold J. Wiens, Han Chinese Expansion in South China, (U.S.A.: The Shoe String Press, Inc., 1967). p. 136.
22. HS 1B: 19a (Dubs, HFHD, Vol. I, pp. 133-134).
23. Han Hui-ti "appointed" Tsou Yao king of Min-yüeh. Tsou Yao had served with distinction during the civil war against Hsiang Yü. Ibid. HS 2: 5a (p. 181). On Chao T'o's renewal of allegiance, see Ibid., HS 2: 4b and footnote #2 (p. 181).
24. Ibid., HS 1B: 19b (pp. 135-136).
25. Ibid., HS 4: 21b (p. 273).
26. I base this conclusion on the fact that Ch'ang-sha was reinforced during the Nan-Yüeh war by imperial forces brought from Ch'ang-an. Ibid., HS 3: 5a (p. 200).
27. SC 116 (Watson, Records, Vol. II, p. 291).

Chapter Seventeen

Defense of the Frontiers

CONCLUSION

The supreme benefit of Han's frontier policy was that only one large central army need be standing in all the empire where otherwise three were needed (one to watch the northern frontiers, one to watch the southern frontiers, and one to watch the eastern frontiers). There was this price to pay however: the empire could hardly restrain the barbarians, especially the nomads, from unifying: but, by time the barbarians, actually the nomads, did unify (c. 175 B.C.), the face of China itself was set towards unity: and within four more decades, China's unity was all but fact, and the power was at hand to roll back the barbarian.

Once more reliance upon the maneuver approach had showered Han with tremendous benefits, and put it through the gauntlet of manageable risks. In this case, the strength of the enemy, the strength of the barbarian, had been avoided, in part, by means of diplomacy. The empire placed no claims upon barbarian property; sought alliances not war; comforted the barbarian with the pleasant thought that along its China flank there need be no fear of attack. In the event that the barbarian attacked China, the strength of the enemy was avoided this way: the enemy was denied the privilege of a decisive military battle and forced to fight a political battle instead. The central field army of the empire, the one and the same that guarded the native east as

well as the north and south, did not engage barbarian invaders until they had spent themselves in the act of pillaging; if the barbarians were to overthrow the empire's grip upon the border provinces, they could only do so by enlisting native Chinese support.

The act of diplomatic deflection, and more so the porous defense which the empire threw up in the face of the barbarian, demanded pecuniary reinforcement, lest the barbarian distrust the empire's peaceful gestures, or grow unduly contemptful of its defenses. This pecuniary reinforcement was provided in the way of an ever mounting policy of appeasement and the dispensation of subsidies (ho'ch'in). On top of that, the empire made recourse to deception. It struck the pose of a civilization united, and invulnerable to easy exploitation, when, in fact, there was much to still unite. The reality of the great wall in the north did much to help on this score, where the nomadic threat was concerned: deft management of the border provinces, especially the border client kingdoms, was very helpful too.

The crux of Han's frontier policy was this: the central governments exposed central position vis-a-vis the local interests of the east and the powerful barbarian interests of the north and south, was converted into a relatively invulnerable peripheral position by allying with the barbarians. Then by subordinating the needs of frontier defense to the needs of internal security, and by deploying its field armies in a central, interior position, the empire generated the surplus of forces it needed to mount an offensive in the east.

PART FOUR

THE ARMY OF THE EMPIRE

(202-133 B.C.)

Chapter Eighteen

TACTICAL ORGANIZATION OF THE ARMY

THE ALL-PURPOSE FORCE

Wholesale changes must have been made in the tactical organization of the Han army after the civil war. By then the army of the empire became a complex force comprising a wide variety of formations. Preserved information about the army is not the best; none the less, enough is known to say with confidence that its nucleus comprised heavy infantry in very large numbers; that this nucleus was supported by horse mounted soldiers, light infantry, war chariots and river sailors in substantial numbers; and that in addition to these mobile elements, static infantry forces were also deployed in small numbers. As such, it must have incorporated just about all the military innovations of the Warring State period of China, the first period of sophisticated development of the Chinese art of war.¹

The precise organization of the nucleus of the early imperial army cannot be said with confidence. It should be safe to say, however, that the organization of the nucleus did not resemble the main unit of the Ch'in army, or the main unit of the typical army of the Warring State Period, circa 600 B.C. The one was organized around light cavalry,² the other around the chariot as a shock wagon. Not until the beginning of the wars against the Hsiung-nu, circa 130 B.C., would light cavalry become the staple of the imperial army.³ Never during all the days of the empire

would the chariot regain the central role it enjoyed between circa 700 and 400 B.C.⁴

If the main formation of the imperial army was not organized around light cavalry or the shock chariot, two other possibilities emerge. Either the empire reverted to the typical formation of the feudal states of central China, early Warring State Period;⁵ or it fielded a hybrid formation. The former formation would revolve around heavy infantry, and would employ chariots as scout cars and command vehicles. The latter formation might also feature heavy infantry, and use chariots as command and scout vehicles for its officers; but it would include this feature too--special echelons organized around the chariot as shock wagon. I am inclined to believe that the latter formation was the formation used. Use of the former formation would indicate a regression in Han military thought; moreover there were ways in which the chariot could contribute as a shock weapon on the battlefield of the second century B.C. See below.

Here is the traditional model of a main battle formation. Sun Tzu, the fourth century B.C. strategist, tells how to form a main army that is complex yet unbalanced--a combined arms team of chariots and infantry, which includes its own commissariat.

Place one hundred men in a "heavy" company. Make sure there are three fighters for ever baggage man. Assign to each "heavy" company one "heavy" combat chariot which is drawn by four horses and crewed by three mailed officers, a driver, spearsman and archer. Support this "heavy" chariot with seventy-two mailed footmen who are armed with composite reflex bows, crossbows, swords or thrusting spears. Also

assign to this "heavy" company, one baggage unit. Limit this baggage unit to one leather covered wagon which is drawn by four horses and attended by twenty-five men (most walk). Attach to some, but not all, of these "heavy" companies, a "light" company. Deploy in each "light company," one "light" or "scout" chariot which is drawn by three horses and crewed by two officers. Reinforce this lighter chariot team with light infantry who do not wear armored shirts. Now gather one thousand "heavy" companies into an army (how many "light" companies?), so that one hundred thousands of soldiers fill its ranks.⁶

On at least one occasion, if the sources can be believed, the empire fielded an army that matched Sun Tzu's chariot to infantry ratio. In 166 B.C., one thousand chariots and one hundred thousands of soldiers were called up to form a single army, and were deployed to repel an Hsiung-nu invasion of the metropolitan West.⁷ Modern commentators find such ratios dubious, however. Better to believe the chariot to infantry ratio to be in the neighborhood of one to five, or one to ten.⁸ As far as the ratio of one to a hundred reported in the annals for the campaign of 166 B.C., that can be attributed to the Chinese habit of rounding and exaggerating figures.

So much for reckoning the exact composition of the nucleus of the early imperial army. Whatever that exact composition, the early army, like many an army of the Warring State Period, included many accomplished combat engineers and included, too, a most useful mass labor base for menial construction and demolition tasks. The empire's habit of assigning top civilians to ad hoc military commands undoubtedly insured the rotation of some of China's foremost civil engineers through the ranks of the army.⁹ Moreover,

the imperial army's heavy reliance upon fortifications, and its impressive offensive siege capacity underscores its engineering talents.¹⁰ Then too, there are numerous accounts of campaigns during which Chinese field armies routinely built roads and walls in the forward zone of operations.¹¹

While it is apparent, then, that the Chinese were masters of the science of military engineering, and made sure to have their best engineer minds in command of siege operations, it is unclear who precisely did the unpleasant work--actually digging trenches and sapping walls. To be sure, menial engineering duties (like most logistics duties) which had to be performed behind the battle zone were typically relegated to state (civilian) labor details.¹² But, in the battle zone itself, we cannot be sure who exactly did what. In this regard, at least as early as the fourth century B.C., a Chinese infantry army on the march routinely built fortified camps that resembled "a Chinese city: a square enclosed by tamped earth walls surrounded by a moat," and intersected within by a temporary network of roads.¹³ Perhaps, then, like their contemporaries in the Roman legions, the foot contingent of the Han army chariot/infantry core had a dual function, doubling as infantry and sappers. This seems all the more likely with certain deployments. There is ample evidence that prisoners and, particularly, convicts were assigned to field forces in large numbers, and it was they who did the unpleasant chores around the camp, digging latrines and ditches and laying out walls and quick access roads. They may have even shared in the immediate dangers of a siege, going in with the first echelon of sappers as "cannon fodder," or perhaps as minimally trained sappers themselves.¹⁴ On top of that, they often fought in the open field.¹⁵

This then was the mainstay of the army of the empire during the formative years of the empire's consolidation (202-130 B.C.). As such, this mainstay was poorly suited for "low-intensity" warfare: engagement of light and agile enemy forces deployed in open order was not the mainstay's forte. Instead the mainstay was suited to wage "high intensity" warfare--to engage highly concentrated enemy formations either in the open field or behind walls. That the infantry element of the main formation would do well in siege warfare and set piece battles is obvious enough. If the chariot was used in a shock role, the suitability of the chariot for fighting dense formations in the open field will take some explaining.

If pressed for his opinion, at least one modern commentator would surely criticize Han if it did use chariots as a shock wagon. With the widespread deployment of the crossbow, the chariot, the centerpiece of the heavy formation of early times, should have been put out of business.¹⁶ Never of value in rugged terrain, its use should have been totally eclipsed in flat terrain also. First encountered, this argument is compelling: previously, before the advent of the pulley drawn bolt action weapon, infantry were mainly armed with swords and pikes, which were only useful for point blank combat. Some infantry had slingshots, spears, and bows for combat at a distance. Slingshots and spears had only short range, suspect accuracy and modest penetrating power. Bows were better, but how many were on hand? Under these earlier conditions, the shock power of the chariot reigned supreme in the open field. But, with the introduction of a weapon capable of firing a metal tipped rod with tremendous force along a flat trajectory several hundred yards long, the infantry of China now possessed a lethal instrument of great accuracy which

could enable them to engage a charge of chariots at very long range.

The truth is that, for intense warfare in flat terrain, the crossbow extended the life of the chariot, it did not end it, although admittedly the chariot was now an ancillary, no more a primary weapons system. True enough, a chariot charge could be defeated by a disciplined band of infantry armed with crossbows. However, when fighting on level terrain in the open field and when up against a disorganized mass of foot, whether it was a barbarian rabble, or an otherwise well drilled formation suddenly confused, a chariot corps could still press home a charge with telling effect. Still very much capable of this latter function, the chariot could combine with infantry, now armed with crossbows, and forge a very effective combat team against even an enemy infantry army likewise equipped with that lethal hand held weapon (the armies of eastern vassal kingdoms were so equipped); Han infantry would soften up the enemy with missile fire, then the chariots would deliver the final blow.¹⁷ Against an enemy army not equipped with the crossbow in significant numbers, the chariot could do more than simply finish off a disrupted opponent, it made possible, under the right terrain the execution of that classic tactic of fire and shock whereby the threatened charge of a heavy force compels the adversary to remain concentrated in order to be able to ward off the blow, thus presenting an easy target for missile attack.¹⁸

Not a relic then of misplaced pride in an antiquated weapon system, the chariot/infantry company could still serve a purpose. Any officer who commanded such a force could conduct two fisted maneuver in "high-intensity" warfare: he had one fist that could engage, and another that

could outflank. Moreover, the provision of a sophisticated sapper team in the basic imperial formation extended the commander's flexibility further: he could also conduct two fisted maneuver over a fortified landscape that included walled cities, watchtowers and redoubts: he could mix siege warfare with open field warfare.

The relevance of the chariot/crossbow combined arms concept might have even gone beyond the issue of imperial prowess and tactical flexibility on the field of battle. Keeping that concept would make it possible to lessen the demands on the Chinese populace. For here would have been an elegant technical fix to a demanding tactical requirement, a fix that could have had far-reaching benefits for Chinese society.

The chariot/infantry formation could have provided a formidable mix of fire and shock, a mix which would have enabled the imperial army to wage high intensity warfare in two phases, the first at a distance, and the second--under radically altered circumstances--up close. The other way was to provide this "high intensity" warfare capability by fighting exclusively on foot and up close. Such, for example, was the other way of the Roman legions. This other way required extraordinary training, however. Many years of drill and exercise were needed to master the intricacies of sword and pike play in a mass formation. The way of the Han imperial army did not require such extraordinary training. The coordinated use of the chariot and crossbow could be mastered relatively quickly.

In the jargon of modern economic analysis, the chariot/infantry formation was "capital-intensive." This attribute had profound consequences. Thanks to this

capital-intensive instrument for "high-intensity" warfare, early Han could, to an important degree, avoid the domestic misery of militaristic ways. There was no need to field a large professional army of indefinite standing; instead, conscription could be the order of the day followed by short stints in the ranks. Upon reaching their 23rd birthday, all males, save those who deserved exemptions or who had bought them, trained in arms for one year in their home provinces. In the next year they were reassigned, and joined hands with garrison troops or forces in the field. After that, they returned to their homes, and were redesignated militia, and underwent annual training in the eighth month of each year up to the end of their 56th year.¹⁹ In this way, loyalty to the state was not to be supplanted by loyalty to officers; nor were the males of China to be ever unduly separated from home and farm. Like a modern democratic state which rotates its citizens through the ranks of its armed force at speed, yet suffers very little for it, thanks to the ingenious and deadly use made of machines of war, the Han Empire could, by pursuing its own peculiar logic, field a first class infantry army too, the tactical equal of any other in the ancient world. In yet another important way, Han could distance itself from the disharmonious military policy of Ch'in, and could bring the sovereign and people closer together.

In several crucial ways, the order of battle of the empire's army did deviate from the typical order of battle of the Warring State Period. First of all, the empire added a river flotilla to go along with its land forces, and some of its conscripts became "Sailors in Towered Warships."²⁰ The numbers of sailors and warships can only be guessed at. What is more, it seems that the empire also deployed light infantry in dedicated divisions. For example, reference is

made to the deployment of light infantry by the commanderies of Shu and Pa.²¹ Conditioned to fight in loose order, and armed with the crossbow, such formations must have been a natural source of expert marksmen. In 61 B.C., we hear for the first time, of a special marksmen unit called, "Volunteer Expert Marksmen." Surely units of this stripe were in existence long before that time.

The most important deviation from the typical order of battle of the Warring State Period, was the deployment of the large cavalry corps. In making this deployment, the empire took its cue from the practice of Ch'in. The specialized chariot/infantry army of the Warring State Period owed its inspiration to the limited wars of a much earlier age, wars which were fought at the center of the old feudal world where the nobility supplied the chariots, the principal arm of the king, and the peasantry supplied infantry contingents of varying size yet of universally dubious quality.²² But the state of Ch'in lay at the northwestern corner of China, and so had to adapt to an altogether different kind of war, the war of the mounted nomadic archer; an army with a large mix of cavalry was the result.²³ The organization of Ch'in cavalry is unknown to us, which is unfortunate since the organization of early Han cavalry is likewise a mystery. We do know, however, that Han cavalry was not organic to the basic chariot/infantry company: all mounted forces were instead attached to army headquarters, and it was not unusual for major cavalry formations to operate independently of their slower comrades in arms. We are also in the dark about the total size of the Han cavalry arm. It seems that it was substantial, for instance, 85,000 horsemen were sent into battle in 177 B.C.²⁴ However, it certainly did not come anything close to the total size of the Ch'in mounted corps. (Cavalry was the

dominant arm in the Ch'in army.²⁵) Those forces that were deployed included unarmored and armored cavalry, and some were equipped with crossbows making them an early version of self-propelled artillery.

During the early years of the empire, Chinese cavalry was the inferior of their nomadic foe. In this regard, government policy to curb militarism no doubt contributed: in the realm of cavalry warfare, the Chinese lacked a technical fix to compensate for the poor quality of their training. Years of apprenticeship were required to master the skills of mounted archery; the nomads of Inner Asia universally made this commitment; the Chinese would not.²⁶ Neither use, for example, of the chariot nor of the crossbow could overcome Chinese inferiority in horsemanship and marksmanship. In a fleeting shoot out with nomadic forces, the chariot, in and of itself, was next to useless. In that context, where high speed maneuver and dispersal counted for so much, an elemental deployment of mounted troopers was called for, a deployment of light cavalry to be exact. To commit two or three men to a chariot was to immediately reduce the flexibility of Han's deployment of mobile firepower by that same factor, a flexibility further reduced by the cumbersome platform upon which these troops were mounted. (Such a commitment also squandered China's precious supply of horses.)

Meanwhile, with the crossbow, the Chinese did enjoy an advantage in range over the composite bow, standard issue for nomadic troops, but what they gained in range, they more than lost in accuracy when on the move and in rate of fire,²⁷ so much so that the composite bow must have been standard issue for Chinese archers on horseback.²⁸ Use of the stirrup might have helped the Chinese redress the

imbalance in marksmanship for a time; the available evidence implies that the nomads of East Asia, at least during the second century B.C., did not use the stirrup themselves;²⁹ but, even if early Han cavalry had used the stirrup (which we think they did not), the nomads would have quickly copied it and so would have regained their original advantage in marksmanship. (Eventually stirrups appeared in leather, wood, and metal. The Chinese could have made them out of any of these three materials. The nomads could only have made them out of leather in large numbers, their source of wood and metal being so scarce, but that would have sufficed.)

Compounding China's problems with its cavalry was the fact that the type of horse it had available was not well suited for steppe combat. The short legged, long necked hardy horse common to Inner Asian armies was difficult to come by in China; the care a horse traditionally received in a sedentary as opposed to a pastoral economy was worlds apart, and from that difference emerged two quite different breeds.³⁰ A sedentary people pampered their horses, the nomads not at all: one was accustomed to medical care, regular feedings and a warm shelter; the other was left unattended on the pasture all year round. A sedentary people bred their horses for docility and bulk, the better to perform arduous yet discreet chores on the farm, ably and without complaint; a pastoral people bred their horses for speed, sleekness, and sheer endurance, the better to propel a light load, a single rider, with great dexterity, over great distances, through all kinds of weather, to tend herd--or to raid one. Thus, for the nomad, the horse was an interchangeable vehicle for production, or for war. For the Chinese the horse was a more specialized instrument better suited for the former than the latter. Finally, not only

were Chinese horses less battle worthy than those belonging to their northern opponents, they were much fewer in number.³¹

In addition to fielding a large, balanced and diverse mobile army that was to fight in a wide variety of settings, the empire also fielded a smaller static force that was only to fight on the frontier borders. Unfortunately, we know next to nothing about the structure of the static units drawn from the commanderies. Apparently, they were envisioned to be military colonists, so it is quite likely that they were part farmers, part soldiers.³² As such, most, if not all of them would probably have been infantry, and, more than likely, they would have been organized into compact and variegated formations that mirrored their uneven patterns of settlement. Until at least 166 B.C., when their source of recruitment was criticized in the wake of the Hsiung-nu's most successful invasion up to that time, the static units drawn from the commanderies consisted almost exclusively of prisoners and convicts. During that year, it was proposed to the emperor that free men be substituted for those criminals and prisoners manning the northern ramparts, and it was also suggested that northern marchmen arm themselves like the Hsiung-nu and adopt their tactics, a clear plea for the deployment of a large force of light cavalry. By the reign of Han Wu-ti, some 40 years later, these recommendations were implemented, whether they were implemented in whole or in part before then we cannot be sure.³³

In the central field army of the core territories, then, a mobile force with a somewhat balanced structure had been shaped from the most reliable portion of the empire's armed forces; and this mobile force was complemented with

static perimeter garrisons. To be sure, this force, which was at the immediate disposal of Han's first few emperors, was most suited for high intensity warfare. To begin with, the destruction of a highly concentrated enemy force, whether that force was deployed in the open field or barricaded behind walls, was the forte of the core of the imperial army--the chariot/infantry force. Moreover, all elements of the imperial field army, not just chariot/infantry companies, could participate in high intensity combat in a significant way. In other words, the imperial cavalry corps, light infantry formations and the "Towered Warships," could be a most helpful adjunct. By making use of their moderately high strategic mobility, the empire's special forces could threaten the flanks of an enemy army, "rounding up" the opponent's troops and hastening their concentration, and so present the less mobile, but more potent chariot/infantry element of the imperial army with a more easily definable target against which to deliver a massive dose of firepower and shock. In this way, Han special forces and the chariot/infantry formation could fight as a team at the operational level, somewhat like the way that the chariot and heavy infantry fought as a team at the tactical level. In a different vein, Han special forces could interdict the lines of communication of an enemy army, and so reduce its combat effectiveness before the start of the decisive battle waged by imperial chariots and infantry. As at the tactical level, so at the operational level, the field army of the empire in full array had the tools to conduct flexible, two fisted maneuver.

Still, elements of the field army of the West could also give a good accounting of itself in low intensity combat. It was the very inclusion of cavalry in substantial

numbers in the field armies of the imperial West which also provided the empire with a moderately efficient means of waging low intensity warfare against one of the two principal unconventional foes confronting the empire, the mounted tribesmen of the north steppe. Against the elusive nomadic armies of rural Inner Asia, dispersal and agile missile fire were the critical ingredients for military success; these ingredients the cavalry of the empire provided to a significant degree. Against the other unconventional foe that posed an important, albeit low grade challenge--the foot tribes of south China--dispersal and agile missile fire were again critical inputs, but, in this case, because the theater of war was densely vegetated and mountainous, and at the cross-roads of many lakes and rivers, light infantry and naval junks were the primary battle groups.

Since the central field army of the commanderies of the West was a broadly diversified force, elements of which were capable of fighting most anywhere, it followed that the remaining elements of the armed forces of the empire, forces of the client states and tribes, were additive, not complimentary, to commandery military power.³⁴ As in the army of the empire, so in the armies of the eastern client states, the chariot/infantry formation was the staple formation. Cavalry, which must have been the only combat element of the client nomadic tribes of the northwest, and which was an important combat element in the army of the client states of Tai and Yen, could easily be matched in numbers and probably in quality by the mounted troops of the imperial core.³⁵ Even the tropic conditioned light infantry of the client states of Wu, Huai-nan and Ch'ang-sha found their match in the special light forces of the commanderies of Wu-ling, Nan-chun, Pa-chun, Kuang-Han and Shu-chun. Thus

the tactical organizations of the client state armies had organizational counterparts in the imperial field army of the West.

It was, in fact, terribly important that the imperial army could fight most any opponent. The territory of the commanderies was exposed to attack by all manner of opponents, and client state armies, with their own peculiar capabilities, were often not in a position to help repel these attacks. Small tribal states that lay west and southwest of the commanderies of the West were adept at light infantry guerrilla warfare. Thus, the light forces of Han's southern regional client states Ch'ang-sha, Huai-nan and Wu could not have been interposed in time to protect the underbelly of the empire against raids on the march that originated from points west of Nan-Yueh. Likewise, the Hsiung-nu Confederacy could bypass the client state armies of the East when assaulting the imperial core in the north. Han's client nomadic tribes in the northwest, such as they were, commanded the only client cavalry which could be interposed to protect the metropolitan area, making it necessary that the emperor have at his immediate disposal, as he did have, a sizable body of imperial cavalry.

It was also inevitable that the organization of the imperial army and the client state armies did overlap. Han Kao-ti's political division of the empire into direct and indirect control bisected Chinese society which, in turn, bisected the heirs of China's military tradition. This bisection had a profound consequence: the know-how and wherewithal needed to field the dominant military formation of the age was shared not only by the imperial core but by many of the client states also. The chariot/infantry unit which had given the Chinese "escalation dominance"³⁶ over

all other sedentary peoples for more than two centuries was, as a by-product of Han's grand eastern maneuver, in the possession not only of the commanderies that were reliable, but also of a large number of client states that were not.³⁷ A disciplined army of heavy chariots and heavy infantry, combined the necessary weaponry and organization to wage potent war in the very heart of the imperial system. If large enough, such an army could overturn the rulership of China in a single season.

The creation of an imperial order that, among other things, granted suspect citizens access to the chariot/infantry formation, the dominant military formation of the age, underscored some of the risk that early Han was willing to run in order to enhance its moral influence, and put in place maneuver offensives that were predicated on launching invasions with justifiable cause.

The risk that Han did run by granting the East access to the chariot/infantry combined arm was not total, however. A number of things were done to mitigate against this risk. First of all, the imperial regime did not go so far as to grant a large chariot/infantry army to individual vassal states.³⁸ At least several client kingdoms would have to combine, in unlawful union, to achieve that.

Second, the division of eastern China into a handful of states reduced not only the size of individual armies, but also their versatility. Several client states might indeed manage to organize their armies into a large chariot/infantry force, but their unlawful league would have to be of exceptionally broad membership if they were to include those vassal kingdoms which could provide cavalry and light infantry in sufficient numbers to match the

unorthodox formations of the central government. The consequence of failure to spread the fire of rebellion far enough so as to assemble a combined arms team was well illustrated by the experience of the rebellious Seven Kingdoms (154 B.C.). Although the leaders of the revolt possessed many chariots and heavy infantry and some light infantry too, their failure to enlist the cavalry corps of Tai and Yen left them fatally vulnerable to the strategic maneuver of the empire's horse.³⁹

The relatively balanced tactical organization of the commandery field army served then not just to defend the imperial core against a wide range of barbarian threats. It also had, in part, the latent function of deterring unwanted client state rebellion: it was understood that the empire could strike back at a rebellion in all possible ways; whereas, a rebel party, unless it enjoyed unusually wide support, could not respond with equal flexibility. At the same time, the relatively balanced tactical organization of the army of empire gave the empire--barring the break-out of an unusually comprehensive eastern rebellion--the tactical initiative in those cases in which rebellion did occur; and if higher level strategy was doing its work, almost all of these rebellions would be anticipated and welcomed.

Although the commanderies of the West alone, or in conjunction with client state assistance, could field relatively balanced, multi-purpose forces combining chariots, cavalry, and infantry, the Han army still was at its best in warfare pushed to extremes: deep, methodical, majestic thrusts into enemy territory, in the wake of which newly constructed roads and newly laid out forts connected the forces in the van with the country left behind; major pitched battles against large armies tightly arrayed; and,

above all, the reduction of walled cities and the resolute defense of the same. As more and more soldiers crowded the battlefield, and as the trading of blows grew more and more intense, so did the tactical superiority of the empire grow apace (to paraphrase Luttwak's analysis of the performance of the Roman Army of the principate which also functioned best at high-intensity).⁴⁰

Luttwak's next insight about Roman military capabilities applies here as well, that "this tactical-structural factor" had implications at the strategic level of great significance: the Han army was clearly most suitable to use against enemies with "fixed assets to protect--primarily cities, but also arable lands, and such things as irrigation systems. Conversely, [Han] capabilities were less useful in fighting enemies whose assets or sources of strength were not fixed, or at any rate, not concentrated." It was all wrong for Chinese infantry to scale mountains, and cut paths through forest, jungle, and swamp to reach the primitive townships of the Man or Lo-lo tribes of the south, the real source of southern barbarian strength was rural and diffuse: even the loss of all their towns would not be a serious blow. Likewise, it made no sense for the Chinese to invade the steppes of Inner Mongolia, vast tracts of scrub and countless acres of grazing land might fall to Chinese soldiers, stray oxen and sheep might be netted too, but ultimately the real strength of nomadic society would relocate, for as long as necessary, in the even remoter wastes of Outer Mongolia.

It was the same for the alpine tribes of Tibet, the forest dwellers of Manchuria, and the lesser barbarian peoples round about China (save the Koreans). None could

resist the relentless advance of a major Chinese army; yet neither could the Chinese attack effectively the widely dispersed rural base of warrior nations whose life and whose strength did not depend upon the survival of a city-based economic and social structure. Consequently, if the Chinese hoped to retaliate for raids carried out in China, "the only alternative was a [most costly] war of extermination. In the absence of a settled pattern of life which the [Han] army could control and reorganize under [Han] rule, peace required that first a desert be made." Thus, for example, if the Han Empire wished to duplicate the feat of Ch'in's conquest of the south, such as it was, it too would have to hunt down and exterminate all those slash and burn farmers who lived there in the surrounding hills.

But let these very same barbarian tribes, whose rural homes lay out of the effective reach of the imperial army, invade part of China with the intent of keeping the land where they then stood, and suddenly the situation was wholly transformed. Then they would be as vulnerable to imperial arms as were those turncoat client kings who hoped to deny their city-based provinces from Heaven's claim. The army of the commanderies of the West had but to march towards a borough of China, and all who would deny its fixed assets to the emperor had either to fight at close quarters in full array, or else perish.

If this application of Luttwak's analysis makes sense in the context of Han military capabilities, then a "goodness of fit" emerges between the cost-effective limits of imperial operations and the chosen field of Han maneuver. Beyond the field of Han maneuver, in Mongolia, Tibet and what is today southern China, the "armed suasion" of Han military power dropped off dramatically. Within this field,

however, that is to say within the developed bounds of Chinese civilization, the empire could apply force most effectively in war, and all the included peoples knew this, granting the empire great coercive leverage in peace as well. This leverage could be turned towards the goal of separating one group of Chinese from another (whether that group was rebel or captured), and defeating each in detail. Beyond the field of maneuver, engagement would bog the imperial army down in endless campaigns of broad attrition: one clan or tribe could only be separated from another with great difficulty. Hence, in these regions, the empire sought to conciliate, to ally, to disengage.

Thus the early empire had fashioned a military instrument that mixed the attainment of competing goals. In part, that instrument helped deliver Han a draw with respect to surrounding barbarian powers--powers of secondary importance in Han's agenda of expansion. In part, that instrument, in all but extraordinary circumstance, gave Han the tactical initiative with respect to its eastern lords--Han's chosen victims of expansion. And, in part, that instrument was so shaped that it helped preserve Han's moral economy--the engine that pulled Han's maneuver expansion. In short, the tactical organization of Han's armed forces was properly derived from Han grand strategy.

FOOTNOTES

Tactical Organization of the Army
Text: pp. 343-365

1. The annals are full of references about all arms: chariot, cavalry, heavy infantry and "skilled soldiers"--light infantry, and crossbow marksmen.
2. John P. Greer, The Armies and Enemies of Ancient China: 1027 B.C.-1288 A.D., (USA: Wargame Research Group and Heritage Models. Inc., 1976), p. 13.
3. O. Franke, Geschichte des Chinesischen Reiches, Vol. I (Berlin: Verlag Von Walter de Gruyter & Co., 1930), pp. 332-333.
4. During this period, known as the early Spring and Autumn Period, states measured military power by the number of combat chariots, or shock chariots, they possessed. The great state of Chin boasted 4900 such chariots. Even a small state like Chu numbered 600 chariots. See Edward L. Shaughnessy, "Historical Perspectives on the Introduction of the Chariot into China," Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies, Vol. 48, Number 1, June 1988, pp. 226-231. Also see Cho-yun Hsu, Ancient China in Transition (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1965, pp. 65-68). Compare the number of chariots in a small army in the early Spring and Autumn Period to the greatest number of chariots which the empire of Han ever put in the field, e.g. 1000 chariots in 166 B.C.
5. The typical formation of the early Warring State Period would be represented by the formation of the Shang army. In that case, a three man chariot team would be supported by ten foot soldiers. The chariot would serve strictly as a mobile command post. Shaughnessy, Op. cit., p. 198.
6. Griffith, Art of War, p. 36 for weapons; and Sun Tzu II.1 (Griffith, Art of War, p. 72) for organization.
7. SC 110 (Watson, Records, Vol. II, p. 173).
8. Cho-yun Hsu, Ancient China in Transition (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1965, p. 66).
9. Michael Loewe, "The Campaigns of Han Wu-ti" in Chinese Ways in Warfare, eds. Frank A. Kierman, Jr. & John F. Fairbank (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1974), pp. 107-108.

10. Chavannes, MH, Vol. II, p. 368.
11. Liu Pang's operations against Hsiang Yu in 204 B.C. are a case in point. Liu Pang's army built a road bordered by walls to the Yong-yang river in order to be able to bring in grain safely to Ngao where his forces were encamped. So stout were Han's defenses that Liu Pang resisted all attacks upon his position for an entire year. Ibid., p. 368.
12. Michael Loewe, "The Campaigns of Han Wu-ti" in Chinese Ways in Warfare, eds. Frank A. Kierman, Jr. & John F. Fairbank (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1974), p. 79.
13. Griffith, Art of War, p. 37. For the tactical merits of the fortified marching camp see Edward N. Luttwak, Grand Strategy of the Roman Empire: From the First Century A.D. to the Third, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), pp. 55-57.
14. John P. Greer, The Armies and Enemies of Ancient China: 1027 B.C.-1288 A.D., (USA: Wargame Research Group and Heritage Models. Inc., 1976), p. 15.
15. A.F.P. Hulsewe, Remnants of Han Law (Leiden: E.J. Brill, Vol. I, 1955, pp. 102-103)
16. Griffith, Art of War, p. 36.
17. John P. Greer, The Armies and Enemies of Ancient China: 1027 B.C.-1288 A.D., (USA: Wargame Research Group and Heritage Models. Inc., 1976), p. 15.
18. Edward N. Luttwak, Grand Strategy of the Roman Empire: From the First Century A.D. to the Third, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), p. 43.
19. Hans Bielenstein, The Bureaucracy of Han Times (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1980), p. 114.
20. Ibid., p. 114.
21. HS 1B: 19b (Dubs, HFHD, Vol. I. p. 135)
22. Griffith, Art of War, p. 32.
23. John P. Greer, The Armies and Enemies of Ancient China: 1027 B.C.-1288 A.D., (USA: Wargame Research Group and Heritage Models. Inc., 1976), pp. 12-13
24. SC 110 (Watson, Records, Vol. II, p. 167).
25. John P. Greer, Op cit., p. 13.

26. Owen Lattimore, Inner Asian Frontiers of China, (Irvington-on-Hudson: Capital Publishing Co., 1951), p. 65 and Michael Loewe, "The Campaigns of Han Wu-ti" in Chinese Ways in Warfare, eds. Frank A. Kierman, Jr. & John F. Fairbank (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1974), p. 79.
27. Sir James Gow Mann, "Bow and Arrow," Encyclopedia Britannica (Chicago: William Benton, p. 1968), p. 30.
28. This is not to say that Han cavalymen did not use crossbows. For instance, it is said that one of Han's best border generals, Li Kuang, used "a huge yellow crossbow." SC 109 (Watson, Records, Vol. II, p. 148).
29. Otto J. Maenchen-Helfen The World of the Huns (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973), pp. 206-207.
30. Owen Lattimore, Inner Asian Frontiers of China, (Irvington-on-Hudson: Capital Publishing Co., 1951), p. 58.
31. Michael Loewe, "The Campaigns of Han Wu-ti" in Chinese Ways in Warfare, eds. Frank A. Kierman, Jr. & John F. Fairbank (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1974), pp. 79-80.
32. Border troops that were part farmers, part soldiers have been used by all armies since the beginning of recorded history. Today, the practice is continued by the Israeli army, among others. Note that in 166 B.C., it was suggested that free men should replace convicts as border colonists. O. Franke, Geschichte des Chinesischen Reiches, Vol. I (Berlin: Verlag Von Walter de Gruyter & Co., 1930), pp. 332-333.
33. Ibid., pp. 332-333.
34. For a classic continental empire like Rome's, client state forces are usually complementary. See Edward N. Luttwak, Grand Strategy of the Roman Empire: From the First Century A.D. to the Third, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), pp. 27 and 44 on the difference.
35. In theory, the skills of client nomadic light cavalry should have been superior to the skills of commandery light cavalry. However, the skills of those nomadic tribes which remained dependent should have eroded. Contact with "soft" civilization has that effect.
36. This term, common to 20th century deterrence theory, was probably first used in the context of ancient warfare by Luttwak. See Edward N. Luttwak, Grand Strategy of the Roman

Empire: From the First Century A.D. to the Third,
(Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), p. 45.

37. This term was coined in Ibid., p. 41.

38. This can be surmised in that the eastern kings did not appoint "Grand Commandants"--full generals of armies--as was the practice of the imperial government. Hans Bielenstein, The Bureaucracy of Han Times, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), p. 105.

39. We have seen that Chou Ya-fu, the Han general who was charged with the task of defeating the revolt of the seven kings, based much of his strategy on his superior mobility. Note too, that at least one commander on the rebel side recognized that superiority for the very real menace that it turned out to be. SC 106 (Watson, Records, Vol. I. pp. 478-479).

40. I have lifted the essence of this paragraph from Edward N. Luttwak, Grand Strategy of the Roman Empire: From the First Century A.D. to the Third, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), pp. 45-46, and the next two paragraphs as well.

Chapter Nineteen

STRATEGIC DEPLOYMENT OF FORCES

THE THREE-IN-ONE SECURITY SYSTEM

AND DEPLOYMENT ON INTERIOR LINES

Once civil war ended and Liu Pang emerged master of China, the Dynasty deployed its forces in a pattern which would remain basically the same until the end of the reign of Han Ching-ti. A mixed pattern was adopted, one in which strong garrisons were encamped in the metropolitan center of the commandery of the West, and all along the commandery perimeter. The one noteworthy exception to all this was the very gradual deployment of imperial garrisons at the fork between the Yellow and Huai Rivers in Honan.

The HS speaks of a "Northern" and a "Southern" Army being deployed in the neighborhood of the imperial capital.¹ Wu Jen-chieh, a 12th century commentator, gives a more precise accounting, that the Southern Army was the smaller of the two, only several thousand men strong; and that the Northern Army comprised as many as 30,000 troops before the reign of Han Wu Ti when presumably it was greatly expanded to support the latter's expansion policies.² The difference in the size of these two armies appears to have been a reflection of very different functions. The larger Northern Army was probably conceived to be a genuine central reserve,³ while the Southern Army was probably intended to defend the capital, and nothing more.⁴ Whatever their

actual functions, it is likely that both armies consisted almost exclusively of heavy infantry.⁵

The deployment of the "Northern" and "Southern" did not exhaust the full central deployment of imperial forces: a great number of chariot/infantry companies were apparently encamped within quick marching distance of Ch'ang-an. It was standard practice for "core" imperial forces, numbering as many as 100,000 infantry and 1000 chariots, to assemble in the metropolitan area before embarking on an expedition. Some of these forces were undoubtedly under the command of the Chief of the Cloud Rampart. This Chief's forces were based north of the Wei River in Tso-p'ing-yi commandery.⁶

While mainstay imperial forces were centrally located, Han special forces were positioned in a vast circle along the border commanderies. Cavalry and chariots (mostly light?) were deployed along a semi-circle to the north of Ch'ang-an along the southern fringe of the Mongolian steppe in the commanderies of Lung-Hsi, Pei-ti, Shang, and Ho-tung--the only major pasturage areas available in the west. During early Han, the maximum number of cavalry possibly approached 100,000.⁷ "Skilled soldiers" of unknown number were encamped south and southwest of Ch'ang-an, outside the territory "within the passes" in the commanderies of Shu and Pa, and surely also in Kuang-Han, Wu-ling and Nan.⁸ It is quite likely that these "skilled soldiers" consisted of light infantry as well as crossbow marksmen. If so, as in the case of the deployment of its mounted troops, the empire was again exploiting a region's peculiar disposition: in this case, the still warlike disposition of the foot peoples of the southwest, peoples closest to the core of the empire who had also just recently been absorbed by Chinese civilization.

Rounding out the perimeter deployment of imperial forces in the northwest, west and southwest were those static units which were actually emplaced along the borders. Most famous of these were the units that patrolled the Great Wall. The sources say nothing about their number, and little about their quality: convicts and exiles (at least until 166 B.C.) deployed as infantry.⁹ Surely though, their total number did not exceed 25,000.¹⁰ In addition to these forces, it is quite likely that border patrols were maintained along the western and southern borders of the commandery of the West (about 25,000 men also?). During the reign of Han Wu-ti, such patrols were apparently maintained, part of a porous version of the Great Wall defense.¹¹ It would be odd if such patrols were not maintained before then as well: the threat of border infiltration was constant throughout the Han period.

I have said nothing about the deployment of imperial troops along the great east/west commandery/client territory divide. Throughout early Han, all the passes leading into the metropolitan area were garrisoned, and, came under the respective commands of the Chief Commandants of Passes.¹² The strength of these garrisons at the Ching Gorge, Han-ku Pass and Wu Pass changed from time to time, (reduced by Han Wen-ti's court,¹³ expanded by Han Ching-ti's¹⁴), although by what numbers, we do not know. One group of forces along the great east/west divide must have been generally increasing in strength however, that would have included all those forces which were deployed east of the Han-ku Pass. From the very first days of the empire, the great fortified granary complex of Ao, Lo-yang and Jung-yang was occupied by imperial troops,¹⁵ and, gradually, over many decades, commandery territory and hence commandery billets spread northeast along the Yellow River and southeast along the

Huai River.

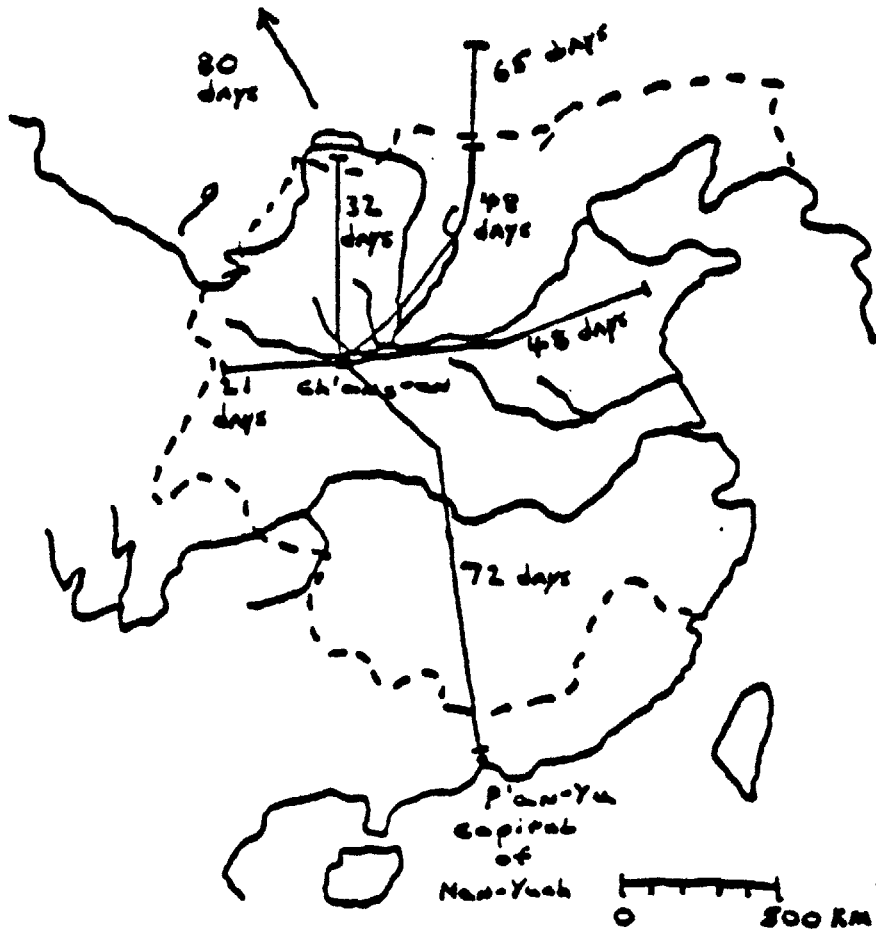
The billeting of imperial armies all to one side of China, and their peculiar perimeter/central deployment had profound implications. For one thing, it meant that most "endemic" and minor threats to empire, those kinds of threats that were mostly encountered to the northwest, west and southwest of China were to be met by imperial troops already deployed "on the line." At the same time, all "sporadic" and major threats to Han, those kinds of threats that were exclusively encountered to the northeast and southeast of China, and within the east of China, were to be met by small client state armies distantly backstopped by imperial. This arrangement, in itself, would prove insufficient for overall defense. Beginning in 177 B.C., this insufficiency grew still larger: imperial forces had to also contend with certain new "sporadic" threats in the northwest, and they had to do so without the aid of interposed client states armies.

For all that, the strategic deployment of imperial forces was correct, and means were at hand to compensate for Han's overall poverty of military power. As it turned out, the very early empire's defensive posture was secure (202-180 B.C.). But there was more. The gradual extension of imperial garrisons down the Yellow and Huai Rivers in conjunction with the original strategic deployment of imperial forces in the West, permitted the prosecution of a protracted, indirect diplomatic offensive against the client state East, an offensive which promised to redress Han's security dilemma in the long run. Owing to the peculiar deployment of imperial forces, Han preserved the empire-wide initiative. This deployment was consistent with maneuver grand strategy.

The alternative to the perimeter deployment of imperial forces in the northwest, west and southwest of China would have been to have concentrated these forces more in the center of the commandery of the West; in effect, to have constituted these forces into a central reserve. In one sense, however, these forces already constituted a central reserve, but it was a reserve deployed "on the line." These forces could and did participate in operations in the east of China, swinging, in fact, through Ch'ang-an while en route to do battle with northern nomads or eastern rebels (for instance, in 201, 196, 158 and 154 B.C.¹⁶). However to have based these forces more towards Ch'ang-an would have opened up imperial territory to direct attack from the opposite direction, from western tribes. In the time it might have taken a central reserve to reach any point along the western perimeter--approximately 21 days (see Map 29)--the invaders could have been long gone and the damage they might have wrought could have long been an accomplished fact. On top of that, the threat which these western tribes posed was endemic: there was no one or several rulers which Han could deal with, and deter; rather there were countless tiny kingdoms to keep away, hence countless contradictory policies to face up to. Only the permanent, or near permanent presence on the border of relatively strong imperial forces could keep the peace.

The alternative to the maintenance of a central reserve around Ch'ang-an would have been to have deployed forward the forces that made up this reserve. Had this been done, it would have been rational to reinforce the eastern arc of commandery territory, thus to have established an uniformly strong all round perimeter defense. This scheme would have undoubtedly failed for the very reason that forward deployment succeeded along the western arc. To have

Map 29
March Times From Ch'ang-an



deployed forward Han's centrally located central reserve to permanent stations in the east would have been to have splintered the might of this reserve with little appreciable benefit. The threats which the empire confronted in the east were of an altogether different magnitude than the magnitude of the threats confronted in the west. In the east, threats were posed by major powers, the Hsiung-nu, rebellious eastern client states or the southern tribes of Yueh. When one of these threats became manifest in full, it took a major commitment of imperial forces to defeat it. Had imperial forces been scattered all over the map, in northern Shensi, western Honan and eastern Szechuan, it would have been impossible to redeploy and reassemble adequate imperial troops in time to prevent a serious penetration of imperial territory. For example, it would have taken an imperial task force based at Lo-yang some 50 days to redeploy to northern Shensi via the Han-ku Pass. Yet nomadic forces could easily have traversed the kingdom of Tai and pushed on to Shang commandery in about 21 days.

By contrast, maintain in readiness a powerful central reserve at Ch'ang-an, as was actually done, and all the eastern approaches to commandery territory could have been adequately protected. One critical factor was that in the east, unlike in the west, there were sizable non-imperial Chinese forces, client forces, ready and able to absorb the first blows of enemy attack. Thus, in the event that the Hsiung-nu attacked from the northeast, or a client kingdom rebelled in the east or one of the tribes of the southern Yueh marched into China from the southeast, loyal client armies already deployed in harm's way could provide the time needed for powerful imperial forces to arrive from Ch'ang-an. The second critical factor was that the threats which the empire faced in the east were sporadic, not

endemic. The very fact that eastern dangers were major meant that major powers were behind them, and major powers tended to pose threats that had a beginning and an end. Hence, all other things being equal, Han's central reserve did not have to face more than one eastern threat at a time.

All other things are rarely equal. It was all very well for client armies to work in conjunction with imperial armies in order to shield commandery territory from attack, but how was client state territory to have been protected? By withholding more powerful imperial forces well back from the client East, it was impossible to complement client state defense with imperial defense within client state territory: yet loyal client state armies were incapable of protecting themselves against full blown invasion such as could be delivered by the Hsiung-nu, Nan-Yüeh or even another rebel client state. Direct imperial defense of the client East being forfeited by the strategic deployment of imperial troops, the empire had only two options open to it: either it could defend the client East indirectly, or it could mix indirect defense with a policy of disengagement or, more likely, appeasement.

Execution of the first option, relying exclusively upon indirect defense--deterrence through threatened retaliation in the wake of invasion--was unwise. To be sure, it was feasible to retaliate within the client East. In fact, it was done, many times; but the same could not have been said for retaliation against the Hsiung-nu or against Nan-Yüeh or Min-Yüeh. Warfare in the far south or remote north had its own unique logic, a logic alien to the Chinese armies of the time. What is more, the distances separating the billet area of the imperial central reserve from the southern barbarian and northern nomadic homelands was prohibitive: in

the time it would have taken imperial forces to campaign in Mongolia or in southeast Asia, client state forces could have marched into Ch'ang-an and back again. It was risky enough when imperial forces campaigned against barbarian invaders inside China--witness the rebellion of Chi-pei (177 B.C.) when imperial troops merely counterattacked in Tai kingdom and Shang commandery.

Under the circumstances, it was wise that Han adopted the policy that it did--indirect defense of the East and diplomatic deflection (appeasement) of the Hsiung-nu, Nan-Yüeh and Min-Yüeh. Moreover, in this way, if and when it came to appeasement, the powers that would have been appeased were the least threatening of the three groups in the east that posed major threats.

The overall policy which Han followed was not without its own peculiar risks. Always there was the risk of coordination of rebel eastern threats with eastern barbarian. Such coordination did happen in a minor way in 201 B.C., and came very close to happening in a major way (Hsiung-nu and major rebellion East) in 154 B.C. There was, however, a way to minimize this risk in the early years of the Dynasty (c. 202-180 B.C.), and Han made sure to follow it. Han made sure to rest its rule upon a moral foundation. That way it did not advertise weakness; instead it projected the image of a cohesive China. A brilliant deception, for this was a "cohesive" China that was too divided to project significant force beyond its borders.

Much more serious was the risk that Han's hegemonic security subsystem could have been turned from the hinterland. One or more barbarian powers could have grow more powerful and could have overrun more lands adjacent to

China. Since it was infeasible for Han to campaign beyond China, Han forfeited all initiative beyond China also. The outer powers, the Nan-Yüeh, and the Hsiung-nu, in particular, because of the ease of movement in the steppe, were free of Chinese interdiction: they could expand anywhere in barbarendom without Han being able to obstruct. In 177 B.C., with the all but total defeat of the Yueh-chih in Kansu, this nightmare became reality: the Hsiung-nu were now masters of all Mongolia, and stood astride Han's entire northern frontier. Henceforth, in addition to having to guard the northeast, east and southeast approaches to commandery territory against major, sporadic attack, the imperial army had to do the same for the northwestern approaches. And here, there were no appreciable client armies and client territories interposed.

In the face of this new threat, manifest for the first time with the invasion of the Ordos in 177 B.C., Han did not increase its imperial army nor did it alter the essence of its central strategic deployment, substantially reinforcing the northwestern perimeter. In other words, it did not confront the strength of the new threat. Instead, it outflanked this threat. In fact, it had begun to do so, from the very advent of the empire. From the very first, Han expanded its influence into the client east, "striking" the barbarian where he was weakest--inside China. Gradual commandery expansion along the Yellow and Huai rivers made this possible; that, and maintaining the original strategic deployment of forces in the West.

In and of itself, the original strategic deployment of imperial forces made possible the control of the east of China by indirect means. As long as the central reserve of the imperial army could traverse the Han-ku Pass before the

outer, eastern gates of Lo-yang had fallen into the hands of eastern rebels, it was always assured of being able to operate in the North China Plain, and if it could do that, it could be reasonably confident of beating back into submission the odd recalcitrant eastern kingdom. A certain risk was run, however, in the event of a broad theater rebellion. Should that happen, it would have been necessary, as it was necessary in 154 B.C., for Han special forces stationed along the western borders to redeploy "down the line," and to the east of the Passes, and so combine with the central reserve. But to affect a coordinated advance of virtually the entire central field army of the empire outside the Passes would have added appreciable time to the entire redeployment (perhaps another 21 days). In that time, a large rebel army might have gotten to the Han-ku Pass first, and sealed in the imperial army: the consequences of disconnecting communications between the metropole and those client kings still loyal to the regime in the East could not have boded well for empire-wide cohesion. Witness the importance which the king of Huai-nan placed on sealing the Passes during his plotting prior to the actual revolt of 122 B.C.¹⁷

In part, it must have been to minimize the risk of Han-ku Pass falling into the hands of rebel forces that Han gradually annexed territory east of the Passes and gradually deployed additional garrisons there. In that way, as the empire increased the pace of its subversion in the East, the disposability of the imperial army remained unimpaired-- although the probability of broad based revolt increased also; depth was interposed around the central passes.

Thus the strategic deployment of the imperial army made it possible for Han to avoid the strength of its enemies as

a whole, supported an empire-wide deception and facilitated the preservation of moral ascendancy. The deployment that accomplished all this was patterned, for the most part, on what was in effect a deep deployment on interior lines--the classic profile of an army poised for maneuver on all sides. Surely the strategic deployment of the imperial army derived from Han's grand strategy.

FOOTNOTES

Strategic Deployment of Forces
Text: pp. 370-381

1. HS 3: 7a (Dubs, HFHD, Vol. I, p. 206).
2. Ibid., footnote #4 on p. 206. Wu Jen-ching cites Chp. 23 (of the HS?), and HS (?) 19 A: 22b. The number of "encampments" of the Northern Army went from 5 before Wu Ti's time to 8 during his tenure. Dubs, HFHD, Vol. I, footnote #4 also, p. 207. Wang Hsien-ch'ien, a 19th century commentator cites HHS Tr. 27: 7b and p19A: 23a. The number of encampments was reduced to five again during Later Han.
3. Witness Wu Jen-chieh's statement: "... the military policy of the Han always stressed the Northern Army," and the fact that on at least one occasion, the annals do say that the Northern Army's took part in a long range expedition, in this case under Han Kao-ti. Dubs, HFHD, Vol. I, footnote #4, p. 206.
4. Wang Hsien-ch'ien believes that the Commandant of the [Palace] Guards who "had charge of the soldiers encamped as a guard to the palace gates" was, in fact, C-in-C of the Southern Army. Ibid., footnote #4, p. 207.
5. The Southern Army would have needed heavy infantry to guard the capital ramparts. And, on the basis of the information given about the composition of a task force (c. 196 B.C.), which included the Northern Army's participation, it would seem that the empire's central reserve counted China's traditional military arm in abundance. In that year, an ad hoc task force was formed, the "Imperial Heir-apparent's Guard," which consisted of chariots and cavalry drawn from three northern commanderies, "skilled soldiers" (light infantry and/or crack marksmen?) drawn from two others, and 30,000 "soldiers" under the "Palace Military Commander" (C-in-C Northern Army)--presumably heavy infantry--so as to round out a typical balanced task force. Ibid., HS 1B: 19b (p. 135).
6. Viz. the campaigns of 201, 177, 166, 158, 154 B.C. References for most of the respective strategic deployments have already been given elsewhere. See Chapter 8 on the nomadic threat. On the Chief of the Cloud Rampart, see Hans Bielenstein, The Bureaucracy of Han Times, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), pp. 115-116.

7. 85,000 soldiers were mobilized to repel a major Hsiung-nu incursion in 177 B.C. SC 10 (De Groot, Chinesische Urkunden, Erster Teil, pp. 74-75). At its peak,

Chapter Twenty

CONCLUSION OF THE WORK

The Grand Strategy of Han: An Evaluation

In 138 B.C., the empire of Han, then under the leadership of Han Wu-ti, the Martial Emperor, began a series of mighty invasions of neighboring lands that would stretch across the space of nearly 100 years (51 B.C.), and that would crown China master of all the known world "between the four seas." Han won either direct or indirect control over the steppe of Mongolia; the deserts and oases of Sinkiang and Zhungaria; the lowlands of eastern Tibet; the jungles of southeast Asia down to south Vietnam; and the mountains and forests of Manchuria south and Korea north. In the course of this expansion which was without precedent in time or scope, the health and the treasures of China which had been built up with such care would be utterly spent, and the empire conceived by the village clerk, Liu Pang, would be brought near to utter collapse. That the empire did finish the task of frontier pacification, and did not utterly collapse under the strain, a pacification matched in the ancient world only be the pacifications of Rome, can be attributed to the marvelous effect of the thoroughness and brilliance of early Han's conquest and consolidation of China. It is now time to reconsider how this unprecedented conquest and consolidation came about.

Manifest from the time Liu Pang rose to power in 209 B.C. down to the time when consolidation of empire was all

but done in 106 B.C., are the signs of a grand strategy. This grand strategy is based upon the shrewd coordinated adaptation of the supple method of maneuver to a variety of different settings. As such, this adaptation will comprise six different grand stratagems, or cleverly contrived schemes, each of which would gain comprehensive ends. The last three of these grand stratagems will feature the same frontier strategy, which will isolate successive victims (inside China), and which will inform the defense of two different theaters in north and south China from 202 to 133 B.C. The first three grand stratagems will feature three different, yet simple political deceptions, which will isolate intended victims in turn, and free the forces of Han for offensive action.

Each of the six grand stratagems will also comprise six different theater strategies which will inform six different attacks launched inside China. (The last three of these theater strategies will have priority over frontier strategy.) It is above all else these offensives, spanning the years 209 to 106 B.C., which will lead to the conquest and consolidation, hence formation, of the political state known as Former Han. The foremost propositions of this study are thus upheld.

The first three grand stratagems of early Han's grand strategy were conceived in the civil war (209-202 B.C.). These three respective adaptations of grand strategic maneuver are most visible in the sequence of main objects which are chosen for the first three offensives. Rather than make for supreme power directly--and in the process take on the main strength of every enemy (the empire of Ch'in and a host of contending rebel powers), reveal intent in full, and fight without the benefit of moral

ascendancy--the weak periphery of politics is first played. A humble base is created, then a sure base is pursued; only when these things are achieved is the definitive conquest of China attempted. This way, attacks fall exclusively upon the weak, ultimate ambition is dissembled, and time is found to build up legitimacy for rule. Well supported are the secondary propositions about the conduct of grand strategic maneuver.

Circumvention of the foe in the civil war, so evident in the selection of successive main objects, is also evident in virtually all the lesser steps taken along the way. Falling in place now are the tertiary propositions about the conduct of grand strategic maneuver.

Between offensives, care is taken to deny the enemy weakness to attack. If rebel Han survives these times, it is first and foremost because compassion and harshness is meted out in good proportion to the people Liu Pang controls. Recall the balanced treatment served up one, to the defeated townsfolk of P'ei before new attacks were launched against other towns and cities (209 B.C.); two, the defeated populace of Kuan-chung as Liu Pang awaits the arrival of Hsiang Yü (206 B.C.); and three, to the generals and armies which helped Liu Pang retake Kuan-chung, and much else besides, on the eve of the great contest with Hsiang Yü in the east (206 B.C.).

Offensives begin, when and only when, the enemy falls out of moral balance. The beginning of the first offensive finds the magistrate of P'ei on the wrong side of politics (for Ch'in and against rebellion); the beginning of the second finds the whole Chinese world in chaos and anarchy (Ch'in unraveling, a host of rebel contenders rising); and

the beginning of the third finds the recent victor over Ch'in, and leader of a new confederate empire, Hsiang Yü, dispossessing deserving nobles and generals of their rightful lands and ancient privileges.

Such imbalances are surely made use of and compounded and made the focus of attack. Political maneuver is the weapon of choice here, and priority is given it over military attack. Thus in the order in which offensives one, two and three occur we find this. Diplomatic bluff and an unexpected declaration for rebellion will make a whole world overturned when really not, award moral ascendancy in attack and shock a desperate townsfolk to turn on empire (Ch'in's) and local magistrate (the attack on P'ei.) Temporary and unequal alliances struck with a strong rebel power and especially with a stronger one (rebel Ch'u) will remove the need to challenge at once the whole of China, will convince successive patrons that aims are modest, will harness the good name of ancient feudal families and will provide crucial flank support for the capture of a sure base (the mountain strong hold of Ch'in). Righteous intrigue of the highest order (taking back the sure base that was unfairly taken away before) and doing so with perfect timing (striking when the main victim, Hsiang Yü, is tied down far away) will appear as a fait accompli--something expected and only right--and will draw not ire and retaliation from Hsiang Yü, but merely excuses and slothful rationales and precious time to consolidate the land just taken, and make of it a decisive springboard for the conquest of the rest of China.

Once the divided foe is divided further and set tottering and reeling, strategic (or tactical) maneuver exploits his social weakness which has just been seriously

aggravated; and delivers the coup de grace. Here speed of advance, or speed in execution, sustains deception, which might otherwise be lost, once the culmination of political maneuver is attained. Tactical encirclement of the town of P'ei (first offensive) will permit Liu Pang's forces to crush the magistrate of P'ei and his coterie of followers, immediately after the townsfolk desert him (first offensive). Strategic envelopment of Ch'in's southeastern flank (second offensive), occasioned by the direct commitment of the main Ch'u army against the main Ch'in army, will enable Liu Pang to launch the deadly cycle of win-a-battle then recruit-new-rebels against relatively light resistance. After a strategic flank attack fails to defeat Hsiang Yü (a third party of insurgents who are fighting in the hills of Ch'i, are counted upon to pin down Hsiang Yü, but fail to do so), a strategic double pincer succeeds (third offensive). Hsiang Yü will see his lieutenants detached from him one by one; and he himself, labeled by the SC the greatest tactician to ever lead an army in his day, will know the frustration of constantly missing Liu Pang's forces.

True to the requirements of grand strategic maneuver, all substrategic military moves are coordinated with strategic ones and are founded upon maneuver as well. A summary is no place to verify this assertion in full. Let it suffice to recall an instance or two. The strategic flank attack that saw the rag-tag army of Liu Pang march from Tang to Lo-yang during the second offensive also witnessed the use of central attack and concentration of the main mobile force and detachment of weaker, slower forces--all this at the tactical-operational level. As such, this tactical-operational scheme, reminiscent of the modern Blitzkrieg, probably outmaneuvered the enemy in the

region in which Liu Pang fought. For the enemy probably deployed his forces in cordon, and lacked the means for swift counteraction (if the SC is any guide, the only Ch'in general with any real skill, and certainly with wide authority, was Chang Han, and he was busy in the north fighting the main army of Liu Pang's allies). The strategic double pincer which saw the defeat of Hsiang Yü during the third offensive was full of adroit small scale double pincers which worked in harmony with their large scale brother. (The first offensive only offers us a glimpse of a single battle, and tells us nothing about small unit actions that took place at the subtactical level.)

Throughout each offensive, but never more so than when each offensive is over, and victory won, magnanimity will rule Liu Pang's actions. Exploitation of victory is, by all accounts, a mild one: the populace who served the enemy, and usually even the rank and file who did as well, are spared their lives; in fact, are offered a handsome stake in the new order. And when this pattern is violated and massacres committed (on two occasions, both during the course of the second offensive), it would seem to be because dangerous and unyielding situations of war permit no other course. Thus does the attacker preserve his moral economy, increase his strength and prepare for the next campaign.

A second even more profound result follows in the wake of victory too. New groups of rulers, and local reorganizations of society which they prefer, are brought to the surface in the evolving state. At the end of the first offensive, the native elite of P'ei, not the defeated town ministry of Ch'in, receive a powerful place in Liu Pang's emerging principality in the east China Plain. At the end of the second offensive, a host of mid-elites from the west

China Plain shared power with mid-elites from southwest China in Liu Pang's southwestern state of Han_s. And, at the end of the third offensive, commoners of merit, daring do and arms, who also came by and large from the east, found themselves masters of China.

Set against the backdrop of the theater of war as a whole, the progress of Han's fortunes resemble the meandering path of a snake in a field of bamboo, a path that lazily winds towards a spot in the field, and a sought for catch. The snake, the army of insurgent Han, twists this way and that, going around, never through, extra-resistant enemy forces. Littering the path of the snake, are the skins of the snake, the remains of military fiefdoms briefly set up, now abandoned. First examined, it is a bizarre advance: but more carefully examined, perfectly rational: Han came to know itself and accepted its limitations and alertly shifted its immediate thrusts, and its temporary habitations, as the fickle nature of chance and the power of local opponents and local allies, tacit or formal, commanded. In this way, without having a rigid plan, a successful plan was had. By always striving to pursue the path of least resistance and least expectation--regardless of what intermediate investments had to be abandoned along the way (e.g. abandonment of the first base won around P'ei in 209 B.C., the base won due east of Lo-yang in 207 B.C., and of Kuan-chung in 206 B.C.)--, Han cleared the two great hurdles of insurgency warfare: the first hurdle, to survive in the very heart of a storm of potent warring factions (in the East); the second hurdle, to slay a foe (actually two foes--Imperial Ch'in and Rebel Ch'u) who is overwhelmingly superior in force of arms, but vulnerable at critical connections of popularity.

There can be no question at all, that Han's use of diplomatic and military maneuver during the space of the civil war, allowed it to achieve feats wildly out of step with the means at its disposal. Starting with a little band of followers, one hundred in number, or so it is said, Han would win over soldiers numbered in the hundreds of thousands. But along with this great benefit, there came great risks, and several times Han fell and nearly succumbed all together. Third parties let Han down three times (allied Tung-yang and allied Ch'u both in 208 B.C., and the insurgents of Ch'i in 205 B.C.). Unexpected moves or resistance by the enemy caught Han off guard twice (Ch'in's strong defense of Lo-yang in 207 B.C., Hsiang Yü's treachery at Kuan-chung in 206 B.C.). Even so, Liu Pang's star continued to rise, until, at the end of 202 B.C., this former village clerk turned lowly bandit, came to seat himself upon the throne of the civilized world. But it was an unsteady crown that sat atop his head, and his authority rested, in the final analysis, on the dubious honor of thieves.

During the first phase of the consolidation of China, which spanned Liu Pang's seven year reign (202-195 B.C.), the object was to replace civil war generals crowned vassal kings with sons of the emperor. Recourse once more was made of grand stratagem (this being the fourth one drawn up for offensive purposes), and once more the principles of grand strategic maneuver were observed.

On the inside of China, Han first laid out a sure base (placing the seat of government in the West) and dissembled its aims by seeming to strike a compromise in the division of the spoils of China (granting the lands of the East to its top civil war generals in promised perpetuity). Then it

expanded only after it was furnished with a pretext to expand (only after rebellions broke out in the East), and did so in an indirect fashion (expanding first on the far side of empire). Speed was again employed in the pursuit (as the frequency of rebellions increased, the speed with which they were crushed increased), and intended victims were attacked in isolation. Victory was exploited with circumspection (sanctuary was afforded any eastern general who did not rebel, and the central government did not increase in any major way the land it directly held). Finally, the empire welcomed the new order of things in the east (sons of the emperor were made kings and they were allowed to make use of the local elite as they saw fit).

Completion of the first diplomatic offensive in the East--offensive theater strategy number four--was somewhat easier than completion of the conquest of China during the civil war. In the first place, the empire had somewhat better instruments to use. The temporary military fiefdom was exchanged for the permanent lawfully possessed commandery territory, with all that that offered by way of enhanced prestige, bureaucratic penetration of the local territory and means to fortify the headquarters of empire. Also, the army of Han was complemented by the armies and the depth of the client kingdoms (the kingdoms were placed in the East), with all that that offered by way of complementing the power of the empire, reducing its responsibilities and safeguarding its prestige. In the second place, the empire enjoyed more latitude in the dispositions of its forces before the offensive began. As master of all China, Han could adjust some of the territorial boundaries and rulers of the eastern kingdoms, thus putting it in a better position to exploit in the near future the uneven loyalties in its eastern rulers (i.e. its

dispositions in Ch'i and Ch'u). Third parties still figured in Han's plans but they were not superior nor equal.

The result of all this was that empire still gained victory greatly disproportional to its means, but the risks were more manageable. Thus Liu Pang eliminated virtually all his powerful civil war colleagues, men who were, in most cases, far better tacticians than he, and in possession of combined armies many times greater than his. But he did so without being tossed about as much by the vagaries of chance. Only one offensive campaign need be mounted in the first phase of consolidation; and there were no unexpected detours in the advance as happened a number of times in the civil war. The number and magnitude of mistakes were reduced also. The one serious mistake that Liu Pang may have committed, on the home front, was to risk too closely the clutches of an incensed client king (king of Chao). Most important of all, the fact that the army of Han did not have to do all the fighting, or all the marching, must have boosted enormously the authority of the regime, and its claim to be Heaven's chosen ruler. Indeed the authority of the regime was much greater--now, with but one exception, all the provinces of the empire were ruled by family members of the House of Han. But just as the empire celebrated this latest victory, it faced a crisis of an all together new kind.

To eliminate an empress faction hostile to the Dynasty (the faction of Lü), grand strategic maneuver once more was enlisted, and the fifth grand stratagem was crafted, with its attendant fifth theater strategy for offensive purposes. First of all, the Dynasty seized the high moral ground by declaring, in the aforementioned edict of 196 B.C., that only those people (and their lawful descendants) who shared

in unifying the world could share in ruling the world. By the same declaration, the Dynasty secured a strong base, and encircled the intrigue faction Lü. Loyalist forces were scattered in the capital, and the emperor's sons, who were recently appointed kings in the East, lay in the vast administrative periphery of the East. Deception was ready built into this theater strategy: the intriguers might know which of the eastern client kings were for them or against them (the former if the intriguers could replace sons of the emperor made kings, the latter if they could not), but they would have a hard time knowing which of the officials in the imperial capital were for them or against them (the sheer number of officials, most of whom were initially loyal to the Dynasty, made it impossible to replace a significant majority without arousing undue suspicion and open resistance).

As with any of Han's previous maneuver strategies, the forces of the Dynasty did not advance until the enemy himself made the first major move, and first moral slip of major scope. In this case, that first major move came when the Lu faction, having intrigued at a slow pace for some fifteen years, sped up their intrigue upon the death of their leader, Empress Lü, and tried to make too many changes in the client state order of the east too quickly. But the loyalist were ready for them, and turned them from within (defectors back at imperial court and in the imperial army) while they surrounded them from without (the army led by the king of client state Ch'i). Once having foiled the intrigue, the loyalists moved quickly to murder the intrigue leaders, but spared underlings who would change sides.

After the intrigue was beaten, a logical change was made in the social order at court. Henceforth, emperors

would be selected whose female side of the family harbored no power beset women with severe authoritarian beliefs. The result was, for a long time, and until the near complete centralization of China and the entrenchment of Han Wu-ti, to reinforce the benevolent side of imperial rule. Thus, owing to strategic statecraft, an important change was brought about in organizational statecraft, and, once again, grand strategy caused a change in the social order beyond court.

The method by which the continuity of the Dynasty was protected eschewed preclusion or pre-emption. This was one of the risks involved. A second was that if the strategy ever was put to use, those who put the affairs of the Imperial House back in order could wield disproportionate power afterwards, or could fall upon each other, jealously grabbing for the spoils of victory (during the period of the fight against the intrigue, the Dynasty would be without a single leader). But these were risks which Liu Pang willingly ran. For the authority of the House of Liu as a whole would have grown that much greater: if the strategy had ever to be used, a hostile domestic faction would have done itself in by its own hand. The next step was to deal with the uneven loyalties engendered in the House of Liu after the intrigue was beaten.

The third great act of consolidation, which began with the reign of Han Wen-ti and ran well through the reign of Han Wu-ti (180-106 B.C.), also featured grand strategic maneuver, which, in turn, informed grand stratagem number six. As with all the other grand stratagems, this sixth and last grand stratagem featured an offensive theater strategy. In its broad outlines, this sixth and final theater strategy closely resembles the earlier theater strategy that informed

the first great act of consolidation. Thus the Dynasty accomplished its goals by way of a single campaign, and that campaign saw the Dynasty first establish a strong defensive position by dividing up the empire "in perpetuity" along the eastern fringe of "Land Within the Passes;" later convert isolated acts of rebellion into a deceptive, grand encirclement; then mop up a succession of desperate last stands with dispatch and crush the ring leaders without hesitation (e.g. the Revolt of the Seven Kingdoms, 154 B.C. and the revolt of Huai-nan and Heng-shan in 122 B.C.); and finally, settle for an incomplete peace with relative magnanimity (the empire stopped short of dispossessing local rulers of all eastern lands). And, by way of similarity too, strategic statecraft brought about more social change (central court came to rule directly most of the east, and the top elite of most of the east was removed).

Quite similar in the broad points, the maneuver concept that informed the sixth offensive was quite different from the fourth in many of the details. Whereas the first relied upon flank attack and concentration of force (great blocks of client kingdoms combined with the commandery of the West to turn target kingdoms; and then original client kings were deposed), the second relied upon central attack and dispersion of force (the field of client states was pierced from interior lines and targeted client states were subdivided and subdivided again). This difference in maneuver concepts was perfectly reasonable. In the first case, the empire was out to eliminate a handful of individuals: combine the support of one king with the power of the commanderies, and another was instantly turned. In the second case, the empire was out to eliminate an entire administrative system: the bonds of sympathy among the intended victims ran deeper: to concentrate force would

reveal intent; to advance from the far side of empire would leave imperial support cut off.

There was one other important difference in the maneuver concepts that informed offensives six and four. Different uses were made of diplomatic surprise. The fourth offensive used diplomatic surprise to stun, and make passive (the adjustment of the client state order in northeast China that followed Han Hsin's capture in 201 B.C.). The sixth offensive used diplomatic surprise that way too (partition of Ch'i in 164 B.C.), but also used it to shock into action (partitions of 154 B.C. that sparked the Revolt of the Seven Kings in the same year). Again this difference in maneuver concepts was rational. Both offensives needed to position Han for the delivery of the final blow without arousing undue suspicion. Hence the merits of those diplomatic surprises (201 B.C. and 164 B.C.) which acting as *fait accomplis* masked decisive outflanking movements of a diplomatic kind. For the fourth offensive this was just about the end of the story: the recently crowned civil war generals were so unsure of themselves and afraid for their status, that they could be counted upon to react soon enough, yet without unity of effort. Conditions for strategic defeat in detail were at hand. For the sixth offensive the story was, by contrast, just beginning.

After the division of Ch'i, it would be many years yet before a significant number of client state kings circa sixth offensive would feel themselves immediately threatened: this lot was, after all, in contrast to their forerunners, made up of men born of the imperial house. By the time, a significant number did feel quite uneasy (ascension of Ching-ti to supreme rule, 155 B.C.), it was best to strike diplomatically, and so preempt a solid

unified front, and yet provoke enough conspirator kings to come out into the open and offer as a group simultaneously a divided target, which, once beaten, would expose the rest who hung back to routine defeat in detail and cleaning up.

It is also important to note that the second offensive was easier to accomplish than the first, though the gains were still disproportionate to the means. A host of indicators show this. For one thing, the empire was able to advance at a slower pace, thus minimizing the adverse friction of chance. Also, the empire did not have to always wait for relatively legitimate provocations before it advanced: it could afford to mix in fait accomplis, and it could afford to trump up provocations. Finally, the imperial army was rarely used at all. (And when it was used--i.e. in 154 B.C.--, it was possible to win by staying on the strategic and tactical defensive!) This was only to be expected. For the empire had still better instruments to use in the second than in the first (its hold on the client states as a whole was better), again a reflection of increasing authority.

I have said nothing about the empire's strategy of frontier defense, a strategy that was a critical part of the last three grand stratagems. During much of the civil war, there was no need for a frontier strategy: the forces of Han did not share a common border with barbarian forces until the latter half of the struggle, and not until the very end of the struggle did they share a border with powerful barbarian forces (the terrible horde of Hsiung-nu nomads dwelled in the steppe opposite Hsiang Yü's northeast client kingdoms). Political artifice of a relatively simple nature sufficed to isolate the intended victims of Han's first three offensives. At the very start of peace, the empire

tried to deal with its nomadic threat by military offensive and direct attack. The near disastrous battle of P'eng-ch'eng taught the empire better; the same mistake was never made again (until 133 B.C. and thereafter); a defense was put together, and founded upon diplomatic and military maneuver. Here was the theater strategy of frontier defense.

At the diplomatic level, the empire tried to ally with the barbarians, and showed them great respect. It aimed to cultivate good moral standing in the barbarians' eyes. In effect it hoped to deflect the barbarian elsewhere, and sought no war with them at all. This was a wise strategy if the vassal East, the people posing the greater immediate threat, was to be rolled up. But diplomatic deflection did need a military backup, what is more, that backup would have to employ much of the same army that was earmarked to keep the peace in the East, lest the burden on the peasantry undercut the regime's appeal. The solution, at strategic level, was to revert, in broad effect, to the device of deployment on interior lines (a device known the world over today and in ancient times): the nucleus of the imperial army (chariot/infantry corps) was encamped in and around the imperial capital; special forces (cavalry, light infantry) were deployed along the western frontiers and served as a strategic reserve deployed on the line. Deception was important to make this device work, lest the barbarian learn of the empire's severe vulnerability to simultaneous attacks from different directions. Deception was provide by means of the great wall and clever management of the border provinces.

At the operational level (frontier theater level), the empire made sure the central field army eluded the full

wrath of any barbarian invasion. That meant deployment of the central field army to the rear and commitment only after the momentum of the invaders was largely spent in pillage. This operational scheme provided elusiveness, but also a defense that only swung into action after the fact, however. As compensation, the empire appeased the barbarians. There was also this bad consequence too: the barbarians were given a free hand to unify their own world. Only a major diplomatic effort, backed by force, could undo that unity, or at least contain its more harmful effects, should it come about.

For all that, a positive consequence--a very positive consequence indeed--followed from frontier strategy. One imperial army was able to do the work of three. The savings in force deployments must have gone far to preserve the empire's moral economy in the East. That, in turn, made manageable the consolidation of China. With the home front rapidly centralizing (c. 130 B.C.), the empire could now settle accounts on the frontiers. But would it complete the maneuver cycle begun back in 201 B.C., and mount a maneuver attack to supersede its maneuver defense? The answer to that question would set limits to the very life of the empire itself.

Ideal Strategy of the Acquisitive State

Peace that follows war is rarely good for either side. From this grim observation, B.H. Liddell Hart came to the grim conclusion that an understanding of grand strategy is, for the most part, territory awaiting exploration.¹ Where the ideal grand strategy of the acquisitive state is concerned,² this conclusion is still very much true. It is now time to explore this terra incognita as far as we can.

The trail towards a better understanding of the grand strategy of the acquisitive state begins not much farther from where Liddell Hart left off. Liddell Hart suspected that the principles of grand strategy--whatever they were--would contradict in many ways the principles of strategy. Indeed the one principle of grand strategy which he discusses in his book, Strategy, bears this suspicion out. Thus, it is remarked that the statesman who wins a war should leave the vanquished a way out.³ The general, of course, is usually taught the very opposite: for him, capture and defeat of the foe is the preferred object, and the road to adulation.

That the victor in war should afford quarter to the vanquished seems only reasonable. To press a defeated foe too far will only get his blood up when it is not necessary to do so: more of the victor's forces will be lost in the desperate fighting to come; more of the vanquished forces will be lost too; and the survivors of the losing side who find themselves captured will be even less willing than they might have been to assist the winning side. Force provokes resistance: too much force can provoke too much resistance: everyone comes out worse off than before.

For the conservative state, the lesson stops here. His grand strategy should aim to find that point where the use of force begins to hurt not help. If the enemy will but quit the field, or cease his diplomatic war, the work of the conservative state is done. The latter's object is not so much to win, but to prevent the enemy from winning. But for the acquisitive state which has reached the point where quarter should be granted, the chore is just beginning. His is the paradoxical mission of having to both grant quarter to the stricken foe and yet find a way to catch him and take him whole. But how?

Well if there comes a point where the continued use of force will only drive the enemy from you all together, it follows that the state that would take the enemy alive and willing must somehow get its way without using force, or at least without appearing to use force. In a sense, the enemy must come to the acquisitive state of his own free will. The implication is profound. What will work for the conservative state will not work for the acquisitive one. It has been demonstrated by Luttwak that the supreme task of the conservative state is, in the realm of grand strategy, by and large this: take the wherewithal of force as "input"--distribute this "input" throughout one of several possible security systems--and maximize power as "output."⁴ (The conservative state is also advised to maintain itself in moral harmony, for moral harmony provides the best shield against diplomatic attack.⁵) But for the acquisitive state this routinization of the problem will not do.⁶ Something must be slipped into the above equation. The conservative state wishes to make its broad strategic intent known: that, after all, is how deterrence works,⁷ and how if its house is in order too and not subject to moral intrigue, the conservative state hangs on to what it has got. But if the

acquisitive state broadcasts its intent as well, its goal will be more difficult to attain: the target of its expansion will realize that it is the ultimate victim: then it will do no good to grant "quarter" to the loser, for the loser knows that this gesture is hollow.

It is crucial then for the acquisitive state to input force and maximize power output without appearing to be doing so all the while. Deception, at the highest level, must be "inputted" too. It is important then for the acquisitive state to expand without appearing to be doing so, else the victim sees what is coming. It is equally important to attain an ultimate objective without appearing to want to, else posterity think badly of the acquisitive state and withhold support. It is also important that the victim of the acquisitive state's expansion somehow does itself in, else force must be used.

For the intended victim to do itself in and submit willing and join the acquisitive state's cause, the victim must come to feel itself inferior in a moral way: he must come to feel that he somehow deserves his fate. Over and over again, early Han shows how this is done. Callousness on the part of the victim, whether caused by too much compassion or too much harshness, is combined with propriety on the part of the attacker--the attacker comes to enjoy moral ascendancy. What is more, such ascendancy is best acquired all of a sudden. The moral confusion of the victim does him in. If the experience of early Han is any guide, the moral dimension in statecraft thus looms as the most important for the acquisitive state that would aspire to the ideal in grand strategy. It also follows that patience is very important too. The acquisitive state may preserve its moral economy, but without an immoral act being committed by

the intended victim, the acquisitive state cannot convert its moral economy into conquest.

But is this the end of the story? If it was, then the meek and pious would surely come to possess the earth. But they do not, so something is still missing. What is missing is predictably enough force. But the use of force must not appear to be prearranged or premeditated, nor can too much of it be used.

The acquisitive state must appear to be on the defensive; if need be he must have the strength to absorb the aggressive blow of the intended victim. He must then appear to take military action in response to an act of aggression committed by the intended victim.

The acquisitive state must also use an amount of force that confirms the perception that he is in moral balance. Otherwise, if he uses too much force, the immediate victim, or posterity, may suspect that he has either been too compassionate--and thus was too easily harassed; or too harsh--and thus was too provocative.

Yet again, we have reached a dead end, for if the state that would expand merely remains on the defensive, it may be unable to drive home the moral ascendancy of its position. Likewise, if it cannot exceed a certain minimum amount of force, a wide variety of attacks that would destroy the enemy will be impractical to use. It follows that unless the victim is physically trapped to some degree, it can escape and rationalize its moral inferiority; and live to fight another day. Thus the acquisitive state must deploy force in a way that encircles the intended victim and compels it to come face to face with the moral horror of its

actions. Thus the former must also deploy force in a way that disrupts the cohesion of the intended victim, and permits capture of the enemy intact.

Yet in arranging its forces to encircle the intended victim, and disrupt him too, the acquisitive state must be careful not to reveal its intent. Thus it must rely upon an hidden arrangement of its forces: it must conceal its forces and lay an ambush.

But not just any ambush will do. Ambush involves surprise, but an ambush based solely upon military surprise is not enough. Military ambush entails concealment of capabilities alone. More is needed: concealment of intentions is essential too. This takes us into the realm of ambush based upon diplomatic surprise. Now we are entering rarefied air indeed, and up we come face to face to a second great distinction between military strategy and grand strategy. To return to a key thought from Handel, and one first discussed in the Introduction, while surprise would be used in military operations all the time, "in diplomacy, it is a tactic of last resort."⁸

Diplomatic surprise is a tactic of last resort because alliances, and helpful combinations are its casualties. Friends do not like being lied to and subject to hidden peril. If they must be deceived it is best to do so at most once, or maybe twice. Timing is everything. An acquisitive state is advised to forego on its closest relations only when the payoff is big (e.g. overturning the balance of power in a whole theater of war). What is called for then is diplomatic surprise of major scope. But since the intentions of the acquisitive state must remain obscure, it is ordinarily best to make a major diplomatic surprise

appear as a fait accompli--something expected and not worth fighting over.

The task of making a major diplomatic surprise appear as a fait accompli requires great cunning and a virtuoso performance. It is necessary to target the precise weakness in a field of states, or theater of warring factions, or league of nations, and do so in a very specific way. On the day when diplomatic surprise bursts through, the victims must succumb to a perverse tonic of fear and excuse. They must be made to feel one, that the balance of power has been incredibly deranged, and cannot be restored at once and with easy combinations; and two, that the derangement is, all things considered, an event just and right. Only maneuver at the highest plane of policy can deliver the first part, and only leaping forward when the target is out of joint moral and social can deliver the second. The victims must be put to sleep, as if administered anesthesia. Early Han accomplished this more than once, so did Nazi Germany over the British and French and Macedonia (c. fourth century B.C.) over a number of Greek city-states.

The culminating point of the political maneuver has now been reached, but the fight is hardly finished: all anesthetics wear off. Anesthesia does not wear off evenly, however. Some organs and limbs come back to life before others. It should be the same for anesthesia diplomatic. Now the factors of space and time enter in. Some victims of aggression regain their senses faster than others. If all goes well--the merits of the prearrangement of forces in the political maneuver is tested now--those victims that return to life, and measure aggression for what it surely is, will attack one by one and in detail. In the eyes of those states still in the grips of the surprise anesthesia, these

attacks, which come one after another, will appear as illegitimate ripostes, uncalled for reactions, brainless exercises: the acquisitive state will receive help as it puts down these attacks which follow surprise. Future victims of attack will lift the spades that dig their own graves!

It may happen that the anesthetic administered by major diplomatic surprise wears off more evenly than expected, and a threatening number of future victims come round at the same time. Or, take a different scenario. Future victims do come to in series, but for some reason do not retaliate in series. When either of these things happen, the future victims who have awakened may understand the measure of their common plight, and seek justice together. Under these circumstances, the acquisitive state must take special action. First, and assuming that it can, it should do nothing for a time to cause further concern. That way some of those states which are yet to reach the chopping block may still find faith in the source of their coming doom. This way, the full force of the impending counterattack can be manageably reduced. Later, when the day of reckoning can be postponed no longer, and conjoint counterattack is in the works, the acquisitive may pre-empt, and disrupt the timing of the counterattack, and so provoke the conspirators to act before they aim to. Once more, major diplomatic surprise is put to work, but this time, it is put to work to shock into action, not stun into inaction.

It will be objected here that the indirect, deceptive deployment of forces is a capability within the reach of the strong, but not necessarily the weak. In that case, the weak must wait for third parties to distract the foe, or must enlist with third parties that will help do so. This,

on top of waiting for the victim to commit an outrageous act.

Once the major struggle is over, there may still be pockets of resistance left. These pockets are best destroyed quickly, one) while they are still dazed and reeling and two) before they fan the winds of suspicion across the theater of operations. In the act of pursuit, this is essential. The pursuer must pursue into regions that now seem to belong to it, by the fact of unjust open resistance. That forces it to strike a peace that leaves other forces alone. It must be willing to commune with these other forces, lest they become suspicious of the pursuer's ultimate intent. Thus starts another cycle of entrapment and "compelled" advance.

Looking back at what has just been said, a number of effects are clearer now. Above all, we can now see how a weak force can come to conquer intact a strong one. The victim himself sets himself up and falls of his own weight. He then willingly augments the acquisitive state's force with his own. In this way, without appearing to be acting, the acquisitive state expands.

Also we can see in this process of expanding without acting, the immense importance of treating chance in the proper way and according to plan. And what is true for a strong acquisitive state is true for a weak one, only more so. For true victory to obtain--victory that promises enduring peace--third parties and especially the victim(s) itself must assist the acquisitive state in its growth. To give a word to the local cause(s) that begins the break up of the society of a victim state, "chance" must deliver it up, moral disharmony and all. Since chance is in such a

felicitous mood but rarely, the acquisitive state must cultivate the fine art of patience--and the good defense that must go along with it. Napoleon was quoted as saying that the good general makes his own luck. I presume what Napoleon meant is that the good general can manage his capability, and lure the enemy into misfortune, or bad "chance," wherein he can disarm him. Perhaps the art of the general permits this; the art of the statesmen, based on the experience of early Han, does not. Here then is a third contradiction between military strategy and grand strategy.

Yet another observation that springs from our examination of the ideal type of grand strategy (and from our last observation above) concerns the formation of a political state. If lasting expansion must befriend chance, then lasting political states cannot be formed just because a leader, or power or movement wills it. Contrary to the thinking of a Machiavellian or a totalitarian (recall the Introduction), enduring states must have some prior basis in reality. Here, I suppose, is justification for a Burkeian, conservative approach to the task of building states, or empires. And here too is justification for Sun Tzu's position.

Finally it will also be seen that the state that would expand must take many risks, some, perhaps, quite dangerous. In setting up traps, it, itself, is widely dispersed and thus highly vulnerable to a concentrated blow. If this blow never lands it is because of the acquisitive state's skill in mixing up, altering his deployments to match changing circumstances; or because in the eyes of some would-be attackers, it does not seem to deserve to be attacked (it is in moral balance); or because both of these things are true. Thus the importance of remaining in moral balance. Thus

the importance of being flexible with deployments. Thus the reason why, at the level of grand strategy, unlike for the conservative state, there can be no routine articulation of forces. What may work for one "input" of force may disastrously crash for another. Moreover, an offensive that is going well may have to be quite suddenly broken off. This is the consequence of aiming to take the enemy intact. This is the consequence of embarking upon a course of action that demands the preservation of moral balance in attack, as well as in defense.

FOOTNOTES

Conclusion

Text: pp. 384-410

1. B.H. Liddell Hart, Strategy (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1967), p. 336.
2. The experience of early Han is apropos for this discussion about states, and grand strategy. The political body that Liu Pang led immediately after the capture of the town of P'ei was a state, broadly defined. It possessed territory, had an army and was ruled by a duly constituted government, at the top of which sat Liu Pang. (Behold the ways by which Liu Pang is greeted in the HS for the period of the civil war: "Lord of P'ei," "King of Han." HS 1A: 10b-1B: 3b Dubs, HFHD, Vol. I, pp. 42-101.) From that time on, Liu Pang always ruled a state, and the Dynasty which he founded ruled a state as well--indeed, it ruled an empire.
3. Op. cit., p. 370.
4. Edward Luttwak, The Grand Strategy of the Roman Empire: From the First Century A.D. to the Third (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), p. 196.
5. This observation can be supported by my findings. Remember that the acquisitive state occupies a position of "undefeatability" (i.e. preserves its moral balance) when lying in wait between offensives. Since the conservative state, is, by its very nature, always lying in wait and on the defensive, it too is best advised to preserve its moral balance. As far as I can tell, this was not discussed by Luttwak. This is discussed by Sun Tzu, however. Sun Tzu IV.1-7 (Griffith, p. 85).
6. I use the word "routinization" in a very strict sense. "Routinization" hereby means that a state would maximize its power output by fashioning and relying upon a hegemonic, preclusive or defense-in-depth security system. Such systems can be the offspring of grand strategies based upon a high quotient of political maneuver, or not. Imperial Rome, as Luttwak would have us believe, did not rely heavily upon political maneuver, some such maneuver was used, but not that much. By contrast, it is a commonplace to believe that the Byzantine Empire, also a conservative state for much of its history, did maneuver politically; indeed most thing it built its whole survival around it. Unless I am greatly mistaken, the Byzantine Empire also fashioned

hegemonic, preclusive and defense-in-depth security systems from time to time.

7. The general concept of "deterrence" as understood today was surely understood by the leaders of early Han in ancient times. Proof of this remark springs from syllogism. Luttwak by way of his book The Grand Strategy of the Roman Empire: From the First Century A.D. to the Third demonstrates the applicability of this concept to Roman statecraft. I have used his method of analysis that informs his demonstration throughout my own work, and found his observation to fit. For an explicit discussion of the fit in the context of Han's empire and client states see Chapter Nine of the thesis, "The Eastern Client States and Hegemonic Maneuver."

8. Michael I. Handel, The Diplomacy of Surprise: Hitler, Nixon, Sadat (Cambridge, MA: Center for International Affairs, Harvard University, 1981), p. 355.

Appendix

FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Here is the time to look out ahead from the summit of theory to which we have just climbed. Exploration of what lies ahead must be left to another time; it must suffice to catch a glimpse and leave a sketch of the most prominent landforms in the distance. And so here they are as I see them, revealed in order of increasing elevation.

Prominent Landforms Numbers One, Two and Three:

On Chinese Statecraft

I can think of three, closely related hypotheses that emerge out of my work. In order of increasing importance, I suspect that the thinking that informed the strategic statecraft of the early Han empire closely resembles the thinking found in Sun Tzu's Art of War; I suspect that this thinking was part of a full-blow strategic culture with Daoist antecedents in the days before the coming of Han--to be more exact, with Daoist antecedents in the Warring State Period; and I suspect that the strategic thinking of the Chinese ranges over a field as wide as the range of strategic thinking exhibited in the West, but with this important difference--whereas in the West, the "middle" range of strategic thinking, that range which encompasses maneuver theory, is based upon a progressive dialectic, in the East, the "middle" range of thinking is based upon a

cyclical dialectic. Let me now discuss the testing and significance of each of these hypotheses in turn.

It should be a relatively straight forward matter to test my first hypothesis--that there is a broad similarity between early Han strategic statecraft and the extant Art of War. The method of "operational code analysis" pioneered by Nathan Leites and extended by Alexander George might provide a handy test.¹

The significance of this first hypothesis is substantial. The extant version of Art of War is the most revered of all the manuals of strategy. It is widely agreed that Art of War rivals any similar work--even the magnum opus of the great Clausewitz--and that for its length (it is only about 40 pages long) it has no rival at all. Thus, if my first hypothesis holds up, the history of early Han provides a powerful expression in practice of Sun Tzu's extant ideas.

Proof of the second hypothesis is decidedly more difficult: indeed, it is best left to competent readers of Chinese. To prove that the thinking that informed early Han strategy was part and parcel of a full-blown Daoist strategic culture, it is necessary to master those strategic texts and manuals that were actually at the disposal of the ancients themselves. Therein is part of the rub, for it is matter of high controversy to say just which texts were then available. Also, to prove this second proposition, it is also necessary to examine the history of the Warring State Period--presumably the period in which this strategic culture was developing--and that is also no easy matter. Many of the relevant histories have not been translated;² one of the main histories is not even a history at all, but

a novel (Chan-kuo Ts'e, or Intrigues of the Warrings States), with all that that entails for contradictory interpretation. Not for nothing then the military and strategic thought of the pre-Han era is a fast growing field of scholarship.

Prove the existence of a Daoist strategic culture, perhaps best expressed by some yet-to-be-discovered version of Sun Tzu's Art of War, and one immensely broadens our present appreciation of the ancient precedents of statecraft. To date, two broadly defined strategic cultures have been identified in the thinking of the ancient Chinese. One of these cultures, labeled "Modernist," is said to be founded upon the School of Law and the experience of Ch'in statecraft. The other, labeled "Reformist," stems from gentler, Confucian notions. (The credit for the important discovery of "Modernist" and "Reformist" statecrafts goes to Michael Loewe.³) Add a Daoist/Sun Tzuian strategic culture to the list, and then it must be said that there existed three strategic cultures. The significance of this discovery would be profound: at once it would be understood that ancient Chinese theorists thought along the entire spectrum of possibilities ("Modernist" statecraft treats of power; "Reformist"--of authority; and Daoist/Sun Tzuian of what?--a synthesis of power and authority). From this, it is a short step to trace present day Chinese strategic thinking to their points of origin. For example, Mao tse-tung's statecraft just may hail from Daoist/Sun Tzuian roots.

Once we know of Chinese strategic thinking, it is possible to compare that thinking to Western thinking. This is an important undertaking for two reasons, one didactic and one practical. In the first place it would give us the

ability to examine the role of culture in strategic thinking. After all, no two cultures on the face of the earth are farther apart than Western and Chinese. Also it would give us an invaluable insight into our own strategic thinking and into the strategic thinking of the People's Republic of China, a state that may someday advance to the first rank of powers.

It is my belief that differences in the philosophies of change will lie at the heart of the differences between eastern and western strategic cultures. Western philosophies of change spring, in the main, from progressive, Hegelian dialectics; the Daoist philosophy of change--the philosophy that presumably informs a third Chinese strategic culture--takes its inspiration from cyclical dialectics.⁴ Since chance, a key ingredient in any maneuver culture, is intimately bound up with change, the prospects for significant and fascinating differences between eastern and western strategic thought are great. From this it follows that a great advantage in warfare may go to that party which understands and is fully at home in both dialectics, both philosophies of change, both understandings of chance. It is sometimes wondered if Mao Tse-tung, a known student of Marxist/Hegelian dialectics and Daoist cyclical dialectics, combined or mixed the two in his career as strategist. To learn the answer to that question may be to find out which great civilization holds an intellectual, perhaps even a moral, lead in statecraft. The fate of the earth itself may revolve around that answer.

Prominent Landform Number Four:

The Great Debate Between Economists and Strategists

The times are out of joint. Thus invariably moans the leaders of a great power in decline. Cries of "overstretch" and a tales of woe done every working man and woman by the accumulation of arms and armaments; and acceptance of obligations, duties and protectorates, fills the pages of the great power's press and fills the halls and corridors of the great power's government and academe. From what we can glean from the stories of the eye-witnesses who were there, such cries did go up in the Athenian, Roman and Han Empires in decline, and in the Byzantine Empire before the eve of fateful Manzikert. Such cries certainly did go up in 1930s Britain. And they certainly are heard loud and clear in the United States in our own time.

Reinforcement for those who cry "overstretch" springs now from Paul Kennedy's recent book, The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers. Here is a long awaited Olympic height view of the causes and dark reasons behind the coming and going of all the great powers since the dawn of the Age of Guns and Sail, circa 1500--the dawn of the age of those colossal empires upon which the sun never seems to set. Here laid out in competent prose, accompanied by ream after ream of footnotes and meticulous citations, is an endless cannonade of argument delivered by a naval historian turned economist, a cannonade that must make the strategist take notice.

But the alarm the economist rings may sometimes ring too loudly. For whither for all that strategy? Take the

case of Britain between about 1660 and 1918, an important case for Paul Kennedy,⁵ and undoubtedly other economists too. It cannot be denied that in all that time Britain owed its greatness in part to muscular productivity. But did not Britain's greatness spring from something else as well? Did not Britain make it policy to resist in peacetime if it could, in war if it had no choice, any European power that would dominate the whole of the continent next door? And did not Britain hold true to this policy and never waver in its resolve on each of four occasions in four centuries when successive European powers did threaten to so dominate? Thus was an all together different kind of contribution made to the greatness of Britain. But where does the likes of such thoughtful policy and artful strategy figure in the thinking of the economist today?

Enter the significance of Han grand strategy. The story of Han's ascent to greatness--indeed near undisputed greatness--must clearly remind us that artful strategy and political warfare can be far and away the most important reason for a state's success. In our rightful concern about "overstretch" and overcommitment, and the health of our economy, we dare not forget the lofty eminence which craft and strategy can occupy. Though we may turn our back upon the refinement of such tools ourselves; it bears remembering that others may not.

Handel by way of his book The Diplomacy of Surprise: Hitler, Nixon, Sadat, suggests that political maneuver and the use of major diplomatic surprise is not for every statesmen, or every state. Indeed, as he says, a tyrant in control of a police state is most likely to spring surprises and maneuver diplomatically.⁶ Certainly, my findings confirm his observation. Liu Pang and his successors who

brought Han up by means of wily statecraft, were tyrants and their state was no democracy. Here then is renewed reason why tyrannies and dictator countries must be watched. However, we should not merely watch the powerful tyrannies and dictator states. Weak states with dictators in control must be watched too. Han, we must never forget, started from nothing.

FOOTNOTES

For Further Research
Text: pp. 413-419

1. See Alexander George, "The Operational Code: A Neglected Approach to the Study of Political Leaders and Decision-Making," International Studies Quarterly, XIII, No. 2, (June 1969), 190-222.
2. Conversation with Professor Arthur Waldron of Princeton University.
3. See Michael Loewe, Crisis and Conflict in Han China (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1974) and Twitchett and Loewe, CHC, pp. 103-110.
4. See J.W. Freiberg, "The Dialectic in China: Maoist and Daoist," Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars, IX, No. 1 (January-March 1977).
5. See Paul Kennedy, The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers (New York: Random House, 1987), Chapters Three, Four and Five.
6. Michael I. Handel, The Diplomacy of Surprise: Hitler, Nixon, Sadat (Cambridge, MA: Center for International Affairs, Harvard University, 1981), pp. 12-14.

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