IDEAS OF EMPIRE IN EARLY MING CHINA: THE LEGACY OF THE MONGOL EMPIRE IN CHINESE IMPERIAL VISIONS, 1368-1500

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Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of

The Kenneth P. Dietrich School of Arts and Sciences in partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

University of Pittsburgh

2018

UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH

THE KENNETH P. DIETRICH SCHOOL OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

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In the mid-fourteenth century the branch of the Mongol empire in China, the Yuan dynasty (1279-1368), collapsed. In its wake arose a new political order, the Ming dynasty (1368-1644), the last imperial state in China founded by Chinese. The cultural and ethnic differences between the rulers and courts of these two dynasties suggests stark differences between them, and the rhetoric of early Ming rulers, when read at face value, indicates that the Ming represented the resurgence of native sovereignty and the rejection of Mongol Yuan administrative practices, military endeavors, and expansive models of imperial rule. Over the last two decades, innovative research has questioned these assumptions, but there remain unappreciated connections between the Yuan and Ming that reveal the complex ways in which Ming rulers adapted Yuan state-building practices and understood the Ming dynasty's relationship with its Mongol past.

Building on world historical methodology and recent work in the field of Yuan-Ming studies, this dissertation argues that early Ming rulers and statesmen viewed their empire as the successor of the Yuan and readily incorporated Mongol-generated imperial language, practices, and state-building methods into the new Ming polity. Early Ming emperors consciously redeployed steppe state-building traditions. They sought to re-establish Yuan patterns of

hegemony over continental East Asia, and in pursuit of these goals, designed strategic policies and commissioned representations that mirrored Yuan imperial visions. When discussing Mongol subjects of the Ming and relations with Mongol groups in the steppe, Ming court language carefully distinguished between cultural and political identities. It was not until the 1440s that Ming rulers, facing military disaster in conflict with Mongols, curtailed their broad ideas of empire, a strategic decision that culminated in the construction of what we know today as the Great Wall. In a larger Eurasian context, this study places the Ming dynasty closer to other contemporary post-Mongol empires, including Muscovite Russia and the Ottomans. In China, as elsewhere in Eurasia, the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries witnessed the adaptation and modification of Mongol imperial ideas rather than the rejection of the Mongol past.

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I. INTRODUCTION

The relationship between the Yuan and Ming dynasties in China presents unique problems to historians. The Yuan (1279-1368) was the branch of the Mongol empire in China, established along classic Chinese dynastic patterns but built and ruled with Mongol methods. The Ming (1368-1644) appears to be the last native Chinese dynasty, succeeding the Mongol Yuan and preceding the Manchu-founded Qing (1644-1911). The Yuan and Ming on the surface appear to be very different imperial formulations whose legitimating structures shared little, and whose patterns of empire seem to be wildly different in size, scope, and vision. I believe, however, that given the profound impact of the Mongols on Eurasian history, the legacy of the Yuan in the imperial self-imagination and state-building practices of early Ming rulers was much greater than recent scholarship has supposed. While important work has been done to overturn antiquated notions of the Yuan as an aberration of Chinese dynastic history and draw meaningful connections between the Yuan and Ming, this project reframes the Yuan-Ming transition era as one that requires mutual understanding – that is, one cannot understand the early Ming without understanding the Yuan. I argue that early Ming rulers and statesmen imagined their empire as the successor of the Yuan dynasty, endeavored to recapture Yuan territory and aimed to reestablish Yuan patterns of hegemony over East Asia. They did this for a variety of reasons, including the maintenance of Ming state security and to mimic Yuan prestige. While the recorded rhetoric of early Ming rulers, notably the Hongwu emperor, suggests that he viewed his

new Ming state as a restoration of Chinese customs, institutions, and styles of rule, such rhetoric was just that: grandiloquence designed to imprint upon the Ming realm the image of a new order after the collapse of the old. Taking these observations further by working around the heavy Confucian rhetoric of Ming court records (a methodology I detail below), I reveal how Ming attitudes towards the Yuan past, as well as the Ming dynasty's relationship to the Mongol Yuan, experienced complex changes, negotiations, and input from many voices, ultimately arguing that historians should view the Yuan and Ming as a single, formative period of China's late imperial history, and that the Ming was part of a larger Eurasian world, contemporary to other post-Mongol Eurasian empires both in time and in terms of imperial state-building practices.

My assertions conjure several questions. How did the bureaucrats and emperors of the early Ming dynasty imagine their state in relation to its predecessor, the Mongol-founded Yuan dynasty? How did Mongol state-building practices influence those of the early Ming? Did Ming rulers, as scholars have argued, see the establishment of the Ming as the expulsion of polluting Mongol influences?[1] Did they believe they were delivering what we call "China" back into the hands of the descendants of the Song dynasty (960-1279)? Perhaps most importantly, did they see the Ming empire as a proper successor and inheritor of the Yuan legacy, or something wholly different, untainted by and divorced from Yuan institutions, models, and imperial visions? Here I define the "early Ming" as the period beginning with the formal foundation of the polity in 1368 and ending with the Tumu Crisis of 1449, when military disaster curtailed Ming imperial ambitions into the steppe.

[1] Jiang Yonglin, *The Mandate of Heaven and the Great Ming Code* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2011), p. 103; Edward Farmer, *Zhu Yuanzhang and Early Ming Legislation: Reordering Chinese Society following the Era of Mongol Rule* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1995).

On a practical level, of course, Ming rulers modeled Ming military and political institutions on Yuan precedents, and echoed Mongol diplomatic practices and language in relations with other states. They did denigrate Mongol culture and customs, citing these as "polluting" influences on the cultured people of the North China Plain, but took intellectual steps to distinguish between the Mongols themselves and the Yuan state. In Ming state records, rulers imparted nuanced judgements of dynastic history that reveal complex attitudes towards the place of the Yuan in China's past. The Yuan dynasty was, to be sure, a proper dynasty by the reckoning of court historians: the swift compilation of the *History of the Yuan* (*Yuan shi* 元史) by the first Ming court indicates that incorporating the Yuan into dynastic annals was paramount for the legitimation of the Ming. As the Ming state matured and faced administrative and logistical challenges, Ming rulers looked to history for lessons, and were as willing to cite the failures of the Song as well as the Yuan. The first Ming ruler, the Hongwu emperor 洪武 (r. 1368-98), faulted the Song for its military weakness and praised the Yuan for its strength. He pointed to the Yuan dynasty's first emperor, Khubilai Khan, as a template of strong central authority. Hongwu was willing to examine the reasons for the fall of the Song and Yuan, and find those same faults in his own administration in order to dig them out. We can see further evidence of these influences in Song, Yuan, and Ming maps, and the changing ways in which maps across these three dynasties depicted steppe-agricultural divides, the Eurasian landmass, and the political units upon them.

A. HISTORIOGRAPHY

These observations matter because the historiographical gap between the Yuan and Ming has not been fully bridged. For much of the early and middle twentieth century, historians sidelined the Yuan dynasty, considering it a breach of an otherwise unbroken line of Chinese dynasties from the Qin (221 – 206 BCE) to the Qing (1644 CE – 1911). Over the past three decades, scholars have revisited the Yuan-Ming era and realized that Ming rulers did not simply adopt Yuan military institutions but adapted other Mongol state-building practices as well for both military and non-military purposes. Historians since have produced numerous studies that reveal the multitude of ways in which the Ming dynasty was shaped by its immediate Yuan past, and observed that early Ming rulers did not unilaterally reject Mongol influence in China, but were simply making political statements intended to placate their most ardent Confucian supporters, all the while freely modeling the Ming empire on the undeniably grand precedent that the Mongols had created. However, a gap between the Yuan and Ming remains. The Yuan still sits uneasily between the Tang-Song and Ming-Qing eras, belonging to neither and relegated to, at best, ambiguous periodization and, at worst, being little more than a representative of the "Mongol moment" in China's history. The established threads between the Yuan and Ming are fascinating studies, to be sure, but they remain just that: threads that make connections between specific observations or phenomena, not tapestries that weave the Yuan-Ming era into a coherent period, and even less bridges that might stitch early Ming China onto a larger Eurasian world in unappreciated ways.

On periodization: the most common comprehensive periodization of Chinese history that survives to the modern day is that of the standard histories, or the *zhengshi* 正史. Beginning in the Tang dynasty (618-907 CE), the idea that a single authorized historical account should exist

for each dynasty had become prevalent among scholars and bureaucrats. By the Qing, the term *zhengshi* had solidified as the descriptor for these histories, known as "official" or "orthodox" histories, usually compiled by a new dynasty for its predecessor (a process detailed below in this introduction's discussion of sources). Regardless of the original purpose of the *zhengshi,* they form a common basis for periodizing Chinese history. The gap that emerged between the Yuan and Ming, however, can trace its twentieth-century origins to the work of Naitō Konan (内藤湖南, 1866-1934), who is credited as the first modern-day historian to reject the idea that modernity in China began with the arrival of the West.[2] In his essays, Naitō suggested that the profound changes China experienced between the Tang and Song periods (called the Tang-Song transition) mark a pivotal moment in Chinese history: the shift from antiquity/medieval times to a form of modernity characterized primarily by the decline of the aristocracy, the rise of a state-serving bureaucracy, the increasingly centralized power of the emperor, and the social/economic/cultural changes that stemmed from these transformations.[3] However, in Naitō's periodization, the Yuan is an aberrant exception whose Mongol rulers "dominated China by force" and whose culture "was on the same level as that of primeval China."[4] Modernity died with the arrival of the Mongols.[5] With some exceptions, historians through the 1970s continued to view the Mongol Yuan as a disruptive era in otherwise neat periodizations of Chinese history. Henry Serruys is one such exception. He meticulously documented the official records on early

[2] Hisayuki Miyakawa, "An Outline of the Naitō Hypothesis and its Effects on Japanese Studies of China," in *The Far Eastern Quarterly* 14.4 (1955): p. 533.
[3] Ibid, p. 537-8; and Naitō, "Gaikatsuteki Tō-Sō jidai kan," in *Rekishi to chiri* 9.5 (1922): pp. 1-12.
[4] Hisayuki, "An Outline of the Naitō Hypothesis", p. 538.
[5] Paul J. Smith, "Introduction: Problematizing the Song-Yuan-Ming Transition," in *The Song-Yuan-Ming Transition in Chinese History* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003), p. 3; Joshua Fogel, *Politics and Sinology: The Case of Naitō Konan (1866-1934),*(Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984); and William T Rowe, "Approaches to Modern Chinese Social History," in *Reliving the Past: The Worlds of Social History,* ed. Oliver Kunz (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985).

Ming relations with the Mongols, providing a window into the nuanced interaction and diplomacy among multiple parties on China's northern steppe frontier, and revealed a Ming state that carefully considered its relationship to the Mongols instead of outright rejecting that relationship, but his work did not overturn the Naitō hypothesis.[6] In the early 1970s, Mark Elvin's work perhaps embodies the classic scholarly views on the Ming dynasty's relationship with its Mongol past and the rest of the world. The Mongols and the Yuan dynasty were responsible for the arrest of China's "medieval economic revolution," and the following Ming era was one of isolationism and retraction from contact with the rest of Eurasia, a trend that stifled trade and innovation.[7]

Following this, historians laid the first real strikes against the pillars of the "arrested modernity" thesis, a historiography adroitly laid out by Paul Smith and Richard von Glahn.[8] In opposition to the idea that the era after the Song collapse was one of economic stagnation, Evelyn Rawski argued that significant economic growth, couched by institutional continuity, characterized the Ming-Qing era, while G. William Skinner traced the long-term development of China's economy as a transition from densely clustered cities to widespread integration of urban centers and market towns.[9] Beyond the economic argument, beginning in the 1980s and early 1990s, Edward Dreyer and Edward Farmer began to take seriously the finer points of the relationship between the Yuan and Ming. Dreyer knew that "Hung-wu was a man of the Yüan dynasty," and observed that the early Ming drew more inspiration from the Yuan than the Song,

[6] Henry Serruys, *Sino-Mongol Relations During the Ming,* I-III, in *Mélanges chinois et bouddhiques,* volumes 11, 14, and 17, (Brussels: l'Institut belge des hautes études chinoises, 1959, 1967, and 1975).
[7] Mark Elvin, *The Pattern of the Chinese Past* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1973), pp. 203-34.
[8] See: Smith, "Introduction," in *The Song-Yuan-Ming Transition in Chinese History.*
[9] Rawski, "Economic and Social Foundations of Late Imperial Culture;" in *The City in Late Imperial China,* ed. G. William Skinner (Taipei: SMC Publishing Inc., 1977), p. 24.

particularly in the Ming military and administrative institutions.[10] However, the impression that the Ming rejected its Mongol past remains strong in modern historiography. Jiang Yonglin dissected the purpose of many early Ming laws that appeared to be anti-Mongol (i.e. laws with the intent of removing "polluted" Mongol influences), and, important for this discussion, carefully distinguished between modern views on Chinese-Mongol relations and the rhetoric deployed in Ming records, but I believe he does not go far enough. For Jiang, "[t]he 'barbarian' Mongol legal legacy… became an essential component of the 'Chinese' anti-'barbarian' discourse in the Ming." Jiang's use of quotations indicates his awareness that historians cannot view Ming legal code in terms of a strict Chinese-Mongol (or Han-barbarian) dichotomy – an awareness prevalent in the rest of his analysis – but he stops there. By understanding these laws in a broader Yuan-Ming imperial and historical context (as detailed under methodology, below), we can go beyond a simple observation of the words of legal texts and understand that these codes suggested Ming rulers were confronting a complex social, cultural, ethnic, and imperial reality.

Since the late 1990s, more historians have launched invaluable studies into the political, economic, cultural, and social relationships between the Yuan and Ming. Richard von Glahn and Paul Jakov Smith attempt to bring structure to several standing questions in the *longue durée* of Chinese history as it relates to the tenth through fourteenth centuries. First, how do we periodize the ambiguous temporal place of the Yuan dynasty?[11] Is it medieval or early modern, thus fitting in a European historical context? Or is it closer to the Sinologists' label of "late imperial", a term that describes the advanced imperial institution-building and vibrant economies of the Ming and

[10] Edward Dreyer, *Early Ming China: A Political History, 1355-1435* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1982), pp. 2, 155

[11] Richard von Glahn, "Imagining Pre-Modern China," in Smith and von Glahn, *The Song-Yuan-Ming Transition in Chinese History,* p. 36.

Qing (1644-1911)? Is it one or both of these? Second, how do we move beyond Mark Elvin's antiquated model of the fourteenth century as a "turning point," in which, as Elvin argued, the invading Mongols destroyed the economic vibrancy of the Song? While historians today do not consider the Mongol Yuan a purely destructive or disruptive force, Smith and von Glahn rightly observe that no alternative to Elvin's turning point argument has emerged. And third, how can Sinologists "re-approach" Chinese history from a world-historical perspective in ways that might reveal heretofore unappreciated connections between the Eurasian-wide "Mongol moment" and the comparatively truncated region over which the Ming exerted political influence?[12] When taken as a whole, these essays establish the threads connecting the Yuan and Ming: beautiful and fascinating threads that hint at a larger story, but not yet part of a more thorough understanding of the era as a coherent period.

Ming historian Timothy Brook has offered a more detailed Yuan-Ming link in his book *The Troubled Empire: China in the Yuan and Ming Dynasties.* He takes the point that the Mongol conquest dramatically changed the course of Chinese history, and looks at one specific phenomenon: the interpretation of calamitous weather events in Yuan and Ming dynastic annals. Brook begins by discarding old notions of the Yuan as a "self-contained unit of time" or a "break in continuity from which the Ming recovered to set China on its course to the present." Instead he views the Yuan and Ming as "component parts of a single period."[13] Some of the most common items in the imperial records of both empires are references to natural disasters and strange weather events that, in classical Confucian cosmology, indicate a disruption between heaven and earth caused by the poor conduct of earthly rulers. By investigating how Yuan and

[12] Ibid, p. 56.
[13] Timothy Brook, *The Troubled Empire: China in the Yuan and Ming Dynasties* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010), pp. 1-2.

Ming records treat these events, Brook finds patterns that "shaped life and memory… as strongly as any other factor," from the cosmological consequences of dynastic infighting to the relationship between nature and agrarian economies.[14]

Formal military and political institutions constitute the most thoroughly-studied area of Yuan-Ming continuity. Dreyer, Dardess, Waldron, and Hucker all observed that the Ming dynasty copied or adapted many of its early institutions from Yuan models.[15] The Ming military-farming system drew from Yuan systems, as did Ming military organization methods and preference for officers and officials to have practical military skills.[16] In more recent years, early Ming military ideals and traditions, and not just institutions, have received more attention. David Robinson's *Martial Spectacles of the Ming Court* identifies the practices of the royal hunt, archery, and the visual portrayal of Ming emperors as strategies of imperial legitimation shared with other Eurasian empires and the Mongols.[17] Robinson goes a step further and contends that these shared ideas extended through the fifteenth century, and that the Ming did not become culturally or politically isolated in the middle of the 1400s as Morris Rossabi and Wang Gungwu have argued.[18]

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[14] Ibid, p. 2.
[15] Dreyer, *Early Ming China,* pp. 76-87; John Dardess, *Confucianism and Autocracy: Professional Elites in the Founding of the Ming Dynasty* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), pp. 194-5; Arthur Waldron, *The Great Wall of China: From History to Myth* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 81-2, 91; Charles O. Hucker, "Ming government," in *The Cambridge History of China, Volume 8: The Ming Dynasty, 1368-1644, Part 2,* eds. Denis Twitchett and Frederick W. Mote (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 62-76.
[16] Foon Ming Liew, *Tuntian Farming System of the Ming Dynasty, 1368-1644* (Hamburg: Gesellschaft für Natur- und Völkerkunde Ostasiens, 1984), p. 82; Romeyn Taylor, "Yuan origins of the Wei-suo system," in *Chinese Government in Ming Times: Seven Studies,* ed. Charles O. Hucker (New York: Columbia University Press, 1969), p. 24; Edward Dreyer, "Military origins of Ming China," in *The Cambridge History of China, Volume 7: The Ming Dynasty, 1368-1644, Part 1,* eds. Denis Twitchett and Frederick W. Mote (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988), p. 104; Dardess, *Confucianism and Autocracy,* p. 195.
[17] See: David Robinson, *Martial Spectacles of the Ming Court* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013).
[18] Robinson, *Martial Spectacles*, p. 15; Morris Rossabi, "The Ming and Inner Asia," in *The Cambridge History of China, Volume 8,* pp. 246-58; and Wang Gungwu, "Wubai nianqian de Zhongguo yu shijie," in *Ershiyi shiji* No. 2 (1990): p. 98.

Yet gaps remain, and even some of the most recent scholarship limits Yuan-Ming connections to simple legitimating rhetoric.[19] In my interpretation, historians of the Ming sometimes still take its rhetorically-charged court records at face value, especially on the matter of the northern frontier. Zhao Xianhai makes teleological arguments about the nature, purpose, and existence of the Great Wall, citing it decades before it truly existed in its final form, and thus suggesting a far more closed Ming attitude towards the steppe than the Ming actually expressed.[20] In early Ming times, the fortifications that did exist on the northern frontier were called the Nine Garrisons, indicating a concern for steppe security but not the isolationist and exclusively defensive posture that the Great Wall brings to mind.[21] Arthur Waldron's argument that the Great Wall did not exist in any form until the late fifteenth century may require more nuance and precision, but as this dissertation will demonstrate, Ming ideas of empire were much broader than we have supposed, and drew more readily from Yuan precedents than Confucian court language would suggest.

B. SOURCES

Understanding the thoughts and motivations of these Ming rulers and statesmen, perhaps the most institutionally and academically privileged body of elites on the planet in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, is a significant challenge. We only have formal court documents and a few

[19] See, for example, Hodong Kim, "Chinese Legitimation of the Mongol Regime and the Legacy of 'Unification,'" in *Sacred Mandates: Asian International Relations Since Chinggis Khan,* eds. Timothy Brook, Michael van Walt van Praag, and Miek Boltjes, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018), p. 56n100.
[20] Wei Zhanbin, "Zhu Yuanzhang de fangbian sixiang jiqi dui Mingdai fangbian de yingxiang," in *Handan Xueyuan Xuebao*, 15.4 (2005); Shih-Shan Henry Tsai, *Perpetual Happiness: The Ming Emperor Yongle* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2001), p. 156; Zhao Xianhai, *Mingdai jiubian changcheng junzhen shi: Zhongguo bianjiang jiashuo shiye xia de changcheng zhidu shi yanjiu* (Beijing: Shehui kexue wenxian chubanshe, 2012), p. 46.
[21] Wang Yuan-kang, *Harmony and War: Confucian Culture and Chinese Power Politics,* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), p. 122.

personal journals to uncover how they viewed the Ming empire and its immediate past. Particularly for the early Ming era, the politically sterilized entries on court affairs in the *Ming Shilu* 明實錄 constitute the largest body of political documentation we have on the matter. The entries in the *Ming Shilu* (also known as the *Veritable Records of the Ming*) are made up of official transcripts of state affairs discussed in the emperor's court, compiled and organized after the death of an emperor under the supervision of the *daxue shi* 大學士, the grand secretary. The *Ming Taizu Shilu* 明太祖實錄 are the records transcribed and compiled after the Hongwu emperor's death in 1398, while the *Ming Taizong Shilu* 明太宗實錄 are those compiled after the Yongle emperor's death in 1424. Subsequent emperors also have their own similar entries in the *Shilu*. Some are more thorough than others, and all are thoroughly edited to eliminate embarrassing details and unfavorable accounts. The Yongle emperor, for example, ordered the *Shilu* of his father, the Hongwu emperor, rewritten thrice to ensure his own legitimacy was secure after he had taken the throne from his nephew by force in a civil war.

The other major source of Ming documents is the *Ming Shi* 明史, or the *History of the Ming,* part of the *zhengshi* "official histories" that formally coalesced as the "twenty-four histories" during the Qing dynasty. Compiled in the early years of the Qing dynasty (1644-1911), the *Ming Shi* is organized into some three hundred volumes and includes biographical entries and historical documents from the Ming dynasty. The decision of the new Qing state to compile the *Ming Shi* was, quite naturally, a legitimating process that helped cement some level of validity in the fledgling Qing government while it was still undertaking the processes of conquest and consolidation of former Ming territories. This means that early Qing officials, rulers, and statesmen had the opportunity to pick and choose which documents the *Ming Shi* would retain, and which they would discard. This does not mean that the *Ming Shi* is without value, because

there are documents and books in the *Ming Shi* that did not survive elsewhere, but it does mean historians must be conscious of the problems inherent in relying too heavily on these filtered writings.

This dissertation does not rely heavily on the *Ming Shi* for several reasons. The first is that I am primarily interested in how Ming state actors filtered and coded – or did not filter and code – their own attitudes towards the Mongol Yuan. By including items from the Qing-compiled *Ming Shi,* I risk viewing Ming attitudes towards the Mongols through a second Qing filter, and the Qing state had a very different and more direct historiographical and state-building relationship with the Mongols, the Mongol empire, and the Yuan dynasty. The *Ming Shilu* is, in a sense, one step closer to the complicated ways in which Ming state actors viewed their Mongol Yuan past. Note that I am not arguing that the *Ming Shilu* is somehow more accurate or less biased; after all, as mentioned above, it is also a sterilized court document. Rather, I insist that scrutinizing the *Ming Shilu* and identifying its rhetoric, biases, and filters makes circumventing rhetoric/bias/filter easier for the purposes of this dissertation's goals. Indeed, scrutinizing rhetoric/bias/filter is necessary for the methodology of this dissertation, which I detail in the next section.

The other major textual sources this dissertation uses are the *Yuan Shi* 元史*,* the *Da Ming Lü* 大明律*,* and the *Huang Ming Zuxun* 皇明祖訓. Chapter 2 examines several maps from the Song (*Lidai Dili Zhizhang Tu* 歷代地理指掌圖), Yuan (*Yuan Jingshi Dadian* 元經世大典), and Ming (*Da Ming Hunyi Tu* 大明混一圖) and *Guang Yu Tu* 廣與圖), the historiography of which I unpack in that part of the dissertation. I use the *Yuan Shi* (*History of the Yuan*) for precisely the same reason I have chosen to forgo the *Ming Shi:* it was compiled in the early years of the Ming dynasty at the direction of the founding emperor and under the supervision of his officials.

Therefore, anything included in the *Yuan Shi* is necessarily something that the Hongwu emperor, his officials, and the members of his court were willing to include for the sake of legitimation and posterity. Similarly, the first Ming emperor ordered the creation of the *Great Ming Code* and personally wrote and frequently revised the *Ancestral Injunctions*, both of which detail laws, regulations, customs, and proscriptions to state officials and commoners (in the case of the *Great Ming Code*), as well as his own male offspring and their royal descendants (in the case of the *Ancestral Injunctions*). These codices offer insight into the logic behind the early Ming administration, including its methods of maintaining internal order, its measures to ensure dynastic security, and its major domestic and international concerns.

C. METHODOLOGY

Arguing this paper's thesis using these sources, all written and compiled for various reasons, requires a particular approach. I have already mentioned that I will scrutinize the rhetoric, biases, and filters that the authors of Ming state sources used to describe their attitudes towards the Mongol Yuan empire. This process involves examining the relationship between early Ming rhetoric and state-building strategies, including historiographical strategies, legitimating strategies, and military strategies. For instance, how do we interpret early-Ming anti-Mongol rhetoric when other sources (or the very same sources) include positive historical judgements of the Mongol-founded Yuan dynasty?

One answer is that these sources and comments were written for different audiences, for different purposes, and/or at different times. This would mean that early Ming state actors were willing to present a more positive relationship between the Yuan and Ming when it was

politically expedient to do so. Taking politically expedient routes for the sake of state-building is not unique to the Ming, but in the case of the Yuan-Ming transition, it suggests that Ming rulers sometimes had reason to incorporate (rather than unilaterally reject) the Mongol Yuan legacy into early Ming state-building. Identifying the specific circumstances and times at which Ming records take wildly different attitudes towards the Mongols/Yuan helps locate the purpose of each instance of rhetoric. For example, in later entries of the *Ming Shilu* the Hongwu emperor frequently praised Yuan military preparedness and denigrated Song weakness, while in other entries he took fully antagonistic attitudes towards the Mongol conquest of China. In many cases, three spaces of contradiction or alignment suggest the seriousness – or flimsiness – of the rhetoric: 1) contradictory rhetoric between different entries in early Ming records, 2) contradictions between that rhetoric and Ming empire-building actions, and 3) contradictions and alignment between Ming imperial visions and pre-Ming (notably Yuan and Song) imperial visions.

Another answer to the question of anti-Mongol rhetoric is to look at the precise language that Ming state actors used in each rhetorical circumstance, and how that language changed over time. Ming rulers used very specific language when discussing the Mongols and the Yuan, both in terms of the Yuan past and more recent problems with Mongols on the Ming northern frontier. They often differentiated between the Mongols and the Yuan. When the Yongle emperor (r. 1402-1424) used peculiar language to describe the establishment of the Yuan dynasty (元以胡人主中夏 "The Yuan used the Mongols to rule China"), he was deliberately suggesting that the Mongols were only one part of an overall legitimate dynastic empire, and thus a perfectly

acceptable period within China's dynastic past.[22] Ming rulers during the later part of the early period (from about 1424 to 1449) used a variety of language to describe their attitudes towards the Mongols, or towards different Mongol groups, or towards the political status of the Mongols in the Ming ecumene, a phenomenon examined in Chapter 4. The evolution of this language, and the circumstances of its use, help reveal the true purpose of the rhetoric, which often reveals that Ming state-building strategies followed in Yuan footsteps.

Any study of the connections between the Yuan and Ming must include an analysis of military organization, for reasons I detailed in the historiography section above. While Hucker and others observed the wholesale re-application of Yuan military systems under the early Ming government, I go a step further and suggest there are also striking similarities between the strategic goals behind Yuan and Ming military actions, as well as the methods both states used in their attempts to accomplish those goals. This suggests that the Yuan had brought to China a whole new understanding of the northern frontier's place *within* an empire, and introduced new methods for managing it. In order to make the case for these similarities, I will rely on the sources and modern literature to examine the strategic purpose behind the relocation of capitals in the Yuan and Ming, the organization of military fiefdoms under members of the imperial lineage, and the organization of soldiers and campaigns along the steppe frontier.

This study is focused on northern China primarily because this is the area in which the Mongol legacy, and particularly Mongol Yuan state-building practices, were most keenly felt and had the greatest impact. The Yuan era reformulated the nature of strategic concerns along the northern frontier, shaping it into a transition zone much in the same way the Liao and Jin shaped the northeastern frontier. While interactions, tensions, and accommodations between sedentary

[22] MSL, Taizong, *juan* 219, p. 2171. I explore this phrase further in Chapter 2, under the section titled, "The Politics of Historiographical Incorporation."

societies in China and nomadic-pastoralist societies in the steppe had always been one of the key definers of policies and experiences (both of the state and the individual) along the northern frontier, the Yuan, at least for a time, eradicated this longstanding divide by creating a single, lasting empire across it. Early Ming military and strategic concerns were also mostly concerned with recapturing, pacifying, and incorporating this region, and the last major obstacle for the Ming to reconstitute the Yuan empire was the conquest of Mongolia, meaning that the northern frontier took on additional state-building and legitimating dimensions in the early Ming as it never had in the Han or Song.

This dissertation does not discuss the northeastern or northwestern frontiers, beyond their role in early Ming attempts to rebuild Yuan lines of diplomatic communications with other states. I also do not discuss the coastal frontier in east China, Ming relations with Korea, or the southern and western frontiers, all of which presented their own unique challenges and created uniquely vexing problems for the Ming state, as well as complicating the lives of the people living there. Certainly, the Yuan empire changed how later states might approach, manage, and control these regions, but the preponderance of evidence I muster on Ming attitudes towards the Yuan past and Ming interpretations of Yuan state-building deals with the northern frontier. Material does exist on the same matter for other frontiers, but in the interests of maintaining some level of focus among the many avenues of inquiry this dissertation considers, I will remain concerned primarily with the north.

D. TERMINOLOGY AND DEFINITIONS

This study focuses on a politically and ethnically fluid region of China, the northern steppe frontier. No single feature, geographic or man-made, demarcated a border between the early-Ming state and the fractured post-Yuan Mongol polities in the steppe region. It was only in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth century that the Ming constructed the Great Wall as we know it today, and until then, the steppe frontier and northern China were in a constant state of flux. Therefore, scholars must be careful to define what we mean when we use terms like "China" and "empire," as well as descriptors of populations like "Chinese," "Mongol," and even "ethnicity" in the pre-modern context.

First, how should historians describe the Ming polity? Was Ming China an empire? The question of whether or not the Ming dynasty can be called an empire remains unanswered. Ming scholars (and scholars of China in general) refer to "empires" almost haphazardly, assuming that the large territorial expanse of most dynasties alone means that those dynasties were also empires.[23] What is the relationship between Chinese dynasties and empires? Does "dynasty" imply empire? Does the fact that "empire" comes from a Western European historical and scholastic context mean the term is inapplicable to the Chinese historical experience? If the Mongol empire was an empire (and it was, or else the term itself becomes meaningless), but the Ming dynasty was not, does that change how historians should interpret the Yuan-Ming transition? In light of this, the question of what "empire" meant in China should come under examination, especially considering 1) the baggage attached to Latin roots of the term "empire" itself, and 2) the influence of nomadic steppe-based political forces upon China. The term has

[23] See, for example: abstracts from *Scaling the Ming: International Conference,* held at the University of British Columbia, May 18-19, 2018. https://mingstudies.sites.olt.ubc.ca/files/2018/04/Scaling-the-Ming-2018-Abstracts.pdf

described polities across a great span of human history, from the Akkadian Empire of the late third millennium BCE to the interventionist activities of the United States in the post-Soviet unipolar world.[24] It encompasses territorially large and contiguous states like the Mongol and Russian empires, maritime units like the Spanish and British Empires of early-modern Europe, multilingual and multicultural collections such as the united Habsburg domains under Charles V, and the cyclical resurgence of semi- or fully bureaucratized regimes in China.

In the Chinese written language, "empire" (*diguo* 帝國) is a modern term originating in the nineteenth century, and to my knowledge, until very recently no scholars have seriously asked if any pre-modern East Asian political terms are equivalent to empire, or are appropriate for use exclusively in East Asian history. Timothy Brook initiated a re-examination of this issue in 2016, proposing that scholars should reintroduce "great state" (*daguo* 大國) in modern academic discussions of China's imperial past and history of state formation.[25] The states of Song, Yuan, and Ming all used the term "great state" in the form of *da* as a descriptor (e.g. *Da Song* 大宋, *Da Yuan,* 大元, *Da Ming* 大明). Earlier dynasties did so as well, but not to the same extent or with the same frequency. The latest work to examine the nature of large states in East Asia, and the relationships between East Asian states, is *Sacred Mandates,* which seeks to understand how political traditions in China and East Asia differed from those in the modernist European-based paradigm of international relations, and how political traditions among East Asian states differed from each other. Notably for the interests of this study, the departure point of *Sacred Mandates* is the Mongol empire and the thirteenth century, a polity that fundamentally changed ideas about state-building and rulership across Eurasia: "No successor state escaped the

[24] See: Eric Robinson, "American Empire? Ancient Reflections on Modern American Power," in *Classical World* 99.1 (2005): p. 35-50.
[25] Timothy Brook, "Great States," in *The Journal of Asian Studies* 75.4 (2016): pp. 957-972.

powerful shadow of these innovations."[26] This included China, and therefore it included the immediate successor of the Mongol Yuan dynasty in China, the Ming.

Getting back to the applicability of "empire," while questioning the haphazard application of "empire" to the Ming polity is an appropriate endeavor, I also ask the opposite question: why is it problematic to call the largest, most populous, and richest political entity in the fifteenth-century world an empire? If the answer is because the Ming dynasty was more culturally, ethnically, or politically homogenous than the empires of, say, the Ottomans or Spain, then that places the 80 million subjects and 2.5 million square miles of the fifteenth-century Ming in the same category as the 2 million subjects and 50,000 square miles of fifteenth-century England. As I suggest in Chapter 2 of this dissertation, large areas of China were likely ethnically and culturally diverse, particularly the northern frontier region (thanks to Mongol influences) and especially the southwest in what is today Yunnan and Sichuan (not covered in this dissertation), which were only sparsely settled and governed by the metropolitan core regions of the Ming. Thus, it seems appropriate that whatever definition of "empire" a given historian might choose, the Ming dynasty ought to be referred to as an "empire" thanks to its territorial size, population, diversity, multitude of governing methods in remote regions, and the effect of the Mongol legacy on Ming-era inter-state relations.

The term "China" also requires definition. I use "China" to mean a geographical region roughly corresponding to what has also been called "inner China" or "China proper:"[27] that is, the provinces of the modern People's Republic except Tibet, Xinjiang, Qinghai, Inner Mongolia,

[26] Brook et al., *Sacred Mandates: Asian International Relations Since Chinggis Khan* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018), p. 25-6.
[27] Surveys and textbooks continue the use of terms like "China proper." See, for example: Patricia Ebrey and Anne Walthall, *Pre-Modern East Asia to 1800: A Cultural , Social, and Political History, Third Edition* (Boston: Wadsworth, 2014), p. 9.

Heilongjiang, Jilin, and to varying extents Liaoning. When I refer to China in the premodern period, I do not refer to a political entity, but this region whose major historical events have centered on the North China Plain, and which has been largely populated by sedentary agriculturalists. Ethnic/cultural labels like "Chinese" and "Mongol" are more difficult to pin down, and untangling ethnicity in pre-modern China is a challenging task. China's long history and appearance of three millennia of unbroken continuity masks latent national primordialism in approaches to Chinese history. Most scholars today openly use the terms "China" and "Chinese" to describe all imperial dynastic states and their inhabitants, a simplification that most of those same historians readily acknowledge is problematic. Because modern China can lay claim to the vast majority of this history without having to dispel competitive arguments from other nation-states, there exists no universal, alternative terminology or intellectual framework to analyze ethnicity in pre-modern China. Modern treatments of China's past overtly or inadvertently presuppose development toward the Chinese nation-state.[28]

In this light, I have chosen to use Naomi Standen's *Unbounded Loyalty,* a book on tenth- and eleventh-century Song-Liao relations, as the bedrock for my multi-century interpretation of cultural-ethnic identity transformations in China. Standen rightly describes the "concept of ethnicity" as "the greatest obstacle" in understanding tenth-century frontier studies. The political subjects of her study in *Unbounded Loyalty* – the Liao Dynasty and the Song Dynasty – have "routinely been described as Kitan and Chinese, labels that imply – however unintentionally – the existence of ethnic groups in the distant past that can accordingly serve as the roots of

[28] See: Prasenjit Duara, *Rescuing History from the Nation: Questioning Narratives of Modern China* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995); and Morris Rossabi, "Chinese Myths About the National Minorities: the Case of Qubilai," *Central and Inner Asian Studies* 1 (1987): pp. 47-81.

modern nations."[29] Standen carefully considers ethnic and cultural categories in her work. Without repeating all of her nuanced unpacking of the longstanding problems of ethnicity in the historian's field, I shall instead offer her thoughts:

> Cultural identity may be felt or ascribed, by individuals or by groups, but it does not become *ethnic* identity until political meaning is ascribed to cultural differences in the context of a struggle for control at the level of the state… It is only when cultural identity becomes the basis for asserting or claiming advantage (social, economic, but above all political) that it becomes ethnicity. … In other words, ethnicity cannot exist in and of itself, but only comes into being when there are advantageous contrasts to be made.[30]

Standen further warns that the historiography surrounding the "conquest dynasties" of the Liao, Jin, and Qing have framed the relationships between these states and "Chinese" states to their south along ethnic lines, particularly as *han-hu* 漢胡 relations ("Han Chinese" and "northern barbarians"). I agree with Standen's assertion that "If one assumes that ethnic thinking was fundamental to these interactions, it is no surprise if you find it going on…" and I further think that, if such a problem is inherent in the study of "non-Chinese" states existing alongside "Chinese" ones, then the reverse is true as well.[31] Studying the early Ming, which existed alongside the autonymic Northern Yuan (and its various successor groups) suffers from the same problem. Standen questions how applicable an ethnic framework of this manner is to Liao-Song relations, and for the same reasons, I also question its applicability to relations between the early Ming state and the fractured Mongol polities, *as well as* the early Ming relationship *to its immediate Mongol past.* In essence, I take Standen's thoughts on cultural-ethnic identity in East Asia outside of the study of state-to-state relations and apply them to the study of a state's and rulers' own self-perceived history.

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[29] Naomi Standen, *Unbounded Loyalty: Frontier Crossing in Liao China* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2006), p. 26.
[30] Ibid, p. 28-9.
[31] Ibid.

On the matter of proper terminology, I will take Prasenjit Duara's warning and attempt to avoid using terms and narratives that imply the eventual formation of the modern Chinese nation-state. Just as Standen has done, I will attempt to maintain specific uses of terms like "Chinese," "Khitan," "Jurchen," or "Mongol," endeavoring to use them to describe cultural groups within the states of the Song, Liao, Jin and Yuan, and not the states themselves. This is an important measure because northern China was still home to many Mongols after the collapse of the Yuan dynasty, and Mongols served as military soldiers under the Yongle emperor, whose is the subject of a significant part of this dissertation.

E. CHAPTER OVERVIEW

Chapter 1 goes back to the question of "empire." It discusses how we can apply the term "empire" to early Ming China, and investigates the historical background of empire in East Asia. This is a particularly difficult question to ask because the word "empire" and the ideas associated with it necessarily come from Western contexts, experiences, and languages. Therefore, Chapter 1 asks what "empire" meant for state-builders in China's history. What did it mean for China's pre-Yuan history? Post-Yuan? How did the Mongols change mental and physical constructions of empire in East Asia, and how did this change state-building practices in China? From here, the chapters examines post-Mongol imperial structures in a broader Eurasian scope in order to reconsider the centrality of the two notable phenomena examined in this dissertation: the construction of the Great Wall and the Tumu Crisis. Here, the chapter identifies two historiographical problems. First: the monolithic nature of the Great Wall in mythos, modern perceptions, and physical reality have overshadowed its more mundane and practical purposes.

Second: the modern Sinologist's focus on the heavy Confucian, anti-barbarian rhetoric in Ming records of the Tumu Crisis inhibit our ability to think outside a strictly Sinological Chinese-barbarian dichotomy. The solution is to look at the historiographies of other Eurasian empires that interacted politically and militarily with nomadic groups after the age of the Mongol empire. In the first case, I study the historiography behind strategic wall-building along steppe frontiers in early-modern Muscovite Russia. In the second case, I study the historiography behind the Ottoman-Timurid conflicts and Tamerlane's victory over (and capture of) the Ottoman sultan Bayezid I (r. 1389-1403).

Overemphasis on rhetoric suggests the Chinese historical experience with steppe nomads was unique, when it was not. By rejecting the Great Wall as a unique Chinese construction and symbol, we can consider the fortification-based steppe strategies undertaken by both the Ming and Muscovite states as fundamentally comparable, thus opening new possibilities of study for post-Mongol, early-modern Eurasian empires. We can take a similar steppe when comparing the Oirat victory and capture of the Zhengtong emperor in 1449 and the Timurid victory and capture of Bayezid I: by examining the differences in the political circumstances of China and Anatolia, and the different reactions to these crises made by the successors of Bayezid and the Zhengtong emperor, we can re-frame China's relationship with the steppe not as one of fundamental incompatability and antagonism, but as one of rational choice among the options available to an established, wealthy, bureaucratic empire. This serves to create a framework for the remainder of the dissertation, one that avoids narrow Sinocentric approaches by 1) asking how the Mongol Yuan changed state-building in China, and 2) asking how scholars examining early Ming state-building can use other historiographies and lenses to dislodge some of the most common Sinocentric biases.

Chapter 2 delves into the visions of empire promulgated by Ming rulers and court officials in the early years of the Ming dynasty. The three best sources for this inquiry are legal codes, spatial representations (i.e. maps), and the formally organized court records of the *Ming Shilu.* An investigation of the legal codes of the Yuan and Ming, as well as the "non-Han" states of the Khitan Liao dynasty (907-1125) and the Jurchen Jin dynasty (1125-1234) suggests that, between the tenth and fourteenth centuries, empires in continental East Asia became ever more concerned with grouping their subjects based on cultural-political classifications. Ironically, while early Ming rulers promulgated codes designed to bury Mongol customs and reintroduce "Chinese" customs, the very legal framework behind cultural-political classifications derived from the administrative practices of previous "non-Chinese" empires, including the Mongol Yuan, the Jurchen Jin (1125-1234) and the Khitan Liao (907-1125). No such formalized codes existed in the Song dynasty. At the same time, an investigation of the earliest Ming map, the *Da Ming Hunyi Tu* 大明混一圖 (*Amalgamated Map of the Great Ming*) suggests that it represents a far more geographically open and expansive vision of empire more closely in line with the imperial depictions of Yuan maps than those of Song or later Ming maps. In conjunction with an analysis of imperial rhetoric in Ming analysis of China's history, we can view how Ming rulers interpreted their relationship with the Yuan and Song, and the older dynasties of the Tang and Han.

Chapter 3 examines the Yuan origins of early Ming military systems and bureaucratic operations. Here I argue that Ming strategic concerns largely mirrored those of the Yuan, and the Ming made similar strategic decisions to solve similar problems. As established above, historians have long observed how the early Ming administration used Yuan military organization systems as models for their own, at times copying Mongol precedents wholesale. This chapter begins

with an overview of these systems, and returns to the connections between Yuan and Ming models, including military paths to high officialdom and the strategic imperatives behind the steppe campaigns of the Ming Hongwu and Yongle emperors. Chapter 3 also examines Yuan appanages and the early Ming princedoms, and argues that these two systems derived from similar strategic considerations with regards to how each maintained territorial security, stability, and the loyalty and efficacy of the dynasty's military apparatus. Mongol Yuan appanages and early Ming frontier princedoms served similar roles in securing the military integrity of the empire, and represent an evolution in the imperial center's thought on how to maintain strong regional militaries while avoiding the centrifugal diffusion of power away from the capital. In both cases, the establishment of the capital on the steppe frontier in northern China – modern Beijing – represented a geographical compromise between the need to govern the agriculturally and commercially productive central empire and the need to maintain steppe security.

Chapter 4 broadly looks at the era after the death of the Yongle emperor (r. 1402-1424), the last Ming ruler to lead or launch successful expeditions into Mongolia. Specifically, this chapter examines when and why Ming imaginations of empire became smaller and more territorially reserved than the expansive imperial vision held by the Ming founders. The Tumu Crisis of 1449, in which the Zhengtong emperor led an army afield and was defeated and captured by the Oirat Mongol warlord Esen, serves as a distinct marker of the low point of Ming imperial ability. After the Crisis, the Ming government commenced the centralized construction of what we know today as the Great Wall. Chapter 4 analyzes the Ming records surrounding the Tumu Crisis to determine if the rhetoric surrounding Ming imperial ambitions changed owing to military defeat, political emergency, and the dramatic changeover of leadership following the Zhengtong emperor's capture. This event, then, marks the end of a broadly "post-Yuan" era of

the Ming empire, in which the Ming state bent both Mongol imperial ideals and structures towards recapturing the territorial prestige of the Yuan dynasty.

Chapter 5 aims to synthesize the work of the previous four chapters. Here, I construct new chronologies and frameworks for Ming history, and the place of the Ming dynasty in Eurasia and world history. The first chronology is a new narrative of the early Ming dynasty, emphasizing its relationship with the Yuan. The second is a discussion of how historians can approach state-building in post-Mongol Eurasia. The third is a discussion of the the place of the late Ming and Qing within two frameworks: late imperial China, and world history. These chronologies rewrite the history of empires and state-building in China, carefully considers the role of nomadic steppe polities as part of an integrative history of continental East Asia, and thoroughly integrates China into a larger world of post-Mongol polities following the collapse of the Mongol empire and the decline of its Mongol successor states. Instead of connecting Ming China to the world exclusively through the maritime silver trade, I build additional bridges overland and consider the Ming dynasty as part of a global phenomenon of post-Mongol empires and beyond. In analyzing the Mongol legacy in China, rather than skipping over the Ming to rush to the Qing, I continue this legacy through the early Ming years and regard the period between 1500 and 1644 as the "outlier" period, rather than ignoring the Ming entirely as an inheritor of the post-Mongol Eurasian heritage.

In the end, this dissertation aims to reformulate the Ming dynasty's place in the post-Mongol world, re-center the Yuan as a transformative force in Chinese history, and connect the Ming dynasty to a larger early-modern Eurasian arena. The Manchu-founded Qing often appears in historiography as China's Mongol successor state. The Ming occupied nearly three hundred years between the fall of the Mongol Yuan and the Manchu conquest of China. Surely the

Mongol legacy did not wait for a semi-nomadic people to reemerge in China when the time was right. If we are to properly consider the Mongol legacy in China, we must look for new ways to connect successive periods of history.

II. CHAPTER 1: IDEAS OF EMPIRE IN CHINA, MONGOL EURASIA, AND THE POST-MONGOL WORLD

The complicated political history of China prior to the establishment of the Ming dynasty (1368-1644) and the Mongol Yuan's tenure of rule over China would suggest that the Ming must have inherited some portion of the imperial legacy of the Mongols. For much of the twentieth century, historians have assumed that the Ming was, on some level, isolationist and that the Ming court was xenophobic to the point of open hostility to the Mongol past.[32] Historians recently have produced a significant body of scholarship in the last decade that complicates this interpretation.[33] Concurrently, the production of world historical approaches to Chinese history has challenged older scholastic methods that take continental East Asia as a relatively insular unit, instead drawing fascinating and complicated connections between China and the rest of Eurasia.[34] It is increasingly apparent that China's numerous states did not develop – and could not have developed – for two millennia in isolation from Eurasian influences. It is also evident that, as was the case in some eras, lack of direct or indirect contact across Eurasia's extremes does not preclude investigation of the similarities in imperial creations between China and

[32] Sugiyama Masaaki, *Mongoru teikoku no kōbō: Gunji kakudai no jidai* (Tokyo: Kondansha, 1996), pp. 231-35; Sugiyama, *Dai Mongoru no jidai* (Tokyo: Chuo Koron Shinsha, 2008), pp. 248-51; Rossabi, "The Ming and Inner Asia," pp. 246-58; and Miya Noriko, *Mongoru jidai no shuppan bunka* (Nagoya: Nagoya Daigaku Shuppankai, 2006), p. 568.
[33] See: Smith and von Glahn, eds., *The Song-Yuan-Ming Transition in Chinese History* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003); Robinson, *Martial Spectacles*; Brook, *The Troubled Empire.*
[34] See: Jonathan Skaff, *Sui-Tang China and its Turko-Mongol Neighbors: Culture, Power, and Connections, 580-800* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012); Stephen Kotkin, "Mongol Commonwealth? Exchange and Governance Across the Post-Mongol Space," in *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History,* 8.3 (Summer 2007), pp. 487-531, esp. 498; this chapter also references several works on Roman-Chinese comparisons.

elsewhere in Eurasia, or between the Ming and the Yuan. In light of this, the question of what "empire" meant in China should be reinterpreted, especially considering the baggage attached to Latin roots of the term "empire" itself, and the influence of nomadic steppe-based political forces upon China.

This chapter asks two questions: 1) how did non-Chinese states and empires change forms and perceptions of empire in China, and 2) how can we look at the historiographies of other post-Mongol Eurasian empires to reinterpret Ming relations with steppe nomads and Eurasia at large? I will begin by retelling, as succinctly as possible, the long narrative of China's imperial history. The difference in this narrative, however, is I will make significant room for steppe states, both those founded by nomadic groups as well as Chinese dynasties that ruled parts of the steppe. The first part of the narrative begins by looking at the pre-Yuan dynastic history of China, seeking the patterns and justifications of state-building that China's rulers used prior to the Mongol conquest. I will discuss how the new ideas of empire in the Qin dynasty (221 BCE – 206 BCE) solidified during the Han dynasty (206 BCE – 220 CE). Those ideas of empire then underwent radical, long-term transformations when nomadic political forces in northern China established empires that encompassed significant populations of both Eurasian steppe nomads and Chinese sedentary agriculturalists. These transformations continued during the Tang dynasty (618-907), whose rulers and statesmen built an empire based on unprecedented levels of nomadic incorporation, accommodative political strategies, and the combination of Eurasian steppe and Chinese models of sovereignty. After the fall of the Tang, Song-era ideas of empire became territorially smaller and culturally more exclusive, but the Song state was only one among several. Other contemporary empires, particularly the semi-nomadic Khitan Liao and Jurchen Jin, continued the previous millennium's traditions of fused politics. Finally, the narrative

discusses the Mongol empire itself, and asks what empire meant for the Mongols and how their innovations influenced and altered previous patterns of empire-building in China. The Mongols created an unprecedented empire, the largest continuous land polity in human history. They also conquered the core agricultural territories of China and deployed a huge array of steppe political practices as a means of administering a vast, populous, and largely agricultural region with different cultural origins. Ideas of empire once more underwent change in twelfth and thirteenth-century China, this time under the rule of the Mongol Yuan Dynasty.

The second part of this chapter rewrites the narrative of Chinese history immediately following the collapse of the Yuan (i.e. the early Ming) by taking a Eurasian-wide lens, unseating embedded notions of Chinese-barbarian dichotomies, and situating the Ming imperial experience within a broader Eurasian context. Namely, I will look at a cataclysmic military conflict with steppe nomads: the Tumu Crisis of 1449 during which a Ming emperor was defeated and captured by a Mongol general, and the subsequent construction of the Great Wall. The fortifications you and I can visit outside of Beijing were built in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth century as part of a grand strategic project to provide an additional layer of defense against nomadic incursion. Sometime in the last five centuries, popular perception associated the Great Wall with an eternal boundary between the steppe and agricultural worlds, but recent scholars, particularly Arthur Waldron, have demonstrated that the physical object and the *idea* of "the" Great Wall did not exist until the late fifteenth century.[35] While past Chinese empires did construct lengthy fortifications on the steppe frontier, they were not part of a grand strategy as they were in the Ming. Nonetheless, the Tumu Crisis and the Great Wall loom as enormous physical and mental phenomena in the history of Chinese steppe-sedentary relations. I wish to

[35] Waldron, *The Great Wall of China.*

take a new approach to understanding these phenomena. My approach is to look to the historiographies of two Eurasian land empires contemporary to the Ming: Muscovite Russia and the early Ottoman polity. By looking to other historiographies, I hope to unseat some of the still-latent assumptions that Ming historians often hold when approaching relations between the sedentary agricultural and nomadic steppe worlds. My goal is to examine how historians of these regions have approached phenomena similar to those so ubiquitous in Chinese history: wall-building as a defensive strategy against nomadic incursion, and the historiographical handling of military defeat at the hands of steppe nomads. The Muscovite state constructed long fortifications intended to protect the core of the polity (Moscow) against incursion from the Crimean steppe. The early Ottoman ruler Bayezid I (r. 1389-1402) fought against the powerful Turco-Mongol ruler Tamerlane, and was defeated and captured, leaving his realm in a state of crisis, similar to the state of the Ming after the Zhengtong emperor's defeat and capture.

A. EMPIRE IN PRE-MING CHINA

1. WHAT IS EMPIRE? THE MODERN ACADEMIC DEBATE AND THE CASE OF CHINA

In Chinese historiography it is easy to talk about the Han empire, the Tang empire, and the Song empire, – or even the "Chinese empire" – despite the fact that, as we will see below, these states functioned in dramatically different ways and whose rulers and inhabitants had different self-concepts of what their political units meant. There is also the problem of the term "empire," which is embedded in the European context and derives from the Latin *imperium*. The question of what we, living in the twenty-first century, should consider a historical or modern empire has

been addressed many times before. Michael Doyle described empires as "relationships of political control imposed by some political societies over the effective sovereignty of other political societies."[36] This bare-bones description, critiqued and expanded since then, permeates an aura of truth in a simplistic sense. It suggests, as Doyle describes in his work, the imposition of hegemony by one group over others, often with the retention of preexisting political structures in the subordinate group, resulting in the creation of a large and far-flung unity of disparate organizations all answering to a single source of power that maintains its position through military, political, and/or economic coercion. Some historical empires fall neatly into this description, like the Ottoman Empire, which was arranged in an *ad hoc* patchwork of provinces whose function, geography and administration changed depending on the strategic needs of the empire as a whole.[37] Others, like the highly bureaucratized Song dynasty of China, appear to be constructions of more-or-less willing participants in the endeavor of empire, all of whom, according to dominant historiography, shared a Confucian cultural foundation that diminished the need to coercively include them into the state.[38]

In recent years scholars have returned to empire. Charles Maier deconstructs and expands the classic definition of empire as "control by conquest or coercion" and "control [of] the political loyalty of the territories it subjugates."[39] In this classical sense, "an empire is characterized by size, by ethnic hierarchization, and by a regime that centralizes power but enlists diverse social and/or ethnic elites in its management."[40] For Maier, empires have three

[36] Michael Doyle, *Empires* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986), p. 19.
[37] Karen Barkey, *Empire of Difference: The Ottomans in Comparative Perspective* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p. 83-93.
[38] See: Frederick W. Mote, *Imperial China, 900-1800* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), p. 92-167; and Peter Bol, *Neo-Confucianism in History* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010).
[39] Charles Maier, *Among Empires: American Ascendancy and Its Predecessors* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006), p. 24-5.
[40] Ibid, p. 31.

major components: voluntary or semi-voluntary cooperation from transnational elites, military force, and ultimate collapse.[41] In contrast, states that did not necessarily require the coercive incorporation of non-inclusive identities were perhaps not empires. According to Maier, this means that Japan, whose inhabitants "recognized themselves as a single people," was not imperial until Japanese annexation of Hokkaido, Taiwan and Korea, despite the traditional translation of *tennō* and *kōtei* as "emperor."[42] The disjuncture between titles and political formations repeats itself in Europe, as Christian popes claimed the Augustian title *Pontifex Maximus* and all its imperial connotations after the collapse of the Roman Empire.[43] Emperors do not make empire, and empires do not need emperors.

Jane Burbank and Frederick Cooper further advanced the thesis of difference, describing empires as territorially expansive and expansionist polities that "maintain distinction and hierarchy as they incorporate new people."[44] Empires have historically been diverse but do not altruistically embrace diversity. They learned to "manage their unlike populations" as a means of finding ways to "both exploit and rule."[45] This thesis differentiates empires from nation-states in the intellectual – but not necessarily actual – sense, in that nation-states *imagine* their citizens as a culturally, linguistically, and/or politically homogenized body.[46] Burbank and Cooper offer an explanation for why what we call empires have emerged and re-emerged over the past several thousand years, and why they seem to inevitably create hierarchies of difference: ambitious societies or leaders can only expand their own power (or the power of those they purport to

[41] Ibid, p. 36, 70, 76.
[42] Ibid, p. 40.
[43] See: Mason Hammond, *The Augustan Principate in Theory and Practice During the Julio-Claudian Period* (New York: Russell and Russell, 1968).
[44] Jane Burbank and Frederick Cooper, *Empires in World History: Power and the Politics of Differenc*e (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), p. 8.
[45] Ibid, p. 2.
[46] Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983), p. 6.

represent) at the expense of others, but not always in a process that completely disenfranchised those others.[47] Empires inevitably incorporate unlike groups into their structures, and those empires whose systems fell apart did so because they failed to accommodate those groups (or their elites). Such failures tended to engender resistance to imperial structures.

Turning to China, how applicable and relevant is the current academic debate over empire to the premodern dynastic polities? In these descriptions, the theme of domination by one group over others repeats itself, often with implicit or explicit structures of cultural hierarchy, and with the coercion or cooperation of elites. Empires also tend to experience entropy and collapse, especially if they do not negotiate with powerful constituents. Two long-held conclusions about China have vexed scholarly attempts to account for China's imperial history in the global history of empires. First, as we will see below, in both Europe and China the foundational empires of those regions provided durable intellectual models for the ambitions of subsequent empires. However, in Europe the claimants to Rome's legacy never again re-established the vast territorial unit of the Roman Empire.[48] In China, the heirs of Qin were successful in re-establishing more-or-less territorially similar polities over and over again, especially after the late sixth century, and permanently after the thirteenth. Second, the historiography of China suggests that China's empires defy the diversity component of imperial theory. China, it appears, has always been Chinese (or even Han), and its inhabitants have since the Qin and Han Dynasties shared a common cultural tradition centered primarily on Confucianism, with elements of Buddhism and Daoism.[49]

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[47] Burbank and Cooper, *Empires in World History,* p. 9, 14.
[48] With the possible exception of the Eastern Roman Empire at its height under Justinian (r. 527-565), which included the most prosperous regions of the former Roman Empire.
[49] See, for example, the introductions of: Mote, *Imperial China,* p. 5; Charles Benn, *China's Golden Age: Everyday Life in the Tang Dynasty* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 2; or the treatment of Chinese, Ming, and Confucian-era philosophy as stemming from a single Chinese category in the preface of Alastair Iain Johnston,

Isolating the first millennium of China's imperial history challenges the first conclusion. Between the founding of the Qin Dynasty in 221 BCE and the founding of the Song Dynasty in 960 CE, 370 of those 1180 years (or about one-third) were eras of disunity. This calculation also generously grants the first part of the short-lived Chin dynasty[50] (265 CE – 420) and the heavily decentralized Tang dynasty (618 CE – 907) after the An Lushan Rebellion in 755 to the "unified" category. The next three hundred years, from about 960 to 1279, hardly constitute one of "unity," because the Song Dynasty existed alongside a variety of polities in what has been called continental East Asia's first multistate system;[51] and from 1127 the entirety of China north of the Huai River was governed by the Jurchen-founded Jin Dynasty. It was only after the unification-by-conquest of continental East Asia under the Mongols that what we call China was, for the most part, permanently unified in a single polity until the early twentieth century, and it was not until the Qing conquest of Tibet and the Zunghar Mongols in the eighteenth century that the borders of the modern People's Republic more or less became what they are today.

The second conclusion is harder to challenge, because many scholarly works still describe a single "Han" people that made up most of the inhabitants of China's successive empires in opposition to barbarian "*hu*."[52] Often scholars acknowledge that the term "Han" used ethnically is problematic, and even if it was employed in contemporary pre-modern records, it usually had a connotation of "civilization" as opposed to "barbarism," but these scholars tend to fall back on the use of "Han" or "Chinese" as monolithic, with caveats admitting the

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Cultural Realism: Strategic Culture and Grand Strategy in Chinese History (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995).

[50] Here I use the alternate Wade-Giles Romanization for "Jin," to avoid confusion with the Jurchen-founded Jin Dynasty (1125-1234).

[51] See: Morris Rossabi, ed. *China Among Equals: the Middle Kingdom and Its Neighbors, 10th-14th Centuries* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983).

[52] Liu Pujiang, "Shuo 'hanren': Liao Jin shidai minzi ronghe de yige cemian," in *Minzu yanjiu* (1998:6), pp. 57-65; or Farmer, *Zhu Yuanzhang and Early Ming Legislation,* p. 4.

oversimplification.[53] This has less to do with their own oversight and more to do with the fact that relatively few works attempting to break down and understand Han self-identity in pre-Qing periods have been produced. Nonetheless, it is evident that at least in the borderlands of China's empires, imperial subjects were ethnically diverse, identity was fluid, and the metropole's intellectual categorization of various "non-Han" groups broke down as oversimplifications themselves.[54] China has *not* always been Chinese in all places.

I do not purport to offer an explanation for why empires have continually reformed in the geographic area we call China, nor why this phenomenon is virtually nonexistent anywhere else in the world.[55] More informed scholars than I have offered various answers. Burbank and Cooper suggest that the ability of the state in China to tie elite fortunes directly to its own treasury and the capital, its ability to radiate centralized bureaucratic authority to the countryside, and its capacity to ensure elite resources did not derive from privately held estates, all encouraged a tradition of service to a unified realm rather than local interests outside the state's purview.[56] Rosenthal and Wong argue that unique historical contingencies, including the frequency and nature of interstate war, account for the discrepancy between European fragmentation and Chinese unification.[57] I also do not aim to break down the specifics of ethnic identity in any era of China's history. Instead, as Chapter 2 will discuss, the Ming Dynasty was the intellectual inheritor of a long tradition of political history, Confucian tradition, and a recent tumultuous

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[53] Naomi Standen, "(Re) Constructing the Frontiers of Tenth-Century North China," *Frontiers in Question: Eurasian Borderlands, 700-1700* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998), p. 60; and Skaff, *Sui-Tang China,* p. 54.
[54] See: Marc Abramson, *Ethnic Identity in Tang China* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008).
[55] I suspect, in the framework of my calculation of China's years of "disunity" versus "unity," scholars still conflate the reality of China's frequent disunity with the rhetoric and textual traditions that China's empires drew upon to stake their imperial claims. Emperors and statesmen themselves may have imagined and textually constructed a genealogy of historically "orthodox" rule, but this does not mean we should imagine that it truly existed as a monolithic narrative.
[56] Burbank and Cooper, *Empires in World History,* pp. 56-59.
[57] See chapter 4 in: Jean-Laurent Rosenthal and R. Bin Wong, *Before and Beyond Divergence: The Politics of Economic Change in China and Europe* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011).

history of Mongol rule. The cumulative textual experience that early Ming rulers and statesmen drew upon to fashion their empire had changed over time. The writers and thinkers of prior empires had filtered history through a narrow sieve of textual tradition. However, the chaotic nature of the Yuan-Ming transition and the lived experiences of the Ming founder and his successors were often so great as to overflow this sieve, even as Confucian literati strove to reconstruct an idealized model of civil governance in the fashion of antiquity. Empire meant something very different to its early Ming constructors than it had for their sources of inspiration, the ancient kings of the Xia, Shang and Zhou, and the Han dynasty.

2. WARRING STATES AND QIN-HAN CHINA

As mentioned in the introduction, the Mandarin term for empire, *diguo*, is a modern word. No single precise term or word exists in Classical Chinese that describes the consciously organized territorial polities of great size that continually reformed in Inner China.[58] How did China's empire-builders imagine empire? Something unique happened with the Qin, whose founding emperor knew he was building something new, and did not claim to be a successor of the Zhou beyond observing that he had surpassed its weak, decentralized model.[59] But simply returning to the Warring States Period (5th cen. – 221 BCE) and the Qin-Han dynasties and examining records does not reveal further obvious answers. Michael Nylan has observed that, perhaps in response to the lack of clear terminology for "empire" in the official documents of the time, "modern histories routinely translate as 'empire' two terms – *tianxia* ('All-under-Heaven') and *junxian* ('commandery/county') – since both imply sovereign rule over extensive territories.

[58] Here I use Inner China to describe the territory of the modern PRC, except Tibet, Xinjiang, Heilongjiang, Jilin, northern Inner Mongolia and eastern Liaoning.
[59] Hodong Kim, "Chinese Legitimation of the Mongol Regime and the Legacy of 'Unification,'" p. 49.

Neither term connotes temporary military power (unlike the Latin *imperium*), and the two compounds rarely appear together in the same essay or treatise."[60] We need a more nuanced approach. I will discard any attempt to find exact equivalents to the English "empire" (or the Latin *imperium*) before the Mongol empire. Instead, in addition to the terms *tianxia* ("All under Heaven" 天下) and *junxian* ("commandery and county" 郡縣), this chapter will also briefly consider *hainei* ("within the seas" 海內), its expanded version *sihai zhi nei* ("[the realm] within the four seas" 四海之內), and *yitong* ("to unify" or "unified" 一統).

The political order of the Warring States and Qin-Han eras was part of a greater organized moral cosmos defined by *tianxia,* or All-under-Heaven."[61] *Tianxia,* in turn, referred to the "lands and activities under the beneficent supervision of the ancestors of the ruling house. … Thus, employment of the term *tianxia* always signals the author's concern with the moral dimension of the authority [of the ruling house]."[62] This concept, in the history that all educated officials and scholars understood in the Warring States era, recalled the moral ecumene of the Zhou Dynasty (11th cen. – 771 BCE),[63] which had originally dispatched relatives of the noble house to settle and govern an expanded region beyond the "royal" territories of the Zhou dynastic state and its predecessors.[64] The Warring States period earned its name from the subsequent generational weakening of ties between the Zhou and its cadet branches, and the Zhou's gradual loss of power to its regional subordinates. By the 5th century BCE, open conflict among the various states signaled the final termination of actual Zhou authority, but not the

[60] Michael Nylan, "The Rhetoric of 'Empire' in the Classical Era in China," in *Conceiving the Empire: China and Rome Compared,* eds. Fritz-Heiner Mutschler and Achim Mittag (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 42.
[61] Achim Mittag, "Forging Legacy: the Pact between Empire and Historiography in Ancient China," in *Conceiving the Empire.*
[62] Nylan, "The Rhetoric of 'Empire'," p. 42-3.
[63] 771 BCE is the date most modern historians mark as the end of Zhou's power over its erstwhile vassals. The state of Zhou nominally existed until 221 BCE and the establishment of the Qin Dynasty.
[64] Here "predecessors" refers to the Shang and mythical Xia states.

termination of its moral ecumene, *tianxia*, which continued to appear in records of the time, referring to the civilized world.

The subsequent intensification of warfare spurred rapid centralization of power in many of the Warring States, sparking an arms race of bureaucratic reform. In this arms race, kings and states who failed to remove intermediary dukes and landlords in order to deepen state access to resources (particularly manpower to swell armies and grain to feed them) ultimately found themselves unable to compete, and ultimately subjected to conquest and annexation by more powerful states.[65] Unlike *tianxia,* the second term listed above, *junxian,* describes these centralization efforts, and is therefore reflective of the nuts-and-bolts bureaucracy necessary to run a large, complex state. The term literally translates as "commandery-county" and explicitly refers to the territorial divisions within a given state created as a means of maximizing administrative efficiency. By the end of the Warring States era (3rd cen. BCE), the eventually victorious state of Qin had organized its territory into larger *jun* subdivided into smaller *xian*. The centralized power of the more militarily formidable states permitted them to circumvent or eliminate aristocrats and appoint bureaucratically selected officials to *jun* and *xian.* The final, rigorous implementation of this two-tiered system in the unified Qin realm created an empire organized not along ethnic or *ad hoc* lines, but along lines designed to facilitate administration and break up preexisting loyalties.[66]

What serves as the ideal empire in ancient China? In China there existed a historical memory of several kingdoms that had once governed *tianxia,* but are not traditionally considered empires: the mythical Xia (21st cen. BCE – 16th cen. BCE), the Shang (16th cen. BCE – 11th cen.

[65] For a detailed analysis of state centralization in Warring States China, see: Victoria Hui, *War and State Formation in Ancient China and Early Modern Europe* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005).
[66] Zhu Weizheng, "Kingship and Empire," in *Conceiving the Empire,* p. 36.

BCE) and the Zhou. Yuri Pines argues that while the Zhou would later become a historical repository of ideal governance and good policy for later imperial states, in the early Zhou era there existed no idea of the "empire" that the Qin eventually created:

> [D]uring the Western Zhou period we may discern foundations of the later ideas of unity, such as the notion of universal ritual supremacy of the Zhou kings, their supposedly limitless authority within their domain, if not within the entire realm, laudation of territorial expansion and possible emergence of a view of the eternally present single locus of worldly authority. Nonetheless, all these do not suffice to conclude that a kind of 'quasi-imperial' outlook emerged already during the early Zhou period. By the end of the Western Zhou period, as the dynastic rule disintegrated, we may discern voices of nostalgia for the past glory, but not proposals of the renewed unification of the present.

The ideal of unification only emerged in the later Warring States era, a goal that many states entertained and that Qin completed. The philosopher Mozi (ca. 470 – 391 BCE) was the first political thinker to articulate this ideal in a historical sense, creating a narrative of past unification stretching from the Xia through the Shang and Zhou, a unity that, according to him, was lost among the "overlords" of the Warring States era.[67] The continuation of this ideal of unity under sagely states and rulers became a strong current of later Confucian thought, embraced as a pillar of the state's moral legitimacy in the Han dynasty.

3. EMPIRE FROM HAN TO SONG, SEDENTARY AND NOMADIC

If one were to generalize a narrative of ideas of empire after the first unification under Qin, it would change over time in tandem with the influence of Inner Asia on the China-Inner Asian frontier. That narrative begins with the solidification of sedentary agricultural empire under the Han dynasty, transforms with exposure to Inner Asian political practices and new forms of legitimacy during the following era of disunion, expands and transforms even more under Tang

[67] Yuri Pines, "Imagining the Empire? Concepts of 'Primeval Unity' in Pre-Imperial Historiographic Tradition," in *Conceiving the Empire,* p. 78-9.

dynasty cosmopolitanism and steppe-sedentary fusion, and then enters a period of crisis and self-reflection during the territorially smaller and militarily challenged Song Dynasty. The following is an attempt to succinctly characterize the underlying transformations of empire between the fall of the Qin in 206 BCE and the end of the Song in 1279 CE.

After brief unification under Qin, the self-proclaimed state of Han managed (with brief interruption) to rapidly reunify the territorial expanse of the Qin empire under a new government. The Han dynasty (206 BCE – 220 CE) lasted for over four hundred years, marking it as the longest-lived dynasty (according to the *zhengshi*) in China's history. If ideas of empire were being expressed for the first time as "unity" just prior to and during the Qin dynasty, then empire-as-unity matured and solidified under the Han. According to Michael Loewe, "Early in Han, the idea of empire was still experimental; by 220, it was seen as the norm."[68] This experimental status is confirmed by the decentralized nature of the early Han state, which following the formal establishment of the Han dynasty ceded power to regional warlords and kings, particularly those in the eastern regions of the empire. Over the next century the Han court managed to mitigate the autonomy of its eastern governors by coopting them with material and titular gifts, replacing them with members of the royal lineage, or exerting central authority via military mobilization against the Xiongnu nomads of the north.[69] Han state-building entered a new phase of "empire-making" that the Qin never had a chance to undertake: the unity of not merely territory, but of ideology and political authority. By the time Sima Qian wrote the *Shiji* (ca. 94 BCE), the use of *tianxia, hainei* and *junxian* had become unified in an imperial and conceptual sense:

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[68] Loewe, "Questions at Issue," unpublished paper, 2005; referenced in Nylan, "The Rhetoric of 'Empire'," p. 42.
[69] Walter Scheidel, "From the 'Great Convergence' to the 'First Great Divergence': Roman and Qin-Han State Formation and Its Aftermath," in *Rome and China: Comparative Perspectives on Ancient World Empires*, ed. Walter Scheidel (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 15-6.

> 秦王初并天下...今陛下興義兵，誅殘賊，平定天下，海內為郡縣...自上古以來未嘗有
>
> "The Kings of Qin first brought together All under Heaven… Now Your Majesty [Emperor Wu of Han] has arisen with the righteous army, punished the cruel and the deceitful, pacified All-under-Heaven [*tianxia*], and organized the world within the seas [*hainei*] into commanderies and counties [*junxian*]… From antiquity it has never been so."[70]

Unity, or *yitong*, had become the defining characteristic of empire in the Han era, combined with new forms of underpinning political ideology. Legalist[71] philosophy had lost strength as a legitimating base of China's first large-scale polity, but its main tenets remained, fused with a new Confucian foundation.[72] The same basic functions of coercion, punishment, and reward perfected by the Qin remained in the Han era, tempered by Confucian moral underpinnings that provided a "façade of legitimacy."[73] A memory of pre-Qin warfare and bloodshed contributed to an intellectual environment that discouraged fragmentation, supported unification, and transformed the image of the ideal ruler from that of a tremendous conqueror to that of a peaceful benefactor.[74]

The tumultuous era after the fall of the Han created new repositories from which would-be empire-builders drew both political structure and legitimacy. These new repositories were primarily generated by nomadic rule in the northern half of the former Han empire. After the Chin Dynasty (265 CE – 420) briefly ended the post-Han division of the Three Kingdoms era,

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[70] Sima Qian, SJ 6/14, translation adapted from Yuri Pines, "Imagining the Empire?"
[71] Modern scholars rightly caution against the label "Legalism," as it incorrectly assumes the existence of a single current of political thought that contemporary thinkers would have recognized as a collection of distinct strains. Nonetheless, I make use of the term because no alternative exists, and it serves as a useful counterpart (and, as described in the main body of this text, complement) to Confucian political philosophy.
[72] Scheidel, "From the 'Great Convergence' to the 'First Great Divergence'," p. 17.
[73] Hui, *War and State Formation,* p. 220.
[74] Mark Lewis, *The Construction of Space in Early China* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2006), chapter 5; Nathan Sivin, "State, Cosmos, and Body in the Last Three Centuries B.C.," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 55 (1995): p. 7; also see Michael Puett, *The Ambivalence of Creation: Debates Concerning Innovation and Artifice in Early China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001).

the Chin suffered a devastating civil war that loosened its control of the North China Plain and Gansu corridor region. Powerful nomadic groups – who lived in these regions, and did not "invade" in the classical sense – subsequently established their own kingdoms in the north, and many proclaimed imperial dynasties in the Qin/Han fashion.[75] During this era, known as the Northern and Southern Dynasties, the Turkic Tabgach (Tuoba) state of Northern Wei (386-534) formed and expanded an empire that interwove Confucian-Legalist administrative bureaucracy with cosmopolitanism, military pragmatism and foreign inclusion encouraged by the plural nature of its social makeup.[76] The Northern Wei was more than an empire that simply ruled over both Turkic nomadic groups and agriculturally-inclined Chinese; its rulers crafted what Chin-Yin Tseng and Jessica Rawson call a "dual presence" that mixed "the traditions and practices of the Chinese sphere and those of the Eurasian steppe."[77] The Northern Wei promulgated Chinese-style laws, offered sacrifices at state-sponsored Confucian temples, adopted Chinese names, and mandated the use of the Chinese language at court. At provincial levels, the state mandated all medium-level offices hold three inspectors, one of whom had to be of Turkic descent.[78] The emperors of the Northern Wei portrayed themselves in a tripartite form: as a Han dynasty-style benefactor and protector; as martial conquerors who engaged in peacetime activities like hunting and archery; and as the disseminator of Buddhist mercy. The latter two were new forms of

[75] Herbert Franke and Denis Twitchett, "Introduction," in *The Cambridge History of China, Volume 6: Alien Regimes and Border States, 907-1368,* eds. Franke and Twitchett, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 13.
[76] See: Jacqueline Fewkes, *Trade and Contemporary Society Along the Silk Road: an Ethno-History of Ladakh* (New York: Routledge, 2009); and Skaff, *Sui-Tang China,* p. 10.
[77] Chin-Yin Tseng, *The Making of the Tuoba Northern Wei: Constructing Material Cultural Expressions in the Northern Wei Pingcheng Period (398-494 CE,* (Oxford: Archaeopress, 2013), p. 3.
[78] Elizabeth Endicott-West, *Mongolian Rule in China: Local Administration in the Yuan Dynasty* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989), p. 3-15.

legitimation that bolstered rule by a new cultural group over a largely sedentary agricultural society.[79]

The Northern Wei was not the first state founded by nomads that attempted to bring together Chinese and Eurasian steppe models of rulership. Others, notably the Särbi (Xianbei) state of Yan[80] based around modern Beijing (which was one of the many kingdoms that had arisen after the Chin civil war) employed such policies. But none prior to the Northern Wei had managed such a vast empire, or instituted active pursuit of "dual presence." Modern scholarship's understanding of the relationship between the Qin Dynasty and its nomadic northern counterpart, the so-called Xiongnu Confederation, remains murky, but neither Qin emperors nor Xiongnu chiefs appeared to adopt the political practices of the other in overt attempts to accommodate frontier populations. The same is true of the Han Dynasty and its own nomadic "counterpart," the Särbi/Xianbei Confederation, who engaged in mutual military struggle numerous times, and of whom the latter demanded and received diplomatic superiority over the former in official correspondence in the early years of the Han.[81]

In contrast to Qin-Han relations with Eurasian steppe nomads, the tenure of Northern Wei nomadic rule over northern China had significant political consequences for interpretations of empire. Cultural plurality, an expanded political lexicon, and new strategies of diplomacy and warfare – all generated by nomadic rule in China – described the late-sixth-century reunification under first Sui (581 CE – 618) and then Tang rule. The royal house of the Tang dynasty (618-907), the Li lineage, was of mixed Chinese-Särbi descent, a fact often overlooked but pertinent

[79] Scott Pearce, "A King's Two Bodies: the Northern Wei Emperor Wencheng and Representations of the Power of His Monarchy," *Frontiers of History in China* 7.1 (2012): pp. 90-105.
[80] Sometimes called "Former Yan" 前燕 to avoid confusion with several other Yan states, most notably the Yan Dynasty proclaimed by An Lushan in the 750s.
[81] Tseng, *The Making of the Tuoba Northern Wei,* p. 4.

for its explanatory power in Tang political history.[82] The Tang empire expanded far beyond the borders of the Qin and Han, incorporating frontier nomads as Tang subjects. The Tang state arranged subject frontier nomads (and other "barbarians") in special *jimi* (羈縻) prefectures. As Jonathan Skaff explains, the term *jimi* held particular connotations:

> The Chinese compound *jimi* literally means "horse bridle" and "ox halter." The term suggests Tang administrative attitudes toward "barbarians," in which Han are equated with "humans" who use bridles and halters to control ethnic groups who are analogous to beasts of burden. In addition, the differentiation of headgear of horses and oxen suggests the varied peoples that the *Tang aspired to rule*.[83]

The Han Dynasty had engaged in similar practices on the northern frontier after Han Wudi's victory over the Särbi, but Han-era *jimi* were generally left to their own devices, ruled by their own chiefs, and were subject to their own laws. Tang *jimi* were often (but not always or uniformly) taxed and administered more closely in line with "regular" Tang provinces, indicating a closer political relationship between the periphery and the center.[84]

Militarily, Tang rulers and generals coopted Eurasian steppe practices with a willingness unseen in past empires in China. Tang armies deployed new military tactics and strategies as a means of effectively subjugating and coercing steppe nomads: they trained their own light cavalry and employed friendly nomadic auxiliaries, rather than attempting to supply and maneuver the ponderous infantry and heavy cavalry armies of the Qin and Han in steppe regions.[85] The Tang court and its emperors highly valued military leaders and strategists who understood nomadic political and military practices, and who could apply that knowledge in pursuit of a greater Tang empire.[86] Tang emperors also prepared displays of power designed to

[82] Skaff, *Sui-Tang China*, p. 122.
[83] Ibid, p. 60; emphasis mine.
[84] Ibid, p. 62.
[85] Ibid, p. 257
[86] See: Jonathan Skaff, "Tang Military Culture and its Inner Asian Influences," in Di Cosmo, ed., *Military Culture in Imperial China* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011), pp. 165-191.

speak to the Tang emperor's place as both the *huangdi* of China and the heavenly *qaghan* of the steppe. After the armies of Tang Taizong (r. 626-649), the second Tang emperor, defeated and conquered the Later Türk Empire, Taizong gathered the chiefs of his enemies and brought them to the capital, who formally requested that Taizong take the steppe title of Heavenly Qaghan in a highly ritualized ceremony. Taizong replied that he would take the title alongside that of *huangdi*:

> 四夷君長詣闕請上為天可汗，上曰：「 我為大唐天子，又下行可汗事乎」羣臣及四夷皆稱萬歲。是後以璽書賜西北君長，皆稱天可汗
>
> The chiefs of the *siyi* [four barbarians] requested that the emperor take the title of Heavenly Qaghan. The emperor [Tang Taizong] said: "I am the Son of Heaven of the Great Tang, and also shall manage the affairs of the Qaghan." The officials and chiefs together all called for [the emperor's] long life. Thereafter [the emperor] with his royal seal bequeathed titles upon the northwestern chiefs, and they all hailed him as Heavenly Qaghan.[87]

This carefully crafted observance performed in the manner of a steppe-style *quiriltai,* or meeting of chiefs to proclaim a ruler, speaks to Tang emperors' identification of their empire as encompassing both the sedentary agricultural regions ruled by their predecessors and the steppe regions of the nomadic Türks, Tabgach, and Särbi.[88]

The Tang empire ceased overland expansion and abandoned inclusive imperial views after the An Lushan Rebellion of 755. An Lushan himself was of Sogdian descent, and his rebellion included the nomadic portions of the multicultural Tang armies. The memory of that civil war weighted heavily on the minds of empire-builders in the tenth century, especially that of the founder of the Song Dynasty (960-1279), Song Taizu (d. 976), who curtailed the

[87] Sima Guang, ZZTJ 資治通鑑, *juan* 81, p. 6073; adapted from Skaff, *Sui-Tang China*.

[88] For an extremely thorough treatment on the Tang Dynasty's Inner Asian influences, see Skaff, *Sui-Tang China.* The above description of Tang ideas of empire could be much longer, but I would only be repeating that which Skaff has excellently articulated.

autonomous power of his military generals. His successors never deployed irregular nomadic auxiliaries as elements of the Song army, and maintained huge, expensive armies near the capital, fearful of potential rebellion in distant provinces. Song diplomatic historiography follows two major trends: 1) examination of the "international" multi-state system of the post-Tang world, in which the Song empire was merely one of several actors; and 2) analysis of the relative weakness of the Song military vis-à-vis its neighbors.[89] Song maps, as we will see in the next chapter, depict a geographically bounded state surrounded by various barbarian groups, none of whom reside within the empire or were governed by the Song emperor. But the Tang legacy of a cosmopolitan, expansive empire remained, if we look to the states with which the Song shared continental East Asia. These are the Khitan-founded Liao dynasty (907-1125), the Jurchen-founded Jin dynasty (1125-1234), and to a lesser extent, the Tangut-founded Xi Xia.

I will make a quick aside before moving on with this historical narrative. It is difficult to pry the history of China between the tenth and thirteenth centuries from the grips of Chinese nationalist historiography. This is partly due to the nature of the production of history texts by successive imperial regimes. For much of Chinese history, stable and semi-stable regimes that claimed the Mandate of Heaven to rule China marked their claim as legitimate by producing a written history of immediately preceding empires, organized during the Qing as the *zhengshi* "orthodox histories;" as we will see in the next section, this was not always a straightforward process, for there could be multiple predecessors for whom a given imperial claimant might produce a written history. Modern interpretations of this narrative tend to omit the histories of

[89] Standen, *Unbounded Loyalty,* p. 15; and see: Rossabi, *China Among Equals.*

the Liao and Jin dynasties, instead privileging the Song Dynasty as the historical continuator of Chinese civilization.[90]

By reinserting the Liao, Jin, and Xi Xia states into the history of mid-millennial China, the history of ideas of empire suddenly becomes much more nuanced, in the sense that nomadic influences never disappeared; and also much smoother, in the sense that earlier cosmopolitanism continued through the early second millennium. Liao was formally established in 907 by a Khitan chieftain named in contemporary records as Abaoji (阿保機) or Liao Taizu (遼太祖, d. 926). Already this challenges traditional narratives that emphasize continuity through the Song, as the Tang collapsed in the same year as the Liao's founding, while the Song was established only in 960. "Khitan" (Chinese: *Qidan* 契丹) is the term used to describe a nomadic people that lived in Northeast Asia, in the region between the modern borders of Mongolia and the northern regions of the Chinese province of Inner Mongolia. The early origins and political structures of the Khitans are obscure and not attested to in any extant records, but we do know that Abaoji managed to claim leadership of the Khitan tribes thanks to a combination of political savvy and military prowess (not unlike many Chinese dynastic founders). The Liao is of particular interest because, capitalizing on the contentious era following Tang collapse, its rulers extended Khitan control over a parcel of territory around modern-day Beijing, known in modern historiography as the Sixteen Prefectures.

[90] A readily visible example of this in practice is the catchy tune Harvard professors William Kirby and Peter Bol have devised to help their students memorize the sequence of Chinese dynasties. I do not implicate Bol and Kirby – both fantastic and leading scholars – in this privileging of certain dynasties over others, since the tune is merely meant to aid undergraduates obtain a basic grasp of Chinese history. Nonetheless, listing the Song, and not the Liao and Jin, as major dynasties suggests the relative unimportance of the latter two in China's history. The tune (and a brief prelude with the two professors) can be listened to here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xJis9TSw1rE, accessed 2 April 2016.

By including the Liao in this narrative, the narrow vision of "China" implied by focusing only on the Song demonstrates weakness. The permeability of frontiers and political inclusivity marked early Liao-Song relations. Naomi Standen has researched in detail the frequent border-crossings that educated elites and military leaders undertook to move from Song to Liao territory, and vice versa. It appears that among the border-crossers themselves, and the rulers who accepted them, no cultural stigma tainted what itswould be considered under modern nation-state law to be treason. Political expediency motivated a ruler's employment of skilled literati and military leaders, while the opportunity of service under competent rulers motivated the border-crossers' willingness to change allegiance.[91] These inclusive attitudes broke down as the Song state emerged as the dominant power near the end of the so-called Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms period (907-960), and claimed the Mandate of Heaven. Subsequently, warfare often punctuated Song relations with the Liao, but the Song state never expanded its borders to the extent of the Tang, despite numerous attempts to retake the Sixteen Prefectures territory around Beijing. Northern China, long a frontier region populated by diverse cultural groups, remained diverse and was now under the control of a decidedly non-traditional regime in the Chinese sense.

In the early twelfth century, unrest in the eastern reaches of the Liao empire resulted in the collapse of the Liao and its replacement by a new empire, the Jurchen-founded Jin Dynasty. The Jurchens (Chinese: *Nüzhen* 女真) were a semi-nomadic forest-dwelling people who lived in modern Northeast Asia, and the ancestors of the Manchu. Initially subordinate to the Liao state, the Jurchens managed to leverage the unexpected success of their rebellion against the Liao to create an alternative well of political power around which other disaffected tribes gravitated. The

[91] See: Standen, *Unbounded Loyalty.*

Jurchens' rapid military victories against their former Liao masters catapulted them into a position of imperial lordship over the former Liao territories and the creation of their new Jin Dynasty. Despite an initial Song-Jin alliance designed to destroy their mutual enemy, Jurchen armies soon turned southwards and conquered much of northern China, pressing far beyond the former Liao frontier and seizing the whole of the region north of the Huai River by 1142. Already the differences between the Liao and Jin states are stark, in that the latter controlled much larger stretches of territory that relied on sedentary agriculture, and much greater populations of Chinese farmers and literati. Yet despite the rapid conquest of the north, there were still instances of former Song literati, officials and generals refusing Southern Song calls to migrate south of the Huai River – they were quite happy to remain in Jin territory, serve their new Jin masters, guard Jin garrisons, and administer the agricultural regions of the Jin empire.[92] The Jurchens, unlike the Khitans and Mongols, had practiced marginal agriculture and fishing in Northeast Asia, and so perhaps were more willing to adopt Chinese administrative practices, just as their new subjects were more willing to accept Jin rule.[93]

Among the Song, Liao, and Jin, the Tangut state of Xi Xia (or Western Xia) managed to maintain its independence for nearly two centuries between its founding in 1038 and its assimilation by the Mongols in 1227. Occasionally labeled an empire, Xi Xia's center of power resided in the Ordos region and the Gansu corridor.[94] Certainly, like the other polities that existed in multistate eleventh-century East Asia, the Tangut rulers governed ethnically and culturally diverse subjects (as empires often do), but the Xi Xia itself survived largely as a vassal

[92] Paul J. Smith, "Impressions of the Song-Yuan-Ming Transition," in *The Song-Yuan-Ming Transition in Chinese History*, ed. Smith and Richard von Glahn (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003), p. 73-4
[93] Hoyt Tillman, "An Overview of Chin History and Institutions," in *China Under Jurchen Rule: Essays on Chin Intellectual and Cultural History*, eds. Tillman and Stephen H. West (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), p. 24.
[94] Ruth Dunnel, "The Hsi Hsia," in *The Cambridge History of China, Volume 6,* p. 154.

of first the Liao, then the Jin, and then the Mongols – but never the Song. The Xi Xia fought to secure its survival, first by waging war against the Song to maintain its independence, then offering tribute, royal marriages, and vassalage to the Liao, Jin, and Song, and finally by seeking alliance (not vassalage) with the Song against the Mongols. The fact that the Xi Xia was never a Song subject cements the idea that, if we are to look for empires in China between the tenth and thirteenth centuries, we should look at the Khitans and Jurchens first.

What is the takeaway of this vast and rapid telling of China's geopolitical history? It suggests that if we re-insert nomadic and semi-nomadic states into the narrative of post-Qin China, we see a political trend in which the ideas and state-building practices of empire encompassed frontier peoples, and political expediency was valued over cultural purity. Confucian moralists who emphasized the rigidity of borders and the incompatibility of civilized and barbaric customs may have improved their influence at court after the Tang-era An Lushan Rebellion, and dominated political discourse in the Song bureaucracy, but this interpretation privileges views that fail to look beyond reified state borders.[95] Although continental East Asia in the post-Tang era had become politically sundered, and the ideal of unity found less concrete foundations than it had in the past, inclusive imperial visions remained a reality. This was not the end of actual political unity, however. In the mid-thirteenth century, the Mongols swept out of Inner Asia, forever changing the political and intellectual landscapes of empire in China, and generating entirely new ideas of empire that outmatched all prior ideas in their intellectual and geographic scope.

[95] Skaff, *Sui-Tang China,* p. 53, 75, 240

4. MONGOL IDEAS OF EMPIRE

The unprecedented accomplishments of the Mongols transformed China and the world. The Mongols themselves introduced a new scope of empire to China, and directly connected distant regions of Eurasia for the first time. Mongol political organization itself, too, was altered by exposure to Chinese methods and ideas of administration and empire. Three important changes to ideas of empire occurred in East Asia: 1) the creation of universal empire in military terms, 2) growing overlap between military and civil administration, and 3) the fundamental and ultimately long-lasting fusion of steppe-style administration with the political considerations and imperatives of sedentary agricultural empires.[96]

a. MONGOL UNIVERSAL EMPIRE AND MILITARY POWER In Eastern Eurasia the Mongols extended their reach over the entire subcontinent, conquering and incorporating a large number of culturally and politically diverse regimes that had existed in a multi-state system since the late tenth century. These included Song, Liao, Jin, and Xi Xia, as well as the Dali Kingdom in modern Yunnan Province, disparate kingdoms in Tibet, and the Koryŏ Dynasty on the Korean peninsula. The early history of the Mongols does not bear repeating here. By the early thirteenth century, Chinggis Khan had become the sole ruler of the Mongols and launched several campaigns against the Jurchen Jin dynasty. In 1234 the Jin fell to the Mongols, who simultaneously expanded west into Central Asia. Successive rulers of the Mongol empire launched numerous campaigns against the truncated Song state south of the Yangzi River between the 1230s and 1270s. The fifth Mongol khan, Khubilai, took ideological and military steps to expand his empire. In 1271 he proclaimed the founding of a Chinese-style dynasty, the

[96] Endicott-West, *Mongolian Rule in China,* p. 1.

Yuan, and in 1273 his armies seized the strategically critical city of Xiangyang. By 1279 the last Song holdouts surrendered or succumbed, and the Mongols secured their rule over continental East Asia.

The rapid pace of Mongol conquest was facilitated by the great advantage that steppe cavalry archers enjoyed over heavy cavalry and infantry on open battlefields, the Mongols' innovative military structures, the successful capture and redeployment of defeated soldiers, the reputation that preceded them, and the incorporation of new forms of military tactics and strategy when they proved useful in achieving Mongol goals. In particular, as Chinggis Khan was consolidating his rule over the Mongol tribes, he organized his soldiers along decimal lines, rather than according to kinship ties, as a means of breaking old political allegiances and replacing them with loyalty only to Chinggis himself. Perhaps the most oft-cited example of incorporation of successful tactics into the Mongol military encyclopedia is the movement of Arab siege engineers from western Eurasia to China, where they constructed trebuchets to assist Khubilai Khan's campaigns against the Southern Song.[97]

The continuous success of the Mongol conquests, both in China and Inner Asia, expanded and changed ideas of empire. The Mongol realm came to be defined as consisting of 1) states that had submitted and/or been defeated, and 2) states that had yet to submit or were rebellious. Once the united Mongol *ulus,* or state, had come into being under Chinggis Khan, no other *ulus* legally existed; China's past *ulus*es (dynasties), as well as the *ulus*es of other parts of Eurasia, became communities, or *irgen*s, and were subjects of Mongol empire regardless of their actual status.[98] Early Mongol rhetoric did not make room for foreign lands outside Mongol

[97] Timothy May, *The Mongol Conquests in World History* (London: Reakton Books, 2012), p. 136.
[98] Lhamsuren Munkh-Erdene, "The emergence of the Chinggisid State," in *Sacred Mandates,* p. 31.

control, except in the sense that they were illegally rebelling from Mongol overlordship.[99] In her investigation of Mongol historiography and the History of the Yuan (*Yuanshi,* ca. 1370s), Francesca Fiaschetti links the Classical Chinese term *waiyi* ("foreign") to the Mongol term *bulga irgen* ("rebellious people"), suggesting that extant Chinese concepts of All-Under-Heaven, which under previous dynasties had ideological components that were not reflected in expansionist pursuits, became transformed into a real pursuit of universal empire that left no room for elements politically outside the Mongol domain.[100] Subjugation, maintenance of stability, and quashing rebellion were in turn carried out by the application of military power. "Foreign" regions of the Mongol empire were classified in military terms: either by their strategic necessity in carrying out ongoing or future campaigns (such as the use of Korea as a staging ground for the invasion of Japan), or according to whether or not a given region's rulers had voluntarily submitted to the Mongols. Rebellion placed one unlawfully (and only temporarily) outside the *qaghan's* power. The *Secret History of the Mongols* speaks to this worldview:

> By the strength of eternal Heaven and the good fortune of my uncle the Qa'an [Qaghan] I have destroyed the city of Meget, I have ravaged the Orosut people and brought eleven countries and peoples duly under submission. […] So, just as the time when, having been sent to ride against a rebellious people of a different race, we were asking ourselves whether we had been successful. Büri and Güyük spoke to us in this way and we parted in disaccord.[101]

Thus Mongolian world order became "strongly influenced by criteria of usefulness and loyalty to Mongolian rule."[102]

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[99] Francesca Fiaschetti, "The Borders of Rebellion: The Yuan Dynasty and the Rhetoric of Empire," in *Political Strategies of Identity Building in Non-Han Empires in China* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2014), p. 130.
[100] Ibid, p. 128.
[101] Quoted from and translated by Igor de Rachewiltz, *The Secret History of the Mongols: a Mongolian Epic Chronicle of the Thirteenth Century* (Boston: Brill, 2004), pp. 206-7.
[102] Fiaschetti, "The Borders of Rebellion," p. 127.

That loyalty, still in a military sense, served as an organization of hierarchy in the Mongol Empire. Socially and politically, peoples and polities that submitted first to the Mongols were treated more favorably. This was later reflected in the legislative structures of the Yuan Dynasty, wherein Inner Asians were given privileges over Chinese, even in the Yuan Dynasty's hybrid Mongol-Chinese administration (a phenomenon that will be explored in the next chapter). The first non-Mongols to submit to Chinggis Khan were the Uighurs, who not only enjoyed the privileges of having submitted voluntarily, but whose ruler at the time, Barchukh Art Tegin (r. 1208 – 1235), was the only non-Mongol to be granted honorary status as Chinggis Khan's son.[103] In contrast, Khubilai Khan (r. 1260-1294) berated King Wonjong of the Korean Koryŏ Dynasty for his recalcitrance:

> 汝內附在後，故班諸王下。我太祖時亦都護先附，即令齒諸王上，阿思蘭後附，故班其下，卿宜知之.
>
> You [Wonjong] submitted later, therefore you are ranked low among the kings. During the reign of our Taizu [Chinggis Khan], the *Iduq qut* [Uighurs] were the first to submit; therefore it was ordered that [their king] be ranked first among the kings. Arslan [king of the Karluks] next submitted; therefore [he] was ranked below [the Uighurs]. You ought to know this.[104]

The Uighurs, Karluks, and other Turkic tribes enjoyed great status and high position throughout the Mongol Empire, but particularly in Yuan China. They served as advisors to Chinggis Khan's successors – Khubilai especially – and received the majority of the Chinese *jinshi* examination degrees awarded to Inner Asians.[105]

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[103] Thomas Allsen, "The Yüan Dynasty and the Uighurs of Turfan in the 13th Century," in Rossabi, ed. *China Among Equals,* pp. 245-7.
[104] *Yuanshi*, *juan* 7, p. 128; translated adapted from Allsen, Ibid, p. 247.
[105] Igor de Rachewiltz, "Turks in China under the Mongols: a Preliminary Investigation of Turco-Mongol Relations in the 13th and 14th Centuries," in Rossabi, ed. *China Among Equals*, pp. 282-92.

The name(s) of the Mongol empire and its branch in China characterize these measures. The Mongol state itself took on a new name: the *yeke Mongol ulus,* or "Mongol Great State," a title whose use suggested that the Mongols themselves understood the unprecedented accomplishments of Chinggis Khan and his descendants. The earliest appearance of the term is from 1240, prior to which the *Secret History of the Mongols* tells us that the Mongol polity was simply called the *Mongol ulus,* or the "Mongol state."[106] This transformation from a unified polity of loosely affiliated Mongol tribes to a force that conquered and bound together a variety of different subjects from multiple ethnic and political traditions tells us that the Mongols understood the vast nature of empire they had created. This legacy remained potent for several centuries afterwards. A 1346 stone inscription, written in both Chinese and Mongolian, praised the world-empire that the Mongols had built:

> "After the world and [its] people had been in chaos from time without beginning to the present, [Chinggis] Qans was born and vanquished the idle sovereigns of foreign realms. [Having founded] the Mongol Great State, he picked up [the myriad countries] as if they were fallen leaves."[107]

In China, Khubilai viewed his Yuan dynasty, or *Da Yuan*, "as a Chinese way of expressing *yeke Mongol ulus*, that is, the entire Mongol empire embracing the Eurasian continent."[108] The full Mongolian name for the Yuan empire in China was the *Dai Ön kemekü Yeke Monqol ulus,* or the "Great Yuan Mongol Great State, a form that fused the Chinese *da,* or "great," modifier with the Mongol *yeke* modifier.[109] The justification that the Mongols had conquered and united all under Heaven was fused with the precepts innovated by the Qin dynasty, of having brought together All-under-Heaven, which was no longer just China, but the known world. Khubilai

[106] Brook et al., *Sacred Mandates,* p. 32.
[107] Adapted from the translations of Francis Woodman Cleaves, "The Sino-Mongolian Inscription of 1346," in *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 15.1/2 (1952): p. 83, and Brook et al., *Sacred Mandates,* p. 29.
[108] Hodong Kim, "Mongol Perceptions of 'China' and the Yuan Dynasty," in *Sacred Mandates,* p. 45.
[109] Ibid.

simultaneously presented the Mongol Yuan as a Chinese-style dynasty (for the benefit of the Yuan's Chinese subjects), and, in his imperial worldview, incorporated China into the larger Mongol empire.

b. OVERLAPPING CIVIL AND MILITARY ADMINISTRATION The overtly militaristic nature of early Mongol empire-building reflected itself in Mongol administrative practices. The synonymous nature of civil and military functions was not itself a new Mongol style of government, but one adapted from Northern Wei, Liao and Jin practices, and expanded to great effect under the Yuan Dynasty.[110] Pre-Yuan dynasties in China did have military officers serving in civil positions, and civil officials before and after the Mongol conquest often served as military commanders, but the Mongol synonymity between the two was nearly absolute. The consolidation of Inner China under Khubilai Khan's Yuan Dynasty extended this overlap beyond the Yangzi River into southern China for the first time. The "militarization" of civil offices had occurred to some extent after the An Lushan Rebellion in the Tang Dynasty, but that was more a function of the degradation of centralized power and the inability of the Tang court to prohibit regional military governors – to whom the court had ceded significant autonomy in exchange for support against An Lushan – from exercising their own power in civil spheres and authorizing their subordinates to do the same.[111] Thus the primary difference between Tang administration on one hand and Northern Wei, Liao, Jin and Yuan on the other lies in the regionalization of power. Tang militarization occurred regionally outside the auspices of court control.[112] For the

[110] Endicott-West, *Mongolian Rule in China,* p. 8-9.
[111] Ibid, p. 7.
[112] See: Skaff, *Sui-Tang China*, p. 83-92. Skaff demonstrates that Eurasian-style patrimonial relations became a significant component of Tang-era power dynamics in both civil and military offices, but the civil and military spheres remained separate until the post-Rebellion period.

Wei, Liao, Jin, and especially the Yuan, the militarization of government was a conscious policy decision that served particular purposes.

These policies are most evident in the Yuan, whose rulers and statesmen faced the challenge of ruling a massive sedentary agricultural population with a relatively tiny "elite" of Mongols. Accurate figures are difficult to calculate, but estimates based on a 1290s census suggest the Mongol population of China was around 1 million, while the Chinese population stood around 70 million.[113] In order to fill its offices, the Yuan state forwent the Song dynasty examination system, which favored Chinese elites educated in the Confucian classics and literary skills. Instead, the Yuan promoted clerical and military routes to high office. This policy had two purposes: 1) it rewarded those with practical military and administrative skills that the Yuan state deemed important for dynastic maintenance, and 2) it ensured that Chinese would not dominate government offices and potentially erode the social and political position of Mongols in the Yuan empire.[114] The holders of higher regional offices, particularly the branch secretariats (*xing zhongshusheng* 行中書省) who governed several provinces, managed both civil and military affairs, and were in turn managed according to the importance of military actions occurring in those provinces.[115] Even as some measure of "Confucanization" took hold in late Yuan policy-making and empire management, the civil and military spheres remained overlapping, as did the cultural makeup of their office-holders. Court factions did not appear to favor militaristic or civil approaches, or their formal separation, but were made up of both generals and scholars, who

[113] The "Chinese" population includes both *nanren* ("southerners") and *hanren* ("Han people"), at figures of 60 million and 10 million, respectively. In the Yuan, the label *"hanren"* included Chinese, Koreans, Khitans, and Jurchens. See Chapter 2 for a more detailed analysis. John Langlois, "Introduction," in *China Under Mongol Rule,* ed. Langlois (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), p. 15n34; and Murakami Masatsugu, *Chūgoku no rekishi, 6: Yūboku minzoku kokka: Gen* (Tokyo: Kodansha, 1977), p. 142.
[114] Endicott-West, *Mongolian Rule in China,* p. 111.
[115] Mote, *Imperial China,* p. 485.

were not only Chinese but also Turkic, Mongol, and representatives of many Inner Asian peoples.[116] None of these formal administrative functions covers the princely appanages of royal Yuan family members, which the khan granted to relatives. The relationship between appointed/recommended officials and the princely appanages remains unclear, but it is at least evident that Yuan officials within them managed affairs at the discretion of either the Yuan khan/emperor or their immediate prince, and not the affairs of civil or military matters alone.[117]

Mixed civil-administrative government extended to diplomatic affairs. As discussed above, the Mongol Empire and its Yuan successor viewed the world as made up of submitted states and states that had not yet submitted or were rebellious. It should therefore be no surprise that military forms of administration managed approaches to foreign regions and kingdoms. Fiaschetti has identified the frequent and repeated use of terms like "attack," (*gong* 攻) "pacify," (*fu* 撫) and "conquer," (*zheng* 征) in relation to regions outside the empire, regardless of whether or not they were antagonist states.[118] As an example, the administrative unit that governed Korea was a branch secretariat titled, "The Provincial Office for Attacking the East and Other Places" (*zhengdong dengchu xing zhongshusheng* 征東等處行中書省).[119] In the context of the attempted Yuan invasions of Japan, this form of governance makes sense: Korea was to serve as a staging point for the preparation and launching of the naval armada, particularly the island of Jeju, where the semi-autonomous kingdom of Tamna served as a critical maritime base for the projected campaign.[120]

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[116] De Rachewiltz, "Turks in China," *China Among Equals,* p. 294.
[117] See: Endicott-West, *Mongolian Rule in China,* chapter 4.
[118] Fiaschetti, "The Borders of Rebellion," p. 138.
[119] Ibid, p. 130; Farquhar, *The Government of China Under Mongolian Rule,* p. 399.
[120] Michael Brose, "Realism and Idealism in the *Yuanshi* Chapters on Foreign Relations," in *Asia Major* 19.1/2 (2005): pp. 333-4.

c. THE FUSION OF STEPPE AND SEDENTARY IMPERIAL WORLDVIEWS In addition to the militarization of government in China described above, Chinese political traditions and geopolitical worldviews altered Yuan imaginations and approaches to empire. Perhaps the most important for the modern historian's consideration of the Yuan Dynasty is the Yuan adaptation of state-sponsored historical writing. China's long and plethoric history of the production of state-crafted history texts is simultaneously a blessing and obstacle for twenty-first century researchers. It offers a huge amount of relatively easily accessible source material, but those materials have been filtered through two millennia of alterations and censorship performed for the legitimizing purposes of particular states.

When the Mongols, having overwhelmed the Jin, finished their conquest of the Southern Song, their rulers wished to insert themselves into the historical continuity of China as a means of legitimately establishing the Yuan along an imagined continuity. This continuity radiated from the first unifications of the Qin and was passed along, in the minds of Mongol rulers and statesmen, by its own predecessors. But it faced a problem in that its statespeople and thinkers were unsure which state – among the Song, Liao, and Jin – it should posthumously consider the true bearer of legitimate succession and unified continuity, and thus for whom it should write an "official history" (*zhengshi* 正史) to mark that legitimacy. An answer was proposed in the 1340s by a scholar of Turkic descent, Tuo-tuo, who suggested writing histories for all three:

> 這三國為聖朝所取制度、典章、治亂、興亡之由，恐因歲久散失，合遴選文臣，分史置局，纂修成書，以見祖宗盛德得天下遼、金、宋三國之由，垂鑑後世，做一代盛典.
>
> These three kingdoms had been taken over by our holy regime. Their statutes and institutions, [circumstances of] governance and disorder, and the causes of their rise and fall may vanish as time goes by. Together, [our] selection of officials, division of the annals, establishment of offices, and the chronicling of their histories will reveal the glory and virtue of our ancestors and the reasons for our succeeding to the Liao, Jin and Song

> as inheritors of All under Heaven. These will serve as a mirror for later generations, and will be the great work of our dynasty.[121]

This practice of adopting local modes of government and legitimization was not unique to the Chinese component of the Mongol empire, as Mongol rulers and statesmen undertook similar projects in Persia and the Islamic world, where there also existed established historiographical traditions.[122] The monumental task of writing the histories of the Song, Liao and Jin – which took a mere three years – served to "accommodate the Mongol conquerors within the Chinese dynastic order," and explain how the Mongols were able to use military power to unify China.[123]

Yuan incorporation of Chinese political traditions extended to the policy of managing regions outside the Yuan empire itself where, like in Han and Tang *jimi* prefectures, the Mongols desired to use local elites as a means of avoiding complications.

> 雲南土官病故，子姪兄弟襲之，無則妻承失職。遠方蠻夷，頑獷難制，必任土人，可以集事。
>
> When an aboriginal official in Yunnan sickens and dies, his son, nephew or brother inherits his position; if such does not exist, the wife takes the husband's official post. These distant barbarians are wayward, uncivilized and difficult to govern, so we must employ local persons if we are to accomplish anything.[124]

Mongol efforts to legitimize Yuan rule with Chinese political traditions continued and intensified over the course of the Yuan, especially as social unrest and infrastructural failures plagued the empire in its later years. By stressing the Yuan empire's ability to unify All under Heaven, they coopted Chinese elites and literati, who often found reason for Mongol legitimacy in Mongol

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[121] LS, appendix, p. 1553-4; translation adapted from Hok-lam Chan, "Chinese Official Historiography at the Yüan Court: The Composition of the Liao, Chin, and Sung Histories," in *China under Mongol Rule*, edited by John Langlois (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), p. 75.
[122] Shagdaryn Bira, *Mongolian Historical Writing from 1200 to 1700* (Moscow: Academy of Sciences of Mongolia, 1978), trans. and revised by John Krueger (Bellingham: Center for East Asian Studies, 2002), p. 49
[123] Hok-Lam Chan, "Chinese Official Historiography at the Yüan Court: The Composition of the Liao, Chin and Sung Histories," in Langlois, *China Under Mongol Rule,* p. 56-7, 62-3.
[124] YS, 26:589; trans. by Farquhar, "Female Officials in Yuan China," *Journal of Turkish Studies* 9 (1985): pp. 21-25.

application of military power for the purposes of unification.[125] In the 1330s onward, shakeups in capital-level government offices were increasingly described in Confucian terms – *genghua* (更化) or "transformation" in a Confucian sense – even when those shakeups were carried out in tanistric fashion, settled with armed clashes in the palace or even outright warfare between contenders for the Yuan throne and their supporters.[126]

The fusion of Mongol and Chinese political practices found its ultimate expression in the Yuan shift away from a steppe-centered model of rule to one centered in the agricultural regions of China. Khubilai Khan's movement of the capital from Karakorum in Mongolia to Dadu (now modern-day Beijing) was in keeping with this shift, and was the result of a careful calculation of political and military resources. John Dardess explained the dilemma facing early Yuan rulers: "Was it more advantageous to control the agrarian realms from a power center in the steppes, or to control the steppes from a power center in the agrarian realms?" Khubilai's decision for the latter opened up the resources he needed to crush steppe-based pretenders to the Yuan throne (a chronic problem facing all Mongol rulers), but it also described the incorporation of Chinese traditions into Mongol imperial administration.[127] Eventually Mongolia itself, the homeland of the empire that the Mongols had constructed, was reduced to a Chinese-style province, sparsely administered yet rigidly overseen in order to ensure the security of the China-based Yuan Dynasty.[128] This political move, as we will see in Chapter 3, mirrors quite closely the strategic policy of the Ming Dynasty.

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[125] Mote, *Imperial China,* p. 505.
[126] See: John Dardess, *Conquerors and Confucians: Aspects of Political Change in Late Yüan China* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1973), chapters 3 and 4. The word "tanistry," or deciding succession among family members by means of warfare and fighting, comes from Joseph Fletcher, "The Mongols: Ecological and Social Perspectives," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 46.1 (1986): pp. 24-6, 36-8.
[127] Dardess, *Conquerors and Confucians*, p. 22.
[128] Ibid, p. 24-5; and Allsen, "Uighurs of Turfan," p. 261.

B. RETHINKING THE EARLY MING NARRATIVE IN A EURASIAN FRAMEWORK

The classic story of the early Ming dynasty reads as follows. The Yuan dynasty collapsed in the mid-fourteenth century due to three major factors: 1) the decline of Yuan military power, thanks to decades of mismanagement and graft; 2) infighting within the highest echelons of the Yuan government, exacerbated by repeated succession crises which often resulted in tanistric conflict; and 3) the politically-motivated dismissal of the most capable members of the Yuan administration and military, who may have otherwise been able to put down Chinese peasant rebellions.[129] In the resulting vacuum of power, regional Chinese and Mongol strongmen established their own powerbases, governments, and armies. They challenged Yuan sovereignty and, in many cases, declared their own dynasties.[130] One such movement was a Buddhist-inspired group of rebels known as the Red Turbans, and within their ranks rose a charismatic orphan named Zhu Yuanzhang, who served as a military commander, scored numerous victories against Yuan forces and other regional warlords, and eventually seized control of the Red Turbans.[131] Zhu soon conquered his rival warlords, defeated the Mongol Yuan forces sent against him, and established the Ming dynasty with its capital in Yingtian (modern Nanjing). He took the reign title Hongwu 洪武, or "vastly martial," a name intended to demonstrate the military strength of his new state. The Hongwu emperor attempted to attack the remnants of the Yuan court, who had fled into Mongolia, but the Mongols managed to defeat the armies he sent

[129] Frederick W. Mote, "The Rise of the Ming Dynasty," in *The Cambridge History of China, Volume 7*, pp. 13-25.
[130] Ibid, pp. 19.
[131] Ibid, pp. 29-57.

northward. Following several similar defeats, the emperor gave up on his ambitions to conquer the Mongolian steppe and over the thirty years of his reign settled into a defensive policy, enfeoffing his sons at strategic points across Ming territory, but specially placing his oldest and most well-trained sons in fiefs along the northern steppe frontier, each commanding several thousand garrison soldiers to defend against Mongol incursion.[132] According to the classic narrative, these were the beginnings of the Great Wall. [133] In domestic affairs, the early Ming state under Hongwu passed laws discriminating against Mongol customs and styles of dress, and the emperor blamed Mongol corruption for the collapse of the Yuan dynasty.[134]

After the Hongwu emperor's death in 1398, his young and inexperienced grandson ascended to the throne as the Jianwen emperor, but Jianwen's reign was short-lived. The Hongwu emperor's fourth son, Zhu Di, served as a powerful enfeoffed prince in modern Beijing. With a great number of soldiers under his command (including Mongol cavalry), he launched a civil war to take the throne by force, and in 1402 captured Nanjing (his nephew likely dying in the process) and took the reign title Yongle 永樂, or "perpetual happiness." The Yongle emperor adopted a more direct and aggressive policy on the frontier, launching five massive, expensive military campaigns into the steppe with the goal of ending the remaining Yuan pretenders and conquering Mongolia. He also meddled in inter-tribal Mongol relations in order to keep the Mongols divided and improve the safety of the frontier. When the Yongle emperor died in 1424, however, Mongolia remained firmly outside Ming control.[135]

[132] See: John Langlois, "The Hung-wu Reign," in *The Cambridge History of China, Volume 7.*
[133] Zhao Xianhai, *Mingdai jiu bian,* pp. 46, 78, 157.
[134] Jiang, *The Mandate of Heaven,* pp. 48, 132, 136.
[135] Hok-Lam Chan, "The Chien-wen, Yung-lo, Hung-his, and Hsüan-te reigns," in *The Cambridge History of China, Volume 7*, pp. 182-275.

Ming interest in the steppe declined after the Yongle reign. The Ming stopped interfering in Mongol internal relations, and as a result, by the 1440s a Mongol general named Esen managed to unite the fractured Mongol groups, brought the Hami kingdoms (northwest of the Ming) under his sovereignty with the threat of force, and extended his military influence east nearly to Joseon Korea. The prospect of a reunited Mongol power on the Ming border frightened Ming emperors and statesmen. The sixth Ming ruler, the young and inexperienced Zhengtong emperor 正統, decided to personally lead a campaign into the steppe to defeat Esen and break up Mongol power. Esen, however, soundly defeated and destroyed the Ming army and captured the Zhengtong emperor near a fortress called Tumu. The ensuing political emergency in the Ming was thereafter known as the Tumu Crisis. This disaster cemented the already existing Ming isolationist attitude, and in the classic narrative, reflects traditional Chinese relationships with nomadic steppe groups: one in which China was always on the defensive in the face of nomadic aggression, and which regarded offensive campaigns as a foolhardy waste of materials, manpower, and money.

This is a common narrative, both in twentieth-century scholarship and popular retellings of Ming history, and recent scholarship on the Yuan-Ming transition has not yet constructed a coherent alternative version more valuable to the modern scholar.[136] However, by taking a Eurasian wide-lens and observing how other post-Mongol polities across the continent managed and interacted with steppe nomads, a new picture emerges. Ming approaches and attitudes towards the Mongols and steppe nomads were not unique to the Chinese historical experience, or a result of Chinese "strategic culture."[137] Instead, Ming strategies in dealing with the Mongols –

[136] See, for example, a widely-read history very popular in China, by Dang Nian Ming Yue, *Ming chao na xie shi'er* (Beijing: Zhongguo youyi chuban gongsi, 2006).
[137] Johnston, *Cultural Realism,* pp. ix-xiii.

namely, building long strategic fortifications like the Great Wall, or maintaining a purely defensive posture after the Tumu Crisis – were quite rational and understandable moves for the Ming state to make, given its position and available resources. We will briefly look at two Eurasian phenomena in order to re-situate China's historical experience with the Mongols: Muscovy Russia's practice of building strategic walls and fortifications to defend against Mongol incursion, and Ottoman reactions to military defeat at the hands of Tamerlane.

1. MUSCOVY, STEPPE RELATIONS, AND STRATEGIC WALL-BUILDING IN RUSSIA, 1450-1650

Following the Mongol conquest of Russia in the mid-thirteenth century, the Mongols rendered the Grand Duchy of Moscow, as well as its sister Rus duchies and principalities, into tributary states under the Mongol empire. The Rus experience under Mongol rule reflects the most common, if generalized, stereotypes of Mongol occupation practices: the Mongols did not settle Russia or attempt to radically change Russian religious, political, or social practices, instead extracting resources by conscripting manpower through tributary demands. This permitted Moscow and other Rus polities to avoid the ideological problems caused by their defeat at the hands of the Mongols, because the conquest remained largely invisible.[138] It is not necessary to delve into the details of Mongol rule over Russia, which continued, at least nominally, for the next two centuries. After the Mongol empire fractured into four autonomous khanates in the late thirteenth century, the Kipchak Khanate (also known as the Great Horde or Golden Horde) continued to exercise power over Russia, until internal Kipchak unrest in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries reduced its ability to demand tribute from its subject states. During the

[138] Charles J. Halperin, *Russia and the Golden Horde: The Mongol Impacts on Medieval Russian History* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1087), p. 127.

reign of Vasilii II (r. 1425-62) of Moscow, Kipchak regional power continued to decline, and by the reign of Ivan III (r. 1462-1505) Moscow no longer recognized Kipchak suzerainty. Muscovy instead became, in many ways, a Kipchak successor state, alongside the Crimean and Kazan khanates.[139]

During the last years of Kipchak power, particularly in the late fifteenth century, the Crimean Khanate and Muscovy formed an alliance. Both powers had an interest in reducing the authority of their common overlord. After the Kipchak decline, the Moscow-Crimean alliance continued on the basis of a mutual desire to keep the steppe region between them stable, and the existence of a common foe in Lithuania, but after the reign of Ivan III the alliance broke down. The ultimate collapse of the Kipchaks, overlapping Muscovite and Crimean interests in the eastern Kazan front, and Muscovite encroachment southwards into Crimea exacerbated mutual tensions.[140] Crimean raids north across the Oka River became more common, and Muscovite settlement south increased in volume. From this point, Crimea sought to check the growing power of Moscow by seeking alliances with the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and the Ottoman Empire.

Muscovy's history of strategic wall-building for defense against nomadic incursion began in earnest in the late fifteenth century. Initial constructions were of a small scale, designed to protect settlers from light raids rather than large-scale invasions. South of Moscow along a 250 kilometer stretch of the Oka River, a tributary of the Volga, the Muscovite state funded the construction and manning of rammed-earth walls, forts, traps, and ditches. These fortifications protected the regions north of the Oka that did not enjoy natural coverage from forest,

[139] Robert O. Crummey, *The Formation of Muscovy, 1304-1613* (New York: Longman, 1987), p. 81; and Edward Louis Keenan, "Muscovy and Kazan: some introductory remarks on the patterns of steppe diplomacy," in *Slavic Review* 26 (1967): pp. 548-58.
[140] Crummey, *The Formation of Muscovy,* pp. 81, 97, 100.

marshland, and impassible sections of the river bank. After relations between Moscow and Crimea soured in the early sixteenth century, Moscow extended the construction of fortifications to the south and southeast, linking existing lines of defense with the town of Alatyr on the Volga. By the end of the century these fortifications were integrated in a much larger, longer, and more robust network of defense, the Abatis Line, which protected about 1000 kilometers of otherwise open territory between Moscow and the steppe grasslands. The methodical extension of these defensive lines was part of a larger strategic program designed to gradually extend Muscovy's ability to operate administratively and militarily in the south vis-à-vis the Crimean Khanate, and it required a simultaneous effort to colonize these areas in order to maintain populations from which the state could draw labor and soldiers for the fortifications.[141]

In the 1580s and 90s, the Abatis Line was largely completed. Muscovy then shifted military forces further south in conjunction with the establishment of new towns and settlements, pushing into territory of the Crimean Khanate. In the early seventeenth century, intense Crimean raids prompted the construction of more lines of fortifications, intended to cut off the main north-south avenues of steppe incursion, again linking frontier military settlements with earthen walls and forts, and now more commonly defended with effective cannon. A brief diplomatic confrontation with the Ottoman Empire and Crimean Khanate prompted Muscovy to temporarily suspend its southern encroachment and fall back on the Abatis Line, but construction resumed after the resolution of the Azov Crisis of 1637-42 and culminated in what is now called the Belgorod Line.[142] In the following decades, further conflict and disputes with the Ottomans and the Crimean Khanate spurred Moscow to extend defensive lines to the southwest, constructing

[141] Brian L. Davies, *Warfare, State, and Society on the Black Sea Steppe, 1500-1700* (New York: Routledge, 2007), pp. 41-7.
[142] Davies, *Warfare, State, and Society on the Black Sea Steppe,* pp. 88-9.

additional fortifications in Ukraine to counter strategic threats to areas under Moscow's suzerainty. Again, Muscovy moved soldiers forward from previous lines and settled refugees from regional conflicts along the Voronezh and Oskol rivers. This latest series of defenses, the Iziuma Line, ran for over 500 kilometers, pushed the frontier over 100 kilometers outward, and linked twenty fortified towns and settlements, providing a continuous line of defense in Ukraine.

The strategic construction of defensive fortification lines ran parallel to the development, experimentation, and deployment of newer and more effective weapons and troop organization. Early sixteenth century Muscovite efforts to build a permanent, mobile force of frontier soldiers met fiscal and technological challenges. Early cannon were too heavy and cumbersome to be of much use against mobile Crimean horsemen, and it was not until the 1620s that Muscovy obtained the expertise and technology to produce and deploy lighter, transportable cannon ideal for anti-cavalry frontier defense. Early muskets and rifles were too inaccurate and slow-firing to be of much use in offensive campaigns for similar reasons.[143] Fortifications like those Moscow constructed on the nomadic frontier improved the ability of western-style firearms to repel nomadic forces, but offensive campaigns remained difficult to conduct.[144] The seasonal mustering and disbanding of Moscow's fifteenth- and sixteenth-century southern frontier armies, and the prohibitive cost of maintaining a permanent force, meant Moscow forewent a constant policy of offense. Thus, the Muscovite court initially relied on smaller groups of soldiers who could move from one location along a defensive line to another, aided by a network of signaling towers. The Abatis Line, as Moscow's first large-scale fortification line, was intended to provide warning of Crimean raids, slow down Crimean movements, hold supplies for mobile Muscovite

[143] Davies, *Warfare, State, and Society on the Black Sea Steppe,* pp. 33-5, 52.
[144] Ibid, pp. 52-5.

forces, and buy time to prepare Moscow for possible siege, but the Line could not withstand a large attack.[145]

These military efforts required the settlement of regions along the defensive lines, in order to provide the manpower to build, garrison, and repair fortifications. The state offered bounties to entice people to settle the frontier, and carefully managed the practices necessary to keep frontier settlements safe. Local governors forbade settlers from logging in certain stretches of frontier forest in order to maintain natural barriers. Soldiers set controlled fires to burn steppe grasses, both to deprive nomadic horsemen of fodder and prevent wildfires from destroying fortifications. Regional promulgations required frontier towns to maintain and deploy scouting parties.[146] Later demographic phenomena, such as deteriorating economic conditions in northern Muscovy, brought more settlers south even without state encouragement, thus permitting the movement of the frontier ever farther south.[147] Kollmann offers a succinct view of the measures necessary to maintain the frontier:

> These new settlements were supported by grain shipments from the center until settlers produced sufficient resources, which took decades. Fortresses were staffed by … anyone else available, including runaway serfs, which set up a constant tension as enserfment in Russia was solidified in the seventeenth century. Frontier governors welcomed any available labor, ignoring government directives to send runaways back to their owners. Behind the line, peasants migrated in, runaways settled, landlords moved serfs and the state forcibly moved gentry and state peasants, turning some of the latter into border guards. Military units farmed their fields communally … All this presaged social mobility; in the 1640s the "new model army" was organized by recruiting local peasants to become dragoons, cavalry, and infantry and by 1658 a Belgorod regiment had formed on this borderland.[148]

One of the many groups on the frontier, the Cossacks, played a unique role at the edges of Muscovite territory, functioning as a mobile and transitory population both within and beyond

[145] Ibid, p. 46.
[146] Davies, *Warfare, State, and Society on the Black Sea Steppe*, p. 45.
[147] Ibid, pp. 64-5.
[148] Nancy Shields Kollmann, *The Russian Empire, 1450-1801* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), p. 67.

the defensive lines. The role of Cossacks in Moscow-Crimean relations, from a Sinological point of view, parallels the role of Mongol units serving in the early Ming military, and in Ming efforts to play nomadic groups against one another. Moscow often subsidized – or rescinded subsidies to – Cossack groups, usually with one or two goals in mind: 1) to bring the Cossacks into Muscovy's conflicts with steppe nomads, or 2) to encourage Cossacks to cease launching raids against parties with whom Moscow had concluded peace treaties.[149] The Don Cossacks, living on lower stretches of the eponymous river, functioned as Moscow's most frequent partners in wars against Crimea. In addition to serving as contemporary polities, Cossacks living in Muscovite territory often garrisoned fortifications along defensive lines, served in formal Muscovite armies, and settled as farmers in strategically important regions along the Crimean frontier.[150]

2. ANALYSIS OF MUSCOVITE FRONTIER HISTORIOGRAPHY

These programs of fortification construction and army organization were not, of course, conducted in a political vacuum, and historians have carefully outlined developments within and without Muscovy that played a role in the construction and extension of steppe frontier defenses. Internal politics in Moscow and the complicated web of relations among Muscovy, Crimea, Kazan, Poland-Lithuania, the Ottoman Empire, and various Cossack hosts inevitably created a mutable frontier. With the advice of Dr. Michael Khodarkovsky, whose expertise is in Russian frontier expansion and imperialism, I have selected a handful of books that cover in a broad sense the era of Muscovite relations with steppe nomads after the disintegration of the Kipchak Khanate/Golden Horde: Kollmann (2012), Davies (2007), Ostrowski (1998), Khodarkovsky

[149] Davies, *Warfare, State, and Society on the Black Sea Steppe,* pp. 29-33, 91-6.
[150] Kollmann, *The Russian Empire,* p. 67.

(2004 & 1992), Crummey (1987), Fennell (1983), and the essays in an edited volume by Bater and French (1983). First, I will discuss how historians have interpreted Moscow's attitudes towards steppe nomads, and in particular the Crimean Khanate.

It appears to me, as a Sinologist, that Russian history's reassessment of the "Tatar Yoke" as a crippling force on early Russian society and state parallels Chinese history's reassessment of the Mongol Yuan Dynasty as a disruptive force that crushed the economic and cultural vibrancy of the Song Dynasty.[151] Fennell concluded that the "backwardness" and "impoverishment" of late medieval Muscovy was caused "not so much by any external factor or by the so-called 'yoke' imposed by the Tatars, as by the innate and devastating conservatism of the ruling class, by their unwillingness and inability to change an outmoded and creaking system and by the sheer impotence of most of the rulers."[152] Fennell also points to inconsistent succession practices, particularly lateral succession from brother to brother, as a source of instability both before and after the Mongol invasion.[153] In this analysis, resistance to the Mongols during and after the conquest had been an impossible goal to organize; the question of whether or not to resist was not one that Rus rulers could or would articulate into a coherent policy. It was only after two centuries of Mongol rule that the gradual centralization of power in Moscow, particularly by Rus monarchs ingratiating themselves with their Mongol overlords and thereby strengthening their own position against potential rivals, brought stability to Muscovy.[154]

In Crummey's view, the emergence of Moscow's centralized monarchy brought two developments that would shape Muscovy's place in Russia in the early-modern era: the state's

[151] Donald Ostrowski, *Muscovy and the Mongols: Cross-Cultural Influences on the Steppe Frontier, 1304-1589* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 244-8.
[152] John Fennell, *The Crisis of Medieval Russia, 1200-1304* (New York: Routledge, 1983), p. 162.
[153] Ibid, pp. 162-3.
[154] Ibid, pp. 163-4.

consolidation of command over military forces; and the ability for Moscow, as a Kipchak subject, to effectively coordinate with other Kipchak subjects on a diplomatic level.[155] The incapacity of the Kipchak Khanate to impose its political will upon Moscow is demonstrated in a failed Kipchak invasion of Muscovy in 1480: the Kipchak khan Ahmed wished to unify his broken realm and punish Muscovy as a recalcitrant subject, but his poorly assembled army could not ford the Oka river defended by Muscovite forces. With no other means of attacking Moscow, the Kipchak army retreated with the onset of winter. Crummey notes that this "stand off" itself did not singlehandedly mark the end of the period of Kipchak dominance, because that era had already slowly withered away over the course of the century.[156] Thereafter, under the long reigns of Ivan III (r. 1462-1505) and Vasilii III (r. 1505-33), relations between Muscovy and its sister successor state the Crimean Khanate are characterized as largely peaceful and governed by "practical" considerations: steppe stability and mutual defense against Lithuania.[157] Peace ended when the Crimean Khanate extended diplomatic overtures to Lithuania, which disrupted the Crimean-Muscovite arrangement and encouraged both parties to intervene in the affairs of Kazan and turn it against the other.[158] According to Crummey, the Crimean Khanate felt threatened by the slow encroachment on lands further south by Muscovite settlers,[159] while Ostrowski points to Kazan's alliance with Crimean as the reason for Muscovy's "logical" conquest of the Kazan steppe, in order to forestall the emergence of two hostile, steppe frontiers.[160] Paired with the improving efficacy of the Muscovite army under Ivan IV (r. 1547-84), or Ivan the Terrible, Moscow's ability to act boldly against steppe polities appears a logical, almost sensible course of

[155] Crummey, *The Formation of Muscovy,* pp. 10-15.
[156] Ibid, pp. 98-9.
[157] Ibid, p. 97.
[158] Ibid, p. 99-100.
[159] Ibid.
[160] Ostrowski, *Muscovy and the Mongols,* pp. 187-8.

action.[161] This style of self-defense formed a "pattern" of Muscovy's (and latter Russia's) relations with the steppe world.

In this view, the extension of defensive lines first south, then southeast and finally southwest was part of a larger, long-term, strategic inevitability of conflict between Muscovy and steppe polities. Khodarkovsky (1992) and Davies, however, examine these relations with finer tools, suggesting that local considerations on smaller timescales created the most pressing incentives to construct large-scale fortifications. In his analysis of Russian-Kalmyk relations, Khodarkovsky (1992) shows how granular politics – including among other things the use of particular titles in diplomatic exchanges, the level of centralization among steppe nomadic polities, the conduct of embassies, and willful misrepresentation of the other's intention – all contributed to a fluid steppe frontier arrangement.[162] These shifting elements of diplomacy largely revolved around the major goals of either side. The Muscovite state desired a stable and nonthreatening steppe frontier, and wished to impress its political superiority over groups it perceived as subordinate. The Kalmyks wished to benefit economically from their relationship with Moscow by selling and trading horses for goods, weapons, and other items that would enrich Kalmyk groups and provide material wealth that could enhance the position of Kalmyk *tayishis*.[163]

The Kalmyks, who arrived in Russia in the early seventeenth century, are not the primary focus of this chapter, but the Moscow-Kalmyk relationship underscores similarities in how historians have approached Muscovite relations with steppe nomads. When possible, Khodarkovsky offers the point of view of the Kalmyks, while acknowledging that the

[161] Crummey, *The Formation of Muscovy*, pp. 152-3.
[162] See: Michael Khodarkovsky, *Where Two Worlds Met: The Russian State and the Kalmyk Nomads, 1600-1771* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992).
[163] Ibid, pp. 28-31, 59-75, esp. 75.

historiographic tradition of Muscovite-steppe relations is limited thanks to the lopsided nature of the sources that favor Muscovy, and often when discussing Kalmyk perspectives he writes in acknowledged generalities, due to the limited nature of sources.[164] Davies, in contrast, delves deeply into the tensions not only between Moscow and the Crimean Khanate, but also Moscow and Muscovite settlers, and Moscow and local governors, Muscovites and Crimeans, and Cossack hosts and all above mentioned parties. However, deep discussion of granular attitudes on the part of the Crimean Khanate is still necessarily limited because of the small sourcebase. Historical studies of the Crimean Khanate do enjoy Ottoman sources as a second pool from which historians can do comparative or analytical studies, but the Ottoman Empire, like Muscovy and Russia, was an imperial state with regards to the nomadic khanates living near the Black Sea Steppe, and its sources are similarly biased.

In his 2004 book on Russian colonialism, however, Khodarkovsky flips his perspective to that of Moscow, and asks two major questions: 1) why did conflict predominate between Moscow and nomadic groups on the steppe, and 2) how did Russia extend its political dominance over huge swathes of the Eurasian steppe belt? Here he chooses to focus on the later stages of Moscow's early-modern imperialism, in the process glossing over the early history of Muscovite-Crimean relations. In doing so he once again acquiesces to the view that warfare between Moscow and nomadic groups was inevitable thanks to "irreconcilable" interests.[165] He also points more specifically to the advancement of gunpowder weaponry as one of the chief reasons for the long-term failure of steppe nomads to resist Russian encroachment – a

[164] Ibid, p. 1-4.
[165] Michael Khodarkovsky, *Russia's Steppe Frontier: The Making of a Colonial Empire* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004) p. 8.

phenomenon mirrored on the other end of Eurasia with the Qing conquest of the Zunghars.[166] While this approach is correct in a sense, it largely repeats the methodologies and conclusions of Fennel, Crummey and Ostrowski: conflict was historically inevitable; nomadic raiding continued because its "economics" made stopping it difficult; nomads could not effectively fight back because of a lack of cannon; and settlers served as an extension of the state's frontier considerations rather than actors with agency.[167] This is not to say Khodarkovsky's 2004 book is without merit, for it does couch the *longue durée* of Russian expansion in somewhat nuanced terms, namely the observation that until the eighteenth century Russian imperialism had no overarching strategic vision, that Moscow was primarily concerned with controlling the means and methods of diplomacy, and that wall-building served both for defense and the control of population movements.[168]

Davies does take the time to ask how other polities in Eastern Europe and the Black Sea steppe region approached frontier defense, an methodology too infrequently seen in Chinese historiography. He points out that when Ukrainian historian and political figure Mykhailo Hrushevsky (d. 1934) juxtaposed Muscovy's approaches to those of Polish-Lithuania, Hrushevsky unfairly concluded that Muscovy's defense strategy was far more effective than it was in reality.[169] Rather, Davies states, Muscovy's construction of a network of frontier defenses was a "long and expensive" project that moved along in fits and starts, with limited initial effectiveness and tension between the state and settlers; and it suffered from setbacks when the political landscape of the Black Sea region changed.[170] However, Davies suggests that

[166] See: Peter Perdue, *China Marches West: The Qing Conquest of Central Eurasia* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010).
[167] Khodarkovsky, *Russia's Steppe Frontier,* pp. 19, 20, 132.
[168] Ibid, pp. 39-40, 43, 140.
[169] Davies, *Warfare, State, and Society on the Black Sea Steppe,* pp. 39-40.
[170] Ibid, pp. 40, 41-45.

Hrushevsky was correct to look at Poland-Lithuania as a comparative unit as the limited power of its ruler in the face of the *Sejm,* a body of nobles with considerable power to restrict the monarchy, curtailed Poland-Lithuania's ability to react to steppe incursions with the same level of decisiveness and efficacy.[171]

The volume on Russian historical geography that Bater and French edited contains a pair of essays pertinent to this historiographical discussion. Shaw combines a discussion of the motivations of Muscovite settlers with the construction of defensive lines, and also considers steppe politics. Lending credence to the view that settlers often operated independent of – or regardless of – Moscow's considerations, Shaw notes that Crimean land, to put it simply, was valuable and fertile, ideal for a wide means of livelihood from agriculture to hunting, fishing, fowling, and beekeeping.[172] The slow rate of settlement and shifting geopolitical situations, however, placed an effective limit on the rate at which Muscovy could expand southwards.[173] With enough manpower and supplies, frontier settlers under state direction could erect fortifications at a dizzying speed: in one instance on the steppe between the Voronezh and Chelnovia rivers, nearly a thousand laborers constructed 25 kilometers of earthen wall in five months.[174] These instances are few and far between, however, without considerable state investment. Stebelsky takes this topic of discussion east and discusses the expansion and colonization of the steppe in incremental terms, noting how environmental considerations informed settlement patterns on north-to-south and east-to-west axes.[175] He also details how colonization provided benefits for the government in Moscow, beyond simply being part of a

[171] Ibid, p. 40.
[172] Denis J. B. Shaw, "Southern Frontiers of Muscovy, 1550-1700," in *Studies in Russian Historical Geography: Volume One,* eds. James H. Bater and R.A. French (London: Academic Press, 1983), pp. 117.
[173] Ibid, p. 126.
[174] Davies, *Warfare, State, and Society on the Black Sea Steppe*, p. 88
[175] Igor Stebelsky, "The Frontier in Central Asia," in Bater and French, p. 143.

program that removed political rivals: the settlement of Central Asia and the Urals brought new sources of iron, copper, and the expertise necessary to turn them into material that became useful in the Swedish wars.[176] Moscow's eastward push witnessed many of the same strategic practices as the southern advance: the construction of defensive lines that slowly encroached upon nomadic territory. However, Muscovy's position in Central Asia was not imperiled by the direct exposure of Moscow to raids, indicating that the eastern strategy was guided more by a semi-coherent policy than survival.[177] Stebelsky uses the language of strategic inevitability in his analysis of the eastern frontier, much like his contemporaries.

In this brief overview of Muscovite wall-building projects and the array of political considerations, intentions, and contextualities that surrounded them, we might conclude that the historiography of wall-building suggests it was simultaneously a reactive and long-term strategic program of defense. This is partly because of the nature of the sourcebase and partly because of the dominance of state-centric narratives. Wall-building becomes a "fail or succeed" project, in which historians can point to specific examples of when it works and when it doesn't, and when it does work, how farsighted state planning allowed it to work. The granular analysis of affected societies, both sedentary and nomadic, rarely comes into play, except in the case of Davies, who mostly examines the relationship between the Muscovite state and its settlers. One section in Khodarkovsky's study does merit attention, in which he warns historians against equating Kalmyk social units with states, and with the liberal use of terms like "khanate," which imply statehood.[178] The political structure of nomadic "khanates" rested on the prestige of the khan, whose allies could very easily withdraw their support and depart, a salient point that Chinese

[176] Ibid, p. 151.
[177] Ibid, p. 149.
[178] Khodarkovsky, *Where Two Worlds Met,* pp. 14-5.

historians have also acknowledged.[179] Yet when the narrative becomes one of the state, perhaps because the object of the narrative (defensive fortifications) was created by the state, the assumption is that the opposite side – nomadic peoples – also form a "state" with a "strategy" directly opposed that of the wall-builders. In building walls, the Muscovite state created a contrasting narrative that had not existed previously.

3. THE OTTOMAN-TIMURID CRISIS OF 1402

The confrontation between the Ottoman ruler Bayezid I and the post-Mongol steppe ruler Tamerlane occupies a much smaller timeframe than the long, drawn out period of confrontation and negotiation between Muscovy and Crimea. This is not to say that relations between the Ottoman Empire and nomadic steppe peoples were limited to the early fifteenth century, but for comparative purposes with Ming history the capture of Bayezid appears particularly relevant. Bayezid came to power amid political tensions in late-fourteenth-century Anatolia, succeeding his father Murad I. Bayezid's rule met challenge, and he faced considerable recalcitrance from his own vassals – Muslim and Christian – as well as rival emirates in Anatolia, who often joined together in opposition to Bayezid. In a series of swift campaigns that earned him the moniker "Thunderbolt," Bayezid conquered western Anatolia, defeated a coalition of European forces, and moved against Constantinople, laying siege to the city between 1394 and 1402. At the same time he faced pressures from eastern Anatolia and Central Asia, where the Ilkhanid successor states and, in short time, the Turco-Mongol ruler Tamerlane moved against Ottoman territory.

The conflict between Bayezid and Tamerlane sprouted from overlapping claims to a diverse region of patchy sovereignty in the former eastern Anatolian domains of the Ilkhanids, a

[179] See, for instance, Skaff, *Sui-Tang China.*

Mongol successor state. The Ottoman conquest of the eastern Anatolian city of Sivas brought the two fledgling empires in conflict, and disputes over titles and the language and politics of superior-inferior relations exacerbated this friction. As Timurid pressure on Bayezid's domains increased, Bayezid abandoned his siege of Constantinople and, on the advice of his allies, moved against Mamluk strongholds in order to consolidate and expand his power. Tamerlane saw this as an affront, perhaps because he sought confirmation from the caliph of Cairo of his superior status over Bayezid. Tamerlane invaded, re-conquered Sivas, and met Bayezid's army near Ankara in 1402. The battle turned poorly for Bayezid: Tamerlane won and captured Bayezid alive. There are several accounts explaining why Bayezid lost. Most distribute the blame in various measures to the defection of Bayezid's soldiers, Tamerlane's ability to block Ottoman access to water supplies, Tamerlane's use of elephant corps, and the superior numbers and discipline of the Timurid army. There are also multiple narratives of Bayezid's fate after he was captured: that Tamerlane dragged him across Central Asia as he continued his campaign to reform a steppe empire in the Mongol design; that Bayezid killed himself in captivity; or that he died of natural causes in the year following his capture. The long-term consequences of the battle are also subject to different narratives, but the most common of the Ottoman narratives place emphasis on the subsequent civil war among Bayezid's successors and the eventual rise of Mehmed I, who appears in Ottoman chronicles as wiser, less impetuous, and more militarily savvy than his father – in all, a "real" challenge to Timurid power during the reign of Tamerlane's son, Shah-Rukh.

This catastrophe has been interpreted through a variety of academic, sympathetic, and popular lenses, some of which are less analytical than others. In his popular book *Lords of the Horizons,* the journalist Jason Goodwin characterized Bayezid as "headstrong and arrogant" and that confrontation between him and Tamerlane was "inevitable" thanks to their exchange of

diminutive and vitriolic language, and Goodwin's account is one that insists Bayezid committed suicide in captivity, placing a last grain of agency into the disgraced sultan's story.[180] Similarly, Maksudoglu places moral superiority in Bayezid's quarter, and writes that Bayezid wished for peace, but was unable to realize peace because Tamerlane's treaty conditions were unacceptable. Maksudoglu also claimed that when the battle turned against Bayezid, the sultan stayed to fight with the "awareness" that defeat was his responsibility, though he had the opportunity to flee if he had wished.[181] Most academics have taken more care to address the circumstances surrounding Bayezid's defeat and capture. Parry places blame on the lack of integration in Bayezid's army, essentially welded together from the soldiers of numerous rapidly conquered territories and gifts of tribute from Balkans vassal-states. While Parry does suggest Bayezid's headstrong personality and style of rule were likely root causes for his alarming, simultaneous expansion into Timurid and Mamluk territory, he emphasizes that overextension and poor centralization efforts formed the bedrock for the sultan's defeat.[182] Finkel offers perhaps the most intuitive interpretation, echoing Parry's explanation that Bayezid's army suffered from political fragmentation, and also detailing the various ways in which fifteenth-century Ottoman chroniclers cast the event: by diverting attention to the subsequent Ottoman civil war, by blaming those soldiers who defected to Tamerlane, and by recasting Bayezid as a tragic figure.[183]

Few modern historians of the Ottoman Empire view the battle and its fallout from a Timurid point of view. Imber suggests that Tamerlane actively exploited the fragile loyalties of Bayezid's soldiers by having his own commanders, some of whom were the former chiefs of

[180] Jason Goodwin, *Lords of the Horizons: A History of the Ottoman Empire* (London: Picador, 2003), pp. 25-7.
[181] Mehmet Maksutoğlu, *Osmanli History and Institutions* (Istanbul: Ensar Neşriyat, 2011), pp. 107-9.
[182] Vernon J. Parry and Michael Cook, editors, *A History of the Ottoman Empire to 1730* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1976), pp. 25-7.
[183] Caroline Finkel, *Osman's Dream: The History of the Ottoman Empire* (New York: Basic Books, 2006), pp. 29-31.

Bayezid's Turkic regiments, display their banners.[184] However, Imber, like other Ottoman historians, points to the hidden resiliency of the Ottoman polity as the reason it did not ultimately disappear after Bayezid's defeat, glossing over Tamerlane's reasons for not capitalizing upon it.[185] Finkel observes parallels between the accounts of Ottoman and Timurid chroniclers, particularly that Tamerlane's chroniclers depicted their ruler's failure to pursue Bayezid's son Suleyman after the battle as mercy rather than weakness, and that Suleyman subordinated himself to Tamerlane in exchange for political freedoms.[186] A few historians attempt to address the Bayezid-Tamerlane conflict in terms beyond those of abutting domains, suggesting that the Ottoman-Timurid struggle stemmed from conflicting and mutually exclusive sources of political legitimacy: the old Chinggisid Mongol lineage versus the new Osman Turkic lineage. In this interpretation, Tamerlane saw himself as the inheritor of an altered form of the Chinggisid legacy, in which he simultaneously ruled in the name of a Chinggisid puppet and in his own right.[187] According to Finkel, the fact that Tamerlane's claims to sovereignty rested on this legacy explains Tamerlane's reaction to Bayezid's conquest of eastern Anatolia, lands that were formerly ruled by the Mongol Ilkhanids.[188] Bayezid, in contrast, pressed the relatively young claim of the Osman dynasty as the rightful ruler of all Turkic peoples, a legacy inherited and altered from the Seljuks of Rum.[189]

For a better glimpse at the Timurid view we may look to Timurid historians. While John Darwin's well-known volume *After Tamerlane* only briefly mentions the Bayezid-Tamerlane conflict, it does go into greater detail about the motivations and goals behind Tamerlane's

[184] Colin Imber, *The Ottoman Empire: 1300-1650: The Structure of Power* (New York: Palgrave, 2002), p. 15.
[185] Ibid, p. 330.
[186] Finkel, *Osman's Dream,* p. 31.
[187] Douglas Streusand, *Islamic Gunpowder Empires: Ottomans, Safavids, and Mughals* (New York: Routledge, 2010), p. 23-4.
[188] Ibid, p. 27.
[189] Streusand, *Islamic Gunpowder Empires,* pp. 66-7.

conquests. Darwin suggests that Tamerlane did not simply attempt to replay Mongol strategies of empire-building, but actively "wrecked" political and economic rivals surrounding his Central Asian imperial core.[190] He, like the Ottoman rulers that followed Bayezid, balanced loyalties by satisfying his steppe subjects with traditional modes of exploitative warfare and satisfying his sedentary agricultural subjects by investing plunder into urban centers, particularly Samarkand.[191] Marozzi, a journalist writing about Tamerlane in the same vein as Jason Goodwin (1998), attempts to present multiple accounts of Bayezid's captivity and trace the origins of each. He notes that the version in which Bayezid committed suicide by dashing his head against the bars of his cage appears to have originated with a sixteenth-century English playwright, Christopher Marlowe (d. 1593).[192] In Central Asia, the Persian method of historiography that governed the writing of Timurid history also paints Tamerlane in a positive light, insisting that Tamerlane treated Bayezid honorably while in captivity, and wept when he heard of Bayezid's death.[193] However, like a mirror of some Ottoman historians, Marozzi tends to gloss over the mutual vitriol of letters exchanged between Tamerlane and Bayezid, suggesting that Bayezid was the instigator of the conflict, and that Tamerlane's letters were reasonably worded and his demands fair.[194] Manz has written multiple books on Tamerlane and the Timurids in Iran, and suggests a fairly straightforward narrative to the conflict: that 1) Tamerlane's primary motivation was to destroy a potential challenger to his authority, especially after Bayezid refused to acknowledge his inferior place, [195] and 2) Bayezid's captivity was comfortable and he was not

[190] John Darwin, *After Tamerlane: The Rise and Fall of Global Empires, 1400-2000* (New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2008), pp. 4-5.
[191] Ibid, p. 5.
[192] Justin Marozzi, *Tamerlane: Sword of Islam, Conqueror of the World* (Cambridge: Da Capo Press, 2004), pp. 333-5.
[193] Ibid, pp. 335-6.
[194] Ibid, p. 319.
[195] Beatrice Manz, *Power Politics in Timurid Iran* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 9.

mistreated.[196] Manz also does not detail how Tamerlane organized with Bayezid's successors and split up the remaining powers of Anatolia, instead writing that he left "without leaving any permanent administration in Anatolia."[197]

In the *longue durée* view of Ottoman history, Streusand (2011) observes that modern historians have tended to describe the history of the empire "as a gradual, linear rise … to an imperial apogee in the reign of Qanuni Sulayman … followed by gradual degeneration…"[198] According to the rise-and-decline mode, the rising of the Ottoman polity was interrupted only by Bayezid's defeat, which "deviated" from careful and considered expansion. Streusand says that while historians have "chipped away at this model," it remains in place and is in need of an overhaul, one which is not "steady and linear" and which reflects "political tensions and clashes within the empire."[199] Streusand does not do away with periodization, but instead chooses to describe several "Ottoman empires," the first of which culminated in and ended with Bayezid's reign. Bayezid's strategy of rapid conquest worked, and in many ways made sense, because of his success and because he found himself surrounded by hostile enemies on all sides, from Constantinople and southeast Europe, to rival Anatolian princes, to the Mamluks, to Tamerlane in the east.[200] In many ways Bayezid's rapid military movements and his political strategy of leaving local rulers in place was the same as Tamerlane's, and when viewed through a century-wide lens, the Ottoman dynasty proved far more resilient and adaptable than the Timurid dynasty. The fact that Bayezid's sons survived, instated as individual rulers under Tamerlane's nominal patronization, suggests that their foundation of political legitimacy remained strong

[196] Beatrice Manz, *The Rise and Rule of Tamerlane* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 73.
[197] Ibid.
[198] Streusand, *Islamic Gunpowder Empires,* p. 33.
[199] Ibid.
[200] Ibid, pp. 36-8.

through the early fifteenth century. Princedoms in southeast Europe backed different Ottoman sultans, rather than attempting to dispose of them, and by the time Bayezid's son Mehmed I died, his revitalized empire was stable and strong even in the face of Karaman and Byzantine hostility.

Writing History at the Ottoman Court, a collection of essays on Ottoman historiography, does much to reveal where conflicting accounts of early-fifteenth-century Ottoman history originate. Kastritsis notes that modern historians place considerable emphasis on the Bayezid-Tamerlane battle as a point of rupture for Ottoman chroniclers,[201] after which they developed "historical consciousness," but Kastritsis deftly argues that the Ottoman chronicles' focus on Bayezid's defeat was much more about the civil war among Bayezid's successors (particularly Mehmed I), who needed to legitimize themselves in an era of fractured power. This created a space for their chroniclers to distort some accounts and fabricate others, most of which tended to deflect the blame for Bayezid's defeat away from the failure of the Osmanli dynasty and towards the aforementioned practical factors.[202] The battle *did* change fifteenth-century Ottoman court historiography, as one would naturally expect given the near-destruction of Ottoman power, but it did not *create* that historiography.[203]

4. LESSONS FOR MING HISTORIOGRAPHY

Among these disparate events with a variety of causes and results, where are the lessons for Sinologists? What are some lessons that historians of China, and particularly the contemporary Ming era, can learn from these historiographies of other Eurasian land empires? The most natural

[201] Dimitris Kastritsis, "The Historical Epic Ahvl-I Sultan Mehemmed (The Tales of Sultan Mehmed) in the Context of Early Ottoman Historiography," in *Writing History at the Ottoman Court,* eds. Hakki Erdem Cipa and Emine F. Fetvaci (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013), p. 4; Cemal Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds: The Construction of the Ottoman State* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), pp. 94-6.
[202] Kastritsis, "The Historical Epic Ahvl-I Sultan Mehemmed," pp. 1-23.
[203] Tijana Krstić, "Conversion and Converts to Islam in Ottoman Historiography of the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries," in *Writing History at the Ottoman Court,* p. 60.

conclusion is that historians of all three regions still have much work to do if we want to consider the nomadic point of view. But this is not a new observation. Rather, I identify four spaces in which historians of the Ming Dynasty can reexamine embedded practices of steppe frontier history:

1) Reexamine our tendency to lend considerable descriptive authority to court records and the heavy Confucian rhetoric therein. Both Confucian officials and modern historians lay out the three options that Ming statesmen apparently had when deciding how to deal with Mongol power: Offensive warfare, defense fortifications, or diplomacy. But these were not necessarily absolute choices.

2) Engage in more extensive regional, early-modern frontier comparisons, particularly with Korea along the Yalu River and Japanese maritime frontiers. This is starting to be addressed in the emerging subfield of early-modern Northeast Asian studies, e.g. Rawski (2015)

3) Reevaluate the narrative power of walls. Walls, as they are physically imposing constructions created by the state, themselves create a narrative of opposition and dichotomy. Dichotomous steppe-sedentary relations do not need walls to exist, of course, but the monolithic nature of the Great Wall, for instance, stands as a huge marker in this regard.

4) We might, as Finkel observed in the Ottoman case, seek parallels between Ming and Mongol chronicles of confrontation on the fifteenth-century frontier. Some historians, notably Hok-lam Chan, have done some of this work. Chan detailed a Mongol narrative of how the third Ming emperor was actually ethnically Mongol and, in a way, a Mongol ruler in China.[204]

In Ming history, the half-century between the Tumu Crisis in 1449 and the formal construction of the Great Wall concentrates extreme, calamitous, narrative power in a short

[204] Hok-Lam Chan, *Legends of the Building of Old Peking* (Hong Kong: The Chinese University of Hong Kong, 2008), chapter 3.

period of time: a concentration that lends itself to classic steppe-sedentary dichotomies in Chinese historiography. However, despite the static and monumental nature of the Great Wall, we do not need to interpret it as a physical marker of a historical break. The Muscovite experience tells us that wall-building can coexist with offensive or expansive strategies and imperial imaginations. We perhaps only perceive the Great Wall and the Tumu Crisis as the breaking point because these phenomena appear, in comparison with the early Ming era from 1368-1424, as signals that something had gone "wrong", or that the Ming state's weakness completely precluded expansionist efforts. Ming military power remained potent after 1500, and experienced revitalization in the face of Japanese and Manchu expansion.[205] The Ming fell primarily due to fiscal mismanagement. Davies correctly identified the same issues that Chinese historians have observed: defenses are expensive and ineffective without a larger strategy of neutralization, while offensive frontier forces are expensive and difficult to maintain in steppe terrain. However, Chinese historians may have placed too much emphasis on the strong, Confucian rhetoric of court records when they have described the third option – diplomacy – as demeaning or politically untenable. It may have been untenable in the face of a united steppe polity, as it was in the case of the Oirats under Esen, or in the late Ming after the Manchu integration of the Mongols, or after the Muscovite conquest of the Kalmyks and the wars against the Ottomans and Crimea, but diplomacy was absolutely a valid approach when the steppe was fractured: when the Yongle emperor played various Mongol tribes against one another, when the

[205] See: Robinson, *Martial Spectacles;* Tonio Andrade, *The Gunpowder Age: China, Military Innovation, and the Rise of the West in World History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016); Kenneth M. Swope, *A Dragon's Head and a Serpent's Tail: Ming China and the First Great East Asian War, 1592-1598* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2009); and Nicola Di Cosmo, "Did Guns Matter? Firearms in the Qing Formation," in *The Qing Formation in World Historical Time,* ed. Lynn Struve (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004).

Jurchen groups of northeast Asia served as Ming tributaries, and throughout the the Muscovite experience after the decline of the Kipchaks.

Similarly, while the Tumu Crisis can be described as the end of Ming pretensions to an empire that included the steppe (as I myself do), it did not necessarily preclude expansionism, as the resurgence of the Ottoman dynasty following Bayezid I's defeat may indicate. The Ming did expand to the south, and established more direct control of marginal regions in Yunnan and Sichuan. Of course, the defeat and capture of Bayezid I and the Zhengtong Emperor occurred in different contexts, particularly with regards to the maturity of the polity: Bayezid relied on his personal ability and prestige to rule a poorly integrated, hastily-assembled realm of vassal-states and tributaries, while the Zhengtong emperor was a quasi-figurehead ruler atop a vast, mature bureaucratic machine that ably survived his unexpected exit. However, this does suggest the possibility that the Ming empire after the Tumu Crisis did not work to correct its evident military ineptitude precisely *because* it was able to fall back on a robust administrative structure. The fragmented Ottoman polity needed military power to keep itself together after Bayezid's defeat, while the Ming empire could easily absorb the blow of Zhengtong's defeat and loss, and adapt to a new situation on the steppe frontier. It was, quite simply, easier and more sensible for Ming state officials to replace the ruler and maintain the status quo than it was to invest the energy, money, and manpower needed to revitalize Ming strategies to conquer the steppe. In any case, below I shall take a closer look at each of the four lessons I have suggested:

1) Ming historians should reexamine our tendency to rely too heavily on Confucian court records that create a narrative of dichotomy.

Arthur Waldron identified what he calls the "policy cycle" of Ming officials, which describes the rotation of strategies the Ming state deployed to manage relations with the Mongols on the northern frontier.[206] These strategies were 1) offensive military engagements into the steppe, 2) the construction of defensive arrangements, such as fortifications, to warn against, slow, and stop Mongol incursions, and 3) engaging Mongol groups diplomatically, usually by offering subsidies as incentives to halt raiding or to pit Mongol groups against one another. The cyclical strategic model does appear to fit the first hundred years of Ming rule quite well. During the Hongwu reign, the Ming military began with an offensive strategy between 1368-70, then shifted to a defensive one after the initial steppe campaigns failed, then resumed an offensive strategy in the late 1380s and early 1390s. Under the Yongle emperor, the Ming cycled between offensive and diplomatic strategies, with the emperor leading steppe campaigns himself, and sometimes personally directing the Ming empire's diplomatic engagement with the fractured Mongols in an effort to curb frontier conflict. After the Yongle emperor's death, the Ming state and court waffled among these three strategies to little effect, never again launching successful northern campaigns, but also making few efforts to engage with the Mongols diplomatically. Instead the Ming court primarily relied on existing defensive arrangements to protect Ming territory. This period of detachment permitted the rise of Esen, who, in the absence of Ming political interference, united the Mongols. The Tumu Crisis then caused the Ming court to shift more or less permanently towards a defensive strategy, embodied by the Great Wall. Ming emperors and bureaucrats eschewed offensive campaigns as costly and unlikely to succeed, and dismissed diplomatic endeavors as politically demeaning.

[206] Waldron, *The Great Wall of China,* p. 37.

However, I believe the cyclical tripartite model fails to provide enough nuance. As I mentioned earlier, the Muscovite and Ottoman experiences suggest alternative ways of looking at Ming-Mongol relations between 1368 and 1500. Moscow used fortifications in all three strategies: offense, defense, and diplomacy. Muscovy's fortified lines reduced the damage of nomadic raids, created a supply zone from which Muscovy could launch offensive campaigns, and coerced Crimeans, Kazans, and Kalmyks into acquiescing to Muscovite diplomatic demands. In this interpretation, the failure or lack of Ming offensive strategy following the Yongle reign is not *because* of the Great Wall (as though the Wall signaled a turn toward isolationist policy) but because of the difficulty and expense involved in operating in the steppe region. Simply put, Ming bureaucrats and emperors did not see a reason to launch offensive campaigns any longer.

We can also look at the differences in the geopolitical arrangements of the Ming and Muscovite frontiers. In the Ming case, the geopolitics of the steppe seems to have been as heavy a dictator of Ming strategy as the rhetorical considerations of the Ming court. A united Mongolia under Esen provided only one avenue of diplomatic dialogue, a dialogue that was underscored by superior-inferior relations, much like that of Muscovy and the Kipchak Khanate. With the Ming court entirely unwilling to accept anything but Esen's inferior status, and with Esen in possession of a much more powerful military, meaningful diplomacy could not occur. Unfortunately for the Ming state, the emperor decided to flex his absolute authority and lead an offensive campaign that he was ill-equipped to command, confirming what Ming court officials already knew: such a campaign would be ineffective at best, and disastrous at worst. The only option left, in the eyes of the Ming court, was the extension and enlargement of defensive arrangements. But the rhetoric of "untenable diplomacy" was more a result of geopolitical realities than a moral unwillingness to treat with "barbarians." In Moscow's case, the collapse of Kipchak power

ushered in a new era of multilateral relations among Muscovy, Crimea, Kazan, Poland-Lithuania, and the Ottoman Empire, providing avenues to enact more fluid, opportunistic diplomacy, and encouraged Moscow to shuffle among various military strategies as the shifting diplomatic scene demanded.

2) Engage in more extensive regional, early-modern frontier comparisons, particularly with Korea and Japan.

The study of Northeast Asian frontiers has emerged as a new field of regional East Asian studies.[207] Rawski describes the transformation of Northeast Asia – roughly modern Liaoning, Jilin, and Heilongjiang – from an unpopulated periphery into a frontier between competing imperial powers. Rawski places the change in the tenth century with the rise of the Khitan-founded Liao state.[208] This transformation in turn pushed Korea to engage more extensively in interstate geopolitics, as its position left it "vulnerable to military pressures from Manchurian regimes."[209] Japan's relations with Northeast Asian powers likewise grew in tandem with the expansion of maritime economic activity and, eventually, clashing frontiers. The first real Northeast Asian conflicts involving Japan were the Mongols' attempts at invasion in the thirteenth century, followed a few hundred years later by the Japanese invasions of Korea in the late sixteenth century. In between, burgeoning trade relations with Ming China and the growth of the global silver network linked Northeast Asia and Japan further.

[207] See: Evelyn Rawski, *Early Modern China and Northeast Asia: Cross-Border Perspectives* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015); Standen, *Unbounded Loyalty;* and Sakura Christmas, "The Cartographic Steppe: Imperial Japan on China's Edge," Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard University (2016).
[208] Rawski, *Early Modern China and Northeast Asia,* p. 34.
[209] Ibid, p. 35.

The Great Wall, in many ways, distracts from a broader analysis of other early-modern frontiers in Northeast Asia. Sinologists might look at Muscovy's fortified frontiers with not only the Crimean Khanate, but also the Kalmyks, the Kazan, and various Central Asian khanates. We can also look at how other states, like Poland-Lithuania, interacted with steppe polities (Crimea) and how nomadic groups in the middle (Cossacks) served as go-betweens, as mercenaries, or operated as independent agents seeking concessions from multiple powers in turn. Rather than painting an image of steppe powers on one side of the frontier and sedentary powers on another, we might investigate relations among China, Korea, Japan, Khitans, Jurchens, Mongols and Manchus in multilateral terms.

3) Reevaluate the narrative power of walls. Walls, as they are physically imposing constructions created by the state, themselves create a narrative of opposition and dichotomy.

As discussed already, the existence of fortified lines on the Muscovite-Crimean frontier creates a narrative of state-versus-state conflict, in which the fortified lines are proof of a larger strategy on Muscovy's part, or indicative of the inevitability of conflict between sedentary and nomadic polities. Historians of Muscovy have described the Muscovite lines as part of a larger strategy, and the methods of manning and maintaining the lines as the purview of the state. However, we know that the Muscovite settlers who moved to the Crimean frontier had a variety of reasons for doing so: they were not only encouraged by the Muscovite state, but economic decline in northern and western Muscovy during its wars against Poland-Lithuania prompted many more to move south. Settlers proved, in many ways, intractable, and the repeated

proscriptions against logging indicate that it was a common problem. This chapter's analysis has taken states as actors, but we must not forget that subsistence farmers were actors as well.

The monolithic stature of the Great Wall, physically and metaphorically, suggests its historic power. But we must remember that the Wall, like any other fortification line, was not impermeable, and that it was part of a larger idea of empire among Ming emperors and bureaucrats, an idea that changed over the first century of Ming rule. Before the Ming state initiated the large-scale construction of what became the Great Wall, sections of fortified lines were constructed by local governors as solutions to local problems, as we have seen in Chapter 4; and states in China have constructed fortified lines on the steppe frontier at various times for various purposes, from defense to population control to use them as bases for offensive campaigns. Straddling both sides of these fortified lines were nomadic populations, who subordinated themselves to different polities, sedentary and nomadic, for their own purposes. After the fall of the Yuan, northern China was still host to significant Mongol populations and Ming armies contained Mongol units. The Yongle emperor valued his Mongol cavalry regiments as experienced and effective soldiers.

4) We might, as Finkel observed in the Ottoman case, seek parallels between Ming and Mongol chronicles of confrontation on the fifteenth-century frontier.

This goes beyond the observation that historians need to take the perspective of nomadic peoples. Rather, historians should seek to compare the narratives advanced by nomadic polities to those of sedentary states. Historians of China – notably Hok-lam Chan – have already done this to some extent. However, there are other major historical periods that deserve the same

treatment: the Yuan-Ming transition, the Ming-Qing transition, the Tumu Crisis, and, to some extent, Liao-Song and Jin-Song confrontations. Often Sinologists implicitly or explicitly view these transitions through the classic lens of the dynastic cycle. Ascribing the fall of the Ming to fiscal problems *explains* the Ming state's inability to suppress domestic revolt and repel nomadic enemies, but it does not afford a clear picture of how imperial visions changed in these times of crises. Neither does it describe how those visions broke down, or were co-opted and transformed, except to assume that the successor inherited their predecessor's visions wholesale. As this dissertation demonstrates in the Yuan-Ming case, the Ming state did inherit a version of the Yuan imperial vision, but the Ming state had to alter that vision in order to to wrap around a more ethnically bound and, eventually, territorial limited discourse.

This can also extend to modern historiography – comparing how today's historians of nomadic polities and historians of sedentary polities view the same (or similar) events. In the case of the Ottoman-Timurid conflict, we can see that Ottoman historians focus on the variety of narratives regarding the reason for Bayezid's defeat and his ultimate fate, and the long-term resiliency of the Ottoman polity. The version that Timurid historians forward focuses less on why Tamerlane emerged victorious, and instead describes the challenges posed by Tamerlane's reliance on his personal charisma and the hybrid steppe-urban nature of his empire. Timurid historians gloss over the aftermath in Anatolia of Tamerlane's battle with Bayezid, describing Tamerlane's decentralized method of carving up territory as par for the Timurid course. If we look at both narratives of the same event, we can see that the resiliency of the Ottoman state might be less the result of the prowess of Bayezid's son Mehmed I, and more a result of the Timurid pattern of establishing subject lords in conquered territory.

C. CONCLUSION

Selective interpretation of what constitutes a Chinese dynasty lends itself to a misunderstanding of China's long history of ideas of empire. One can argue that China's empires were never fully Chinese after the collapse of the Han dynasty – and such an argument would imply equivalence between modern ethnic categories and cultural self-identification at between the first millennia BCE and CE. Regardless, it is clear that Eurasian steppe-style political traditions influenced the creation and imagination of empire in China, particularly after the late fourth century CE. Modern world-historical and Eurasian interpretations of the Tang empire bypass the linguistic rigidity of Tang textual records and reveal its cosmopolitan and politically multifaceted nature. Consideration of the Song Dynasty's contemporary rivals, the Liao and Jin, further questions precisely what a "dynasty" or "empire" meant in the tenth through thirteenth centuries. In China, unity was a powerful tool, deployed to justify empire. The Mongols expressed this in the most straightforward fashion, conquering most of continental East Asia and legitimizing their rule as a Chinese-style dynasty that had unified All-under-Heaven.

Continuing this narrative into the early Ming, new world-historical tools help reveal fascinating parallels between early Ming history and the experiences of other post-Mongol polities. The fact that both the Ming dynasty and Muscovite Russia relied on enormous strategic wall-building projects to defend against nomadic raids demonstrates that the construction of the Great Wall was not signaling uniquely Chinese or Ming xenophobia and isolationism, but rather than these policies made rational sense and do not preclude connections between the Ming and its nomadic, Mongol Yuan past. Similarly, scholarship on Chinese and Ming history does not need to treat Ming military defeat at the hands of nomads as, again, a uniquely Chinese predicament and one that revealed inexcusable military weakness. The militarily powerful and

charismatic Ottoman ruler Bayezid also faced defeat at the hands of a Mongol-style ruler, Tamerlane, but this did not preclude Ottoman military strength. Ming scholars should draw further parallels between the resurgence of Ottoman military power and the great military endeavors that the Ming undertook to protect Korea from Japanese invasion, or defend the coast from piracy. While the scale between Ottoman conquests at that empire's height, and Ming military accomplishments in the sixteenth century are quite mismatched territorially, historians should not forget that within a decade of its founding the Ming began, in rather spectacular fashion, as one of the largest states on earth, and certainly the richest.

III. CHAPTER 2: THE INTELLECTUAL AND SPATIAL LEGACY OF THE MONGOLS IN IMPERIAL CHINA

In this chapter we will see how, through examining legal codes, northern China must have been more ethnically diverse than historians have previously supposed, and how the exchange and inheritance of Yuan imperial ideas informed early Ming ideas and imagination of empire. The imperial experience of the Yuan Dynasty and the greater Eurasian geographic arena it created inspired early Ming visions of empire. Examination of state archives, documents, maps, and law codes from the Yuan-Ming transition era reveals the fact that the Yuan imperial experience had two major impressions upon imperial constructions in China: 1) it suggests that imperial thought and practice in the early Ming were not isolated from the "barbarian" influences of the Mongol Yuan; and 2) it places the intellectual and practical empire-building techniques of the early Ming state far closer to the "cosmopolitan statecraft" of the Northern Wei, Tang, and Liao-Jin empires than a "native" focused approach would suppose. This chapter will examine three facets of the political history of northern China and the Yuan-Ming transition era to uncover early Ming thoughts on empire and imperial construction.

First: ethnic law. The "ethnic" and "cultural" makeup of northern China at the beginning of the Ming Dynasty remains unclear to modern historians. There are nearly no surviving indications – in written form or otherwise – of northern China's ethnic landscape in the late fourteenth century. The sources that survive are state documents, in which the obfuscating effects of early Ming rhetoric on "Han" versus "Mongol" identity (or "barbarian" *hu* 胡) muddy

our ability to understand how people living in northern China identified themselves. How closely did these populations identify with what we call "Han"? How "Mongol" or "barbarian" were they? This section relies on state-fashioned law, originally designed to categorize different "ethnic" groups, as a means of locating how the early Ming state and its subjects managed and understood cultural and ethnic identity in the late fourteenth century. This sections begins with a cursory overview of Tang, Liao and Jin law, and then examines the highly structured Yuan formulations of ethnic law in order to interpret the language of early Ming ethnic law. I propose that northern China in the late fourteenth century must have been more ethnically diverse than we have previously realized.

Second: comparing spatial representations. Northern Song Dynasty-era maps universally demarcate a clear border between the Song and Liao empires. What is interesting about these maps is that they often include Khitan Liao-governed regions within Song territory, despite the Song's chronic inability to recover those regions from the Liao. In contrast, the sole surviving Yuan Dynasty map of the Mongol empire and the earliest Ming map together represent the extension of the cartographic knowledge of Chinese statesmen to most of Eurasia. This section will compare maps from the Song, Yuan and Ming and argue that the early Ming, Eurasian-spanning map titled *Da Ming hunyi tu* ("Amalgamated Map of the Great Ming") represents a vastly expanded imperial vision fashioned from Mongol Yuan cartographic knowledge and imperial representations. Such a vision was far more in line with Yuan imaginations of empire than those of the Song. The subsequent disappearance of Eurasian maps in Ming cartography speaks to the particular impact of the Yuan on early Ming imperial ideas, and how those ideas changed in the mid-fifteenth century, following the decline of Ming military power and the Ming

court's increasing inability to influence states beyond its frontiers (this phenomenon of decline is further explored in Chapter 4).

Third: analysis of the rhetoric in Ming criticisms of the past, and the rhetoric of Yuan/Ming diplomatic correspondence. The sections in the *Ming shilu* ("Veritable Records of the Ming") from the reigns of the first (Hongwu) and third (Yongle) Ming emperors are full of references to past Chinese states. Of particular importance were the three ancient dynasties of the Xia, Shang and Zhou.[210] Ming records also show that early Ming emperors constantly measured past states against one another, and against the Ming. Modern historiography has established that the founding emperor Hongwu (r. 1368-98) and his statesmen visited records of those ancient Three Dynasties as they sought models of proper government. Early Ming emperors also cast doubt upon the moral authority of the unifying states that came after the Zhou, particularly the Han (206 BCE – 220 CE), Tang (618 CE – 907), Song (960 – 1279) and Yuan (1279 – 1368). Curiously, Ming rulers and statesmen did not necessarily give special attention to the Yuan Dynasty's Mongol origins as the reason for its fall, but go to great lengths to place it within existing historical chronicles alongside its predecessors. In this section I propose that Ming rulers did not found their criticisms of the Yuan Dynasty on its barbarian origins, but rather on its moral and infrastructural failings. Those failings either 1) echoed the failings of earlier empires, or 2) were imperfections of comparable degree to those of the Han, Tang and Song. Ming rulers, particularly the founder Hongwu, then referenced China's past in diplomatic correspondence with other states. They invoked the ancient Three Dynasties as they made the case for the Ming Dynasty's claim to the Mandate of Heaven. These diplomatic letters were similar to those that

[210] Hereafter referred to as the Three Dynasties. Xia Dynasty (mythical) 21st cen. – 1600 BCE. Shang: 1600 – 1046 BCE. Zhou: 1046 – 771/256 BCE.

early Yuan rulers dispatched to foreign states, particularly in their willingness to invoke military power as both a foundation of legitimacy and coercion to accomplish political goals.

The purpose of this chapter, then, is to draw these three strands of research into an overarching structure that seeks to re-describe the early Ming state as one construed of culturally and politically multifaceted imperial ideas. Literal interpretation of Ming records and their Confucian rhetoric has obscured the Yuan influences on Ming ideas of empire. Instead, political agendas and strategies that can be described as decidedly "non-Confucian" in a classical sense (i.e. favoring aggressive wars, deciding not to employ acculturalization as a foreign policy technique, etc.) were tools of the early Ming state and its vision of empire.[211]

A. LAW AND EMPIRE IN NORTH CHINA

Early Ming law is a well-documented subfield. Jiang Yonglin's study of the Ming Dynasty's standardized legal codex, the "Great Ming Code" (*Da Ming lü* 大明律), offers a deep analysis of the laws that the first Ming emperor and his court fashioned. Jiang endeavors quite successfully to interpret the imperial intentions and purpose of the early Ming state following the collapse of the Yuan Dynasty. In his work, Jiang has taken a deliberately narrow focus, choosing to look at the decades surrounding the Code's creation. The Code includes sections on what we, living in the twenty-first century, might call "ethnic law." Specifically, regarding Mongols who remained in Ming China after the Yuan collapse, the Code attempted to legislate distinctions between Mongols and Chinese, and to prohibit the practice of Mongol customs in the Ming empire.[212] As

[211] For a comprehensive discussion of the role of Confucianism in Chinese strategic policy, see: Wang, *Harmony and War*, particularly Chapter 1, "Confucian Strategic Culture and the Puzzle."
[212] Jiang, *The Mandate of Heaven,* pp. 132-139.

Jiang points out, these laws were designed to return the Central Kingdoms[213] to the models and practices of antiquity, and to ensure the century of Mongol rule would not infiltrate China culturally as well as militarily.[214]

However, when one takes early Ming law in a multi-centurial perspective, grand themes emerge that suggest entirely new ways of viewing the era between the tenth and fourteenth centuries. The ethnically-based law laid out in the Ming Code appears to be a relatively new phenomenon, unknown in the long, pre-Mongol history upon which the Hongwu emperor and his successors drew for moral guidance. No such ethnic distinctions appear in Song or Tang Dynasty law, for instance. The first laws in China's history that appear to follow similarly ethnic lines are developed in their most basic form under the Khitan-founded Liao Dynasty (907-1125), further developed by the Jurchen-founded Jin Dynasty (1125-1234), and then elaborated, standardized and used to great (and intrusive) effect by the Mongol Yuan. Under the Khitan regime, these laws took form as bi-ethnic frameworks, creating roles and distinctions for the ruling conquerors and their Chinese subjects. By the time of the multi-ethnic Mongol Empire, the laws took on new layers of administrative purpose and cultural meaning, distinguishing among four different ethnic groups, creating privileges and prohibitions for each. When scholars look at early Ming records, they find virtually no discussion of the ethnic makeup of northern China, save a handful of proscriptions against the practice of Mongol customs and the wearing of Mongol clothes. Given the significant historical baggage behind the establishment of the Ming empire, it seems unlikely that northern China was as ethnically homogenous as historical treatments have assumed.

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[213] In my translations of Ming sources, I endeavor to translate the modern Chinese term for China, "*Zhongguo*", as "Central Kingdoms." My aim is to recover the original geographic meaning of *Zhongguo* from nationalist narratives.
[214] Jiang, *The Mandate of Heaven*, pp. 48-9, 125-6.

1. CULTURAL AND "ETHNIC" LAW IN THE LIAO AND JIN

The origins of the Mongol multi-ethnic classification system are located in the Liao state of the tenth century. Considering the Liao as an empire of China as much as the Song (as Chapter 1 has argued) muddles the classic historical chronology of China (which takes Song as the Tang successor) because the Song did not arise until some six decades after the Liao founding. Regardless of these historiographical issues, the geopolitical vacuum left by the Tang collapse permitted Khitan ascendancy and the creation of what has been called continental East Asia's first multistate system.[215]

Chinese history texts sometimes treat the Liao as a "conquest dynasty," because it was not part of "Han" civilization, and it controlled the region around modern Beijing, a parcel of territory that pre-modern and modern scholars alike have considered part of China.[216] However, as Naomi Standen has pointed out, the Liao state was hardly one based on conquest and militarism. It warred frequently with the Song but was not necessarily more aggressive than its counterpart to the south; its ruling cadre was based on two particular royal clans, not the elite status of soldiers; and its large empire was built upon complicated political arrangements, and relied on conquest no more than most China-based regimes.[217] In this context, the term "conquest dynasty" hardly describes a state that did not engage in significant conquest of China. Nonetheless, the Liao governed regions that held significant Chinese populations. How did it administer these places, and did it legally recognize cultural differences that could be considered proto-ethnic?

[215] Morris Rossabi, "Introduction," in *China Among Equals,* p. 9-11.
[216] On the Liao as a conquest dynasty: Mote, *Imperial China,* pp. 29-30.
[217] Standen, *Unbounded Loyalty*, p. 6-9, 29.

To answer this question, we must begin with the classic Chinese cultural dichotomy between the "cultured" and the "barbaric," or *huayi* 華夷. In this dichotomy, *hua* represents Confucian-centric society, almost always tied to a polity or polities located on the North China Plain and surrounding macro-regions. This brand of society is usually associated with sedentary agriculturalist life and a political system based on extraction of in-kind taxes from farmers. In contrast, the *yi* are the "barbarian" groups living "beyond the pale," outside the auspices of benevolent Confucian government, without adherence to classically acceptable rites and rituals, and (in the mind of sedentary states in China) building political systems based on military might. In this socio-politico-cosmological formulation, there are several kinds of *yi,* organized according to the four cardinal directions (rather than specific cultural or "ethnic" practices) under the term *siyi* 四夷. The most militarily potent of these *yi* were, naturally, the horse-riding nomadic pastoralists who operated in the steppe-desert-forest regions to the north and northeast of China. The *huayi* formulation reached its intellectual apogee under the Tang empire, which enjoyed military supremacy in continental East Asia and vast tracts of the steppe until the An Lushan Rebellion in 755.[218]

The cultural efflorescence of Tang society and political power of the Tang state arguably gave rise to the first period in which ideas and philosophies that originated in China dramatically influenced societies and polities in East Asia, particularly when Korea and Japan imported the Chinese language, Chinese scholarship, and Chinese philosophy as major components of their elite social strata; and in which significant populations of nomadic-pastoralists acknowledged the Tang emperor as their *kaghan,* or "heavenly ruler."[219] This dichotomy extended to law, as Tang

[218] Wang Gungwu, "The Rhetoric of a Lesser Empire: Early Sung Relations with its Neighbors," in *China Among Equals,* p. 47-65.
[219] Skaff, *Sui-Tang China,* p. 120.

law did not distinguish among specific cultural groups with regards to offenses and appropriate punishments. Foreigners who were "unassimilated" or "uncivilized" (*huawairen* 化外人) were subject to the law of their home, regardless of where that was. Tang law did apply to "assimilated" foreigners (*huaneiren* 化內人). In instances where "foreigners" and "natives" were involved in the same case, the Tang state applied Tang law.[220]

A Khitan chieftain named in contemporary records as Abaoji formally established the Liao state in 907. "Khitan" is the term used to describe a nomadic people that lived in Northeast Asia, in the region between the modern borders of Mongolia and the northern regions of the Chinese province of Inner Mongolia. The early origins and political structures of the Khitans are obscure and scarce in extant records, but we do know that Abaoji managed to claim leadership of the Khitan tribes thanks to a combination of political savvy and military prowess (not unlike many Chinese dynastic founders).[221] Following the establishment of the Liao state, social stratification was essentially the inverse of the classical Chinese cultured-barbarian dichotomy, but represented with more flattering terminology and bureaucratized in a far more tangible fashion than it ever had been in Tang intellectual thought. In the Liao, conscious social and cultural distinctions separated Khitan rulers and their Chinese subjects, at least in the southern regions of the Liao empire that encompassed modern Beijing. Liao law still represented those distinctions as a binary, and Liao sub-capital administrative structures duplicated those distinctions. Under the Liao, a "northern administration" (*beimian*) managed populations of nomadic groups, while a distinct "southern administration" (*nanmian*) managed Chinese populations living in the Beijing frontier area.[222] Both administrations answered to the Liao ruler

[220] Herbert Franke, "Jurchen Customary Law and the Chinese Law of the Chin Dynasty," in *Studies on the Jurchens and the Jin Dynasty,* eds. Franke and Hok-lam Chan (Brookfield: Ashgate Publishing Company, 1997), p. 220.
[221] See: Wang, "The Rhetoric of a Lesser Empire," in *China Among Equals.*
[222] Standen, *Unbounded Loyalty,* p. 29-30.

and his official retinue, but operated without significant mutual interaction or coordination. This dual form of government borrowed heavily from both nomadic tribal models and Tang-style bureaucratic systems. In particular, the creation and organization of the southern administration was largely in the hands of "Chinese" literati and statesmen who frequently changed their political allegiance among the many states that existed during the tenth century. It further appears that among Chinese there was no great stigma attached to serving "barbarian" Liao rulers, at least before the establishment of the Song state and the beginning of sharp Song-Liao conflicts in the late tenth century.[223]

It seems unlikely that Liao government systems remained static and unchanging for the duration of the state's existence, but a lack of scholarship on the subject limits our understanding of those changes. We can, however, examine the new forms of government that the Jurchens created and adapted to serve their new Jin state in the mid-twelfth century. The Jurchens were a nomadic forest-dwelling people who lived in modern Northeast Asia, and the territorial/cultural predecessors of the Manchus. Initially subordinate to the Liao state, in the early twelfth century the Jurchens managed to leverage the unexpected success of a rebellion against the Liao to create an alternative well of political power around which other disaffected tribes gravitated. The Jurchens' rapid military victories against their former Liao masters catapulted them into a position of imperial lordship over the former Liao territories and the creation of their new Jin Dynasty. Despite an initial Song-Jin alliance designed to destroy their mutual enemy, Jurchen armies soon turned southwards and conquered much of northern China, pressing far beyond the former Liao frontier and seizing the whole of the region north of the Huai River by 1142.

[223] Ibid, p. 41-104.

The differences between the Liao and Jin states are important, in that the latter controlled much larger stretches of territory that relied on sedentary agriculture, and governed much larger populations of Chinese farmers and literati. Yet despite the rapid conquest of the north, there were still instances of former Song literati, officials and generals refusing Southern Song calls to migrate south of the Huai River – they were quite happy to remain in Jin territory, serve their new Jin masters, guard Jin garrisons, and administer the agricultural regions of the Jin empire.[224] The Jurchens, unlike the Khitans and Mongols, had practiced marginal agriculture and fishing in Northeast Asia, and so perhaps were more willing to adopt Chinese administrative practices, just as their new subjects were more willing to accept Jin rule.[225]

In the early years of the Jin, its rulers adopted Liao-style dual government, managing the steppe-forest belt with a "northern administration" and sedentary agricultural regions in China with a "southern administration." In the decades following the founding of the empire, the Jin state moved closer to a style of administration more closely resembling those that had arisen in China, and it was also more administratively "poly-cultural" than its predecessor in both internal and external relations. It monitored the Mongols with Chinese practices, leaving them to govern themselves and declining to directly interfere in Mongol tribal politics (a factor that would ultimately permit Mongol ascendancy); it folded the Koryŏ state of the Korean peninsula more completely into the new Jin world order; and it incorporated the Tangut Xi Xia state as a closely integrated vassal, rather than a coerced ally as it had been for the Liao.[226]

The great impetus of innovation in Jin legal institutions seems to be the poly-cultural nature of its empire that was, in terms of numbers, predominantly Chinese. It also, like the Liao,

[224] Smith, "Impressions of the Song-Yuan-Ming Transition," pp. 73-4
[225] Tillman, "An Overview of Chin History and Institutions," p. 24.
[226] Ibid, p. 27; and Jing-shen Tao, *The Jurchen in Twelfth-Century China: A Study of Sinicization* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1976), p. 20.

borrowed heavily from Tang precedents for punitive and legal matters. However, the Tang code had no framework for legally distinguishing among cultural groups and creating for each certain privileges and prohibitions. The Jin empire, in addition to incorporating Jurchens, Chinese and Khitans, also closely included Koreans, Balhae, Mohe, Tanguts, and Turks. Thus it is in the Jin that we see the first legal frameworks in Chinese history designed to promote certain cultural groups, and the creation of separate legal frameworks designed to regulate different cultural groups. In the earliest iterations of Jin statecraft, Chinese law governed Chinese subjects, Khitan law governed Khitan subjects, and Jurchen law governed Jurchen subjects. Law forbade certain Jurchen practices, such as levirate (the marriage of a son to his deceased father's widow or concubine) to Chinese and Koreans.[227] On the other hand, Jin law maintained the traditional Chinese prohibition against preemptively dividing the father's property while the father was still alive.[228] Civil examinations and the time-tested *yin* privilege[229] system endeavored to place Jurchens from all strata of society in official positions, and to maintain the use of the Jurchen language in state matters.[230] These snippets of Jin law suggest that the Jin state deployed culturally-specific legal frameworks to govern an expanded empire with more complex tools than those used by the Liao.

2. ETHNIC LAW IN THE MONGOL EMPIRE AND THE YUAN DYNASTY

Culturally and ethnically distinguishing laws took on new roles under the Mongol-founded Yuan Dynasty, shaped to improve state control and reduce the possibility of dissent rather than merely

[227] Franke, "Jurchen Customary Law and the Chinese Law of the Chin Dynasty," p. 226-9.
[228] Ibid, p. 230.
[229] The *yin* privilege system permitted salaried officials to recommend others to office, creating a nepotistic path in contrast to Song-style meritocratic examination.
[230] Tillman, "An Overview of Chin History and Institutions," p. 34.

manage multiple populations. The most recent scholarship on the origins of the Mongol empire's administrative institutions suggests that they heavily derived from Khitan precedents.[231] The Mongols brought about three great geopolitical changes to East Asia. First, they annihilated the multistate system that had characterized continental relations for over three centuries, from 907 to 1234, by conquering the Jin, Tangut Xi Xia, and Southern Song. Second, they connected China more directly to a larger world for the first time; no longer were the western regions of Asia only understood through merchandise and merchants, for now the Mongols brought Central Asians (*semuren* 色目人) and Muslims (*huihui* 回回) into China to create new, innovative administrative systems with specific roles for those groups. Third, they built upon the Jin cultural administrative system and created the first "proto-ethnic" laws; i.e. laws that fashioned distinct social and political purposes for different cultural groups based on geographic origin, language, religion, pre-conquest political alignments, and cultural "closeness" to the Mongols.

The core of these laws was the "four-class" system first described in a modern academic context by Meng Siming.[232] The use of "class" in this terminology is inexact, as the system was not created for economic functions, but for entirely political purposes.[233] In sum, the system organized the Yuan empire's populace among four tiers, from highest to lowest: 1) Mongols, 2) Central Asians (*semuren*), 3) North Chinese (*hanren* 漢人), and 4) Southern Chinese (*nanren* 南人). Of these four categories, "Mongols" and "South Chinese" were the most fixed, and described particular people who originated from particular places and had particular allegiances prior to the Mongol conquest of China (to the Chinggisid lineage and the Southern Song state, respectively). The categories of "North Chinese" and "Central Asians" were more flexible, as the

[231] Munkh-Erdene, "The emergence of the Chinggisid state," pp. 29-30.
[232] Meng Siming, *Yuandai shehui jie ji zhi du* (Beijing: Zhonghua shu ju, 1980), p. 25-36.
[233] Meng Siming later acknowledged that "class" was a poor description of the Mongol legal code he analyzed.

former included Khitans, Jurchens, and Koreans; and the latter often included Muslims of all origins. The categories were both cultural and political. For the Mongols, North Chinese were more trustworthy than South Chinese because Turkic, Khitan and Jurchen states had ruled the north for centuries. South Chinese chafed under Mongol rule – the Yuan state rarely permitted southern scholars any but the lowliest of posts, and the Yuan state heavily favored Central Asians and Mongols in most administrative circumstances.[234]

The specific laws that branched from this "four-class" system had significant social resonance. Perhaps the most often cited example of Yuan discriminatory law is the decree that prevented Chinese magistrates and commoners from carrying weapons. In the arena of the state, however, we see even more evident examples of law that reflected the growth of "proto-ethnicity," drawn from Jurchen and Khitan precedents but also innovated for Yuan purposes. Mongols were exempt from *yin* nomination requirements, usually apprenticeship, a tactic borrowed from the Jurchens to insert more Mongols into the Yuan administration.[235] Different *yin* ordinances governed North and South Chinese, as a means of reinforcing discrimination against the latter.[236] The Yuan state tightly controlled other avenues to office, and restricted hereditary positions in the bureaucracy in order to prevent established Chinese lineages from monopolizing offices and to further facilitate the inclusion of Mongols and Central Asians in state functions.[237] Beyond the central state and into local levels, gazetteers often listed officials according to the "four-class" system as a means of monitoring who was serving where, and

[234] See: Endicott-West, *Mongolian Rule in China.*
[235] *Ibid,* p. 65.
[236] *Ibid,* p. 66.
[237] *Ibid,* p. 74.

keeping track of the origins of even the lowliest appointed officials.[238] In general, Yuan law was designed to manage its diverse population, maintain stability, and keep Mongols at the top.[239]

The Yuan came to an end in the mid-fourteenth century amid rebellion, famine, disease, and internecine warfare. Various explanations have been offered to explain the Yuan Dynasty's fall, but the significant death and destruction surrounding the collapse of the Yuan regime is firmly embedded in representations of the Yuan-Ming transition. Ming Dynasty scholars and literati who later wrote about the time recall its chaotic nature, and the natural response of many educated men was to wait out the storm and, for those ambitious enough, seek out political and military leaders to whom they could offer counsel and advice. Following the formal establishment of the Ming Dynasty in 1368, the early Ming state initiated a program of social and legal reform that reflected the great intellectual changes of the past three centuries.

Proto-ethnic law in the early years of the Ming Dynasty served administratively different functions than it had during the Yuan, but the very pointed and specific purpose of Ming law demonstrates that thinking about different populations along proto-ethnic lines had become a reality in China. Several mental shifts about the spatial extent of the world, civilization, and the meaning of ethnicity must have changed during the Yuan era. The Hongwu emperor promulgated codes designed to sharply distinguish among Chinese, Mongols, and Central Asians, and reduce the cultural impact of the Mongols in China. Furthermore, the *Great Ming Code* expanded Chinese law to cover foreigners, rather than applying their own local customs as

[238] *Ibid,* p. 80-1.
[239] A special mention should be made for Muslims, who were often deployed as tax-collectors and financial administrators. The specific use of a religious group for particular political purposes, regardless of their geographic or "ethnic" origins, is yet another case of pragmatic Mongol approaches to government that imagined political purposes for cultural groups. See: Morris Rossabi, "The Muslims in the Early Yüan Dynasty," in *China Under Mongol Rule,* ed. John Langlois (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), pp. 257-95.

had been practiced under the *Tang Code.* In one such promulgation, Mongols and Central Asians in China were encouraged to marry Chinese:

> 凡蒙古色目人聽與中國人為婚姻不許本類自相嫁娶違者杖八十男女入官為奴其中國人不願與回回欽察為婚姻者聽從本類自相嫁娶不在禁限
>
> Mongols and *semu* people shall marry Chinese persons… They shall not marry within their own people. Any violation shall be punished by eighty strokes of beating with the heavy stick, and both men and women shall be enslaved by the government. If Chinese persons do not wish to marry Qincha Hui Muslims, the latter may marry among their own; the above prohibition shall not be applied.[240]

Other laws were designed to stifle the "polluting" (*wuran* 汙染) influence of Mongol customs in China. In his earliest promulgations, the Hongwu emperor made classical references to the "mutton-stink" of the barbarians and the "sweeping away" of their practices. Once enthroned as emperor, he took measures to ensure such practices would not become re-entrenched, including laws designed to fix surnames to ethnicity:

> 禁蒙古色目人更易姓氏詔曰天生斯民族屬姓氏各有本源古之聖王尤重之所以別婚姻重本始以厚民俗也朕起布衣定群雄為天下主已嘗詔告天下蒙古諸色人等皆吾赤子果有材能一體擢用比聞入仕之後或多更姓名朕慮歲久其子孫相傳昧其本源誠非先王致謹氏族之道中書省其告諭之如已更易者聽其改正
>
> Prohibition against Mongols and Central Asians changing their names:
>
> Regarding the inherited names of the various minorities, there is an origin for each name. The sage kings of ancient times considered this especially important, and thus disallowed intermarriage. This was an important fundamental from the very beginning in order to be generous to folk customs.
>
> I, the Sovereign, awoke and made known my intentions, pacified the multitudes and the mighty, and became master of All Under Heaven. Thereafter I instructed the Mongols and Central Asians under Heaven to act as my loyal sons. As expected there were those with talent, and I promoted them to a man.

[240] DML, article 122, p. 10-1/2, trans. Jiang Yonglin.

> I heard that after they had entered office, some changed their names. I have been concerned about this for many years. Those officials' descendants inherited their names and titles and hide their true origins. Indeed, it is not the case that the former kings conveyed conscientiousness [regarding] the ways of the clans. I have instructed the Grand Secretariat [on this matter]. If there are those who have already changed [their names], then hear this correction.[241]

Similar laws sought to enforce clothing regulations, though the fact that the Ming court frequently re-issued such regulations implies that such laws were ineffective, and also suggests that customs, practices, and clothing in northern China had for a long while overlapped with those of steppe nomads. The words of the Hongwu emperor, born a peasant, attest to the cultural reality of the average Ming subject in the fourteenth century:

> 詔復衣冠如唐制初元世祖起自朔漠以有天下悉以胡俗變易中國之制士庶咸辮髮椎…胡俗衣服則為袴褶窄袖及辮線腰褶婦女衣窄袖短衣下服裙裳無復中國衣冠之舊甚者易其姓氏為胡名習胡語俗化既久恬不知怪上久厭之至是悉命復衣冠如唐制士民皆束髮于頂官則烏紗帽圓領袍束帶黑靴…
>
> An imperial order to return to clothing according to Tang regulations:
>
> Since Khubilai Khan arose from the desert and came to possess All under Heaven, he used *Hu* [barbarian] customs to transform the systems of the Central Kingdoms [*zhongguo* 中國]. Scholars and commoners all wore their hair braided down the backs … *Hu* customs and clothes then became pleated trousers, narrow sleeves and hair braided to the waist. Women's clothing consisted of pleated trousers and short jackets, and underneath a skirt.
>
> We have not returned to the old clothing styles of the Central Kingdoms. This is extremely serious. [People] have changed their family names to Hu names, and study Hu languages. Customs have already been changed for a long while, and no one thinks it strange. Know that I command clothing and attire to be according to Tang regulations. Scholars and commoners all shall bind their hair at the top of the head, and officials shall wear black caps, with clothes [pulled] over the head. Gowns should be worn with belts, and black boots. …[242]

[241] MSL, Taizu, *juan* 51, pp. 999-1000.
[242] MSL, Taizu, *juan* 30, p. 525.

This passage on clothing customs does not, on its own, represent a revelation in Ming studies. However, few historians seem to have paid attention to the fact that the first Ming emperor thought steppe customs and clothes so common that it required legislation to reverse. For the Hongwu emperor and his court, law controlled and categorized Ming subjects in ways that the Tang and Song states had not envisioned.

Curiously, as Jiang Yonglin points out, the *Great Ming Code* does not describe laws governing marriage and family names among any populations besides Mongols and Central Asians.[243] Nor does it acknowledge that many of its marriage laws were derived from Yuan precedents, so that "the 'barbarian' Mongol legal legacy… became an essential component of the 'Chinese' anti-'barbarian' discourse in the Ming."[244] How do we unpack this paradox? By placing these observations in a *longue durée* context, thus revealing the enormous cultural and ethnic political impacts of the Mongols and the Yuan state. The reality of northern China in the late fourteenth century was undoubtedly that its population was ethnically and culturally mixed, that its people observed a variety of customs, and its practices did not conform to the social vision of the Hongwu emperor and his scholar-statesmen. The inability of the Ming state to enforce its ethnic vision suggests that either the Ming state did not wish to supply the men and material necessary to acculturate northern China's populations, or it could not possibly do so, given the fact that northern China had been culturally diverse for four centuries. This could not be undone in a mere twenty years.

[243] Ibid, p. 131.
[244] Ibid, p. 139.

B. SPATIAL REPRESENTATIONS OF THE EMPIRE AND THE STEPPE FRONTIER IN THE SONG, YUAN, AND MING

It is not a new scholarly notion that early Ming rulers never intended the border to remain fixed on the steppe frontier as an artificial barrier between the "barbaric" and the "cultured." Twenty-five years ago, Arthur Waldron argued that the Great Wall we know of today did not exist as a physical construct nor an idea before the Ming dynasty, and did not become those things until the sixteenth century, well into the dynasty's existence. The revelation that there was no singular Wall has intellectual significance:

> In the Ming . . . the question facing the first rulers after the Mongol Yuan had been overthrown was not, as is sometimes thought, how once again to hold the Great Wall, because there was no Great Wall then. Rather, the problem was where the Ming dynasty's own territory should end. Should it stretch north, and try to encompass at least some of the territory that its predecessor, the Mongol Yuan, had held? Or should it adopt a line closer to the ecological boundary of Chinese-style agriculture? Debate over this issue simmered for most of the dynasty's nearly three hundred years. . . .[245]

The term associated with the Great Wall (*changcheng* 長城) appears only four times in the records of the *Ming Shilu* from the thirty-year reign of the founder, the Hongwu emperor: twice in the opening years, and twice in the middle. It appears only three times in the Yongle records, four times in the Xuande records, and four times in the Zhengtong/Tianshun records. By contrast, it appears eight times in the Hongzhi reign, nine times in the Wanli reign, and ten times in the Tianqi reign.[246] Just as no perpetual manmade construct separated the sedentary agricultural and nomadic steppe worlds, neither did geographic features universally provide such barriers.[247] The difference between the cultured and the barbaric, as Waldron puts it, was moral,

[245] Waldron, *The Great Wall of China*, p. 9.
[246] By number of records discussing the subject, from search functions in Scripta Sinica.
[247] The Ordos loop region provides a striking example.

not geographic.[248] The Ming state, with a long history from which it could draw, understood that the difference could be militaristic as well.

The single, continuous Great Wall that we see today may not have existed prior to the Ming, but fortifications intended to provide defense against nomadic incursion have existed in various forms since the Warring States Era. These fortifications were not passed on or inherited between dynasties. Different states, including those that originated outside of China, constructed them for different purposes in different places, often left different stretches of defensive walls unconnected, and sometimes did not find need to construct them at all (such as the Tang).[249] In the early 20th century Owen Lattimore suggested that Qin- and Han-era fortifications in the north were built for the dual purpose of defense and population control; i.e. keeping frontier settlers in the empire and preventing them from joining nomadic populations.[250] Across the long span of Chinese history, steppe-region walls have served numerous strategic and political purposes. Song dynasty-era depictions of fortifications offer significant information on the perceptions and realities of strategic concerns and policies in middle-period Chinese history. The Song, far more than the Ming, appears in scholarship as a territorially truncated empire, the smallest of China's unifying states by the reckoning of the Qing-era *zhengshi* 正史. Historians familiar with the Song dynasty's perpetual armed struggle with first the Khitan Liao dynasty (907–1125) and later the Jurchen Jin dynasty (1115–1234) will understand that the strategic core of these conflicts lay in the Sixteen Prefectures region, a large parcel of territory around modern-day Beijing.[251] The Sixteen Prefectures were particularly important because they opened the way to the North China

[248] Waldron, *The Great Wall of China*, p. 42–3.
[249] Ibid., 47–48.
[250] Owen Lattimore, "Origins of the Great Wall of China: A Frontier Concept in Theory and Practice," in *Geographical Review* 27.4 (1937): pp. 98, 112.
[251] Standen, *Unbounded Loyalty,* pp. 76–99.

Plain, and therefore control of the region was strategically imperative for any state centred in those flatlands.[252] The Song never controlled the Prefectures: They remained administered and fortified by the Khitan Liao (907–1125) and Jurchen Jin (1115–1234) states, a source of constant anxiety for Song rulers and statesmen.

Yet the Prefectures appear on Song maps as part of the Song empire. This is easily explained: Song cartographers imagined them as properly "cultured," and to cede them to the barbarians on paper would be to acknowledge a strategically, politically and culturally unfavourable status quo. In the mind of Song statesmen, this perpetuity of control over the Prefectures extended into the distant past. A Song-era compilation of forty-four maps titled the *Lidai dili zhizhang tu* 歷代地理指掌圖 depicts the region as part of all past empires and eras, from mythical antiquity through the Song. But the most curious element of these maps is that each and every one depicts a northern border marked by fortifications, always on the steppe frontier, and always encompassing the Prefectures and other regions along the same latitude. This includes the then most-current map, titled "The prefectures and commanderies of cultured and foreign places during our Great dynasty." (*Ben chao hua wai zhou jun tu* 本朝化外州郡圖).[253]

The depiction of these walls is particularly important because during long periods of China's history, there were often no such continuous (or even discontinuous, or any) fortifications along that frontier. In addition, the depictions did not represent contemporary

[252] For discussions of the economic and military fluidity of the North China Plain and its role in opening China to Eurasia, see Victor Lieberman, *Strange Parallels: Southeast Asia in Global Context, 800–1830, Volume 1: Integration on the Mainland* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003); and Wang Hongbo and Han Guanghui, "Cong junshi chengbao dao saibei duhui—1429–1929 nian zhangjiakou chengshi xingzhi de shanbian," in *Jingji dili* 33.5 (2013): pp. 72–6.
[253] Xu xiu siku quanshu bianweihui, eds., XXSKQS, 585: 562–3.

political realities. Shui Anli 稅安禮 (fl. 11th–12th cen.), the Song author of the *Lidai dili zhizhang tu*, imagined a fortified border as the proper separation between China and the "barbarians," a border that enveloped regions the Song state did not govern. The atlas was designed to serve as a pedagogical tool for literati studying for the examinations, and was intended as a reference for answering questions related to statecraft, government and territorial administration.[254] It went through several editions in the Song, demonstrating its popularity and perceived usefulness in matters practical and ideological. In effect, whether or not Song-era bureaucrats, literati, and elites knew it did not depict a territorially accurate rendering of China's imperial past and present, they imagined that it *should.* This imagining became even more stretched in later Song maps—the 1180s *Duoli tu* 墮理圖 similarly depicts the empire and a steppe-frontier fortification, even though the entire northern half of this depicted empire had long been lost to the Jurchen Jin dynasty.

Only one map of the entire Mongol Empire from the Yuan era has survived to the present day, in the *Yuan jingshi dadian* 元經世大典 (1329), a compilation of statecraft texts, and it depicts Eurasia on a grid.[255] The distinctive grid is usually what first grabs a viewer's attention, but more importantly for our discussion, it represents the first true map of Eurasia in Chinese geographic knowledge. China's cartographic tradition of mapping regions outside China prior to the Yuan era tended to rely on literary sources rather than the geographic knowledge of merchants or wayfarers, and preferred to depict places and people according to their relative

[254] Hilde De Weerdt, "The Cultural Logics of Map Reading: Text, Time, and Space in Printed Maps of the Song Empire," in *Knowledge and Text Production in an Age of Print in China: China, 900-1400,* eds. Lucille Chia and Hilde De Weerdt (Leiden: Brill, 2011), p. 243.
[255] Ralph Kauz, "Some Notes on the Geographical and Cartographical Impacts From Persia to India," in *Eurasian Influences on Yuan China,* ed. Morris Rossabi (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2013), p. 161.

position and proximity to China rather than according to geographic accuracy.[256] The sheer extent of the Mongol conquests and the establishment of the Yuan dynasty ushered in a new era of imperial vision and cartographic depiction. As Hyunhee Park has discussed, the Muslim scholar Jamal al-Din submitted a memorial to Khubilai Khan that reflected these innovations:

> 在先漢兒田地些小有來，那地里的文字冊子四五十冊有來，如今日頭出來處、日頭沒處都是咱每的，有的圖子有也者，那遠的他每怎生般理會的？回回圖子我根底有，都總做一箇圖子呵，怎生？
>
> The entire land of China was very small in the past. The geographic books of the Khitai [Chinese] had only forty to fifty types. Now all of the land from the place of sunrise to the sunset has become our territory. And, therefore, do we not need a more detailed map? How can we understand distant places? The Islamic maps are in our hands. And therefore we could combine them [with the Chinese maps] to draw a [world] map.[257]

The earliest map we have from the Ming era, the fifteen-foot wide silk scroll *Da Ming Hunyi Tu* (大明混一圖, the *Amalgamated Map of the Great Ming*), originated in the late fourteenth century. It is strikingly different from its Song predecessors, and more closely resembles the Yuan grid map in its extent and format.[258] It depicts not only what has traditionally been called "Inner China," but the entirety of Eurasia, as well as Japan and some Southeast Asian islands, in a distorted yet recognizable form. Of the features depicted on the map, two are particularly relevant for our discussion. First, the map places greater territorial emphasis on regions once governed by the Mongols; and second, it depicts no walls or fortifications in northern China. These points have significant consequences for how empire was imagined in the early Ming regime.

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[256] Hyunhee Park, "Cross-Cultural Exchange and Geographic Knowledge of the World in Yuan China," in *Eurasian Influences,* pp. 129–31.
[257] Wang Shidian, ed., MSJZ, *juan* 4, *zuanxiu,* p. 74. Translation from Hyunhee Park, "Cross-Cultural Exchange."
[258] Ha Enzhong and Huo Hua, "Ming Hongwu nianjian huizhi de 'Da Ming hun yi tu,'" in *Lishi dang'an* 3 (2013): p. 2.

Who made the *Amalgamated Map*, why was it made, and what sources did its creators use? A 1994 study concluded, based on the use of specific place names, that it was crafted in the early decades of the Ming dynasty, perhaps in 1389.[259] This would date the map to two decades after the formal end of the Yuan dynasty. More recently, Lin Meicun has argued that the artists who created it were probably court painters, given that the early Ming state did not have a designated court cartographer.[260] He also notes that Xu Da, one of the most successful early Ming generals, sealed and protected the Yuan court's records when he conquered their capital, Dadu, thus preserving materials that may have been the sources for the *Amalgamated Map.*[261] Liu's speculations dovetail with the conclusions of Wang Qianjin, Hu Qisong and Liu Ruofang, who suggested that the *Amalgamated Map* may have derived its depictions of various regions from several sources: Of China from the *Yu ditu* 與地圖, a nonextant Yuan-era map drawn by Zhu Siben 朱思本 (d. ~1335) in the early 14th century; of Africa, Europe, and Southeast Asia from a nonextant map drawn by Li Zemin 李澤民 (fl. 14th cen.) called *Sheng Jiao Guang Bei Tu* 聲教廣被圖; and of India and other places from the *Diqiuyi* 地球儀 of Muslim scholar Jamal al-Din (Zhama Luding 札馬魯丁, fl. 13th cen.).[262] Other scholars have similarly concluded that the *Amalgamated Map,* and its Korean counterpart, the *Kangnido* (*Hun yi jiang li lidai guodu zhi tu* 混一疆理历代国都之图), drew their geographic information of particular regions from particular sources—Chinese, Mongol and Muslim.[263] The cartographic traditions involved in

[259] Wang Qianjin et al., "Juanben caihui *Da Ming hunyi tu* yanjiu," in *Zhongguo gudai dituji,* ed. Cao Wanru (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe), pp. 51–4.
[260] Lin Meicun, "A Study on the Court Cartographers of the Ming Empire," in *Journal of Asian History* 49.1/2 (2015): p. 187.
[261] Ibid., 188–200; and Lin Meicun, *Menggu shanshui ditu: Zai Riben xin faxian de yifu shuiliu shiji sichou zhi lu ditu* (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 2012), p. 42.
[262] Wang Qianjin et al., "Juanben caihui *Da Ming hunyi tu* yanjiu," 54.
[263] Chen Dezhi, "'Hun yi jiang li lidai guodu zhi tu' xiyu diming shi du," in '*Da Ming hunyi' tu yu 'hunyi jiangli tu' yanjiu,* ed. Liu Yingsheng (Nanjing: Fenghuang chubanshe), p. 6.

their creation, and the improved accuracy of southern oceanic locations when compared to Song maps, further reinforces their Yuan origins.[264]

The map's proposed date of origin in 1389 places it near the end of the reign of the first ruler of the Ming dynasty, Zhu Yuanzhang, known as the Hongwu emperor. The Hongwu emperor's thirty-year rule was characterized by the stabilization of the new empire and attention towards the remaining military threat posed by the Mongols. The *Amalgamated Map* was created in an era of strategic fluctuation between the young Ming empire and the remnants of the Northern Yuan on the steppe. Between 1369 and 1398, Ming military endeavors on the northern frontier shifted at various times among direct attempts to invade Mongolia (1370–72), suspension of steppe campaigns in favor of internal consolidation and expansion on other frontiers, (1372–87), and geostrategic maneuvering to expand into the northwest via Gansu and northeast via Liaodong in order to outflank the center of Mongol power (1387 onward).[265] After the Hongwu emperor's death in 1398, civil war between the young Jianwen Emperor and his uncle Zhu Di (the founder's fourth son) interrupted Ming strategic efforts in the north, but Zhu Di's victory and ascension to the throne as the Yongle emperor ushered in a new, aggressive phase of Ming-Mongol warfare. The Yongle emperor moved his capital to Beijing, and from that base led five campaigns into the steppe with various levels of success. He was able to do so because of his efforts to create a more robust supply network necessary for operation in the steppe environment, and the large-scale acquisition of warhorses from foreign sources, including Korea and friendly Mongol tribes.[266] Unlike in earlier and later reigns, initial setbacks at the

[264] Yang Xiaochun, "'Hun yi jiang li lidai zhongdu zhi tu,' xiangguan zhu tu jian de guanxi," in *Yanjiu* (Beijing: Shehui kexue wenxian chubanshe, 2012), p. 99; and Zhou Yunzhong, "'Da ming hun yi tu' zhongguo bufen laiyuan shixi," in *Yanjiu,* p. 118.
[265] Zhao Xianhai, *Mingdai jiu,* pp. 234–79.
[266] See Henry Serruys, *Sino-Mongol Relations During the Ming, II: The Tribute System and Diplomatic Missions (1400–1600)*, pp. 256-57; and Edward Farmer, *Early Ming Government,* p. 171.

hands of the Mongols galvanized rather than tempered Ming expansionism under the Yongle emperor: When his handpicked general Qiu Fu was defeated and killed in modern Heilongjiang, the emperor decided to lead the next campaign rather than settle for a robust defense.[267] After the Yongle reign, Ming military action in the north never again operated with any success in the Mongolian region. His death marked what scholars have described as the truncation of Ming expansion and the beginning of strategically insular politics in the Ming court: Between the Yongle reign and the late 1440s, Ming bureaucrats increasingly decried the fiscal wastefulness and futility of the northern campaigns.[268]

Thirteen eighty-nine is of particular importance in the context of the Hongwu emperor's strategic attitude towards the Mongols, because that year was in the middle of the resumption of large-scale Ming incursions into Mongol territory after the period of consolidation and defense. The Ming undertook these incursions in response to the nascent power of the self-declared emperor of the Northern Yuan, Toghus Temür, and his most powerful allies and commanders, Naghachu and Nayir Bukha. In 1387 Ming armies marched into Liaodong against Naghachu, defeating him and forcing his surrender, thereupon prompting Toghus Temür to flee to the old Mongol capital of Karakorum where he died in 1388. This was followed by a campaign in 1390 against Nayir Bukha, which ended after Ming attacks into Mongolia itself forced his defeat and surrender. In the context of ongoing Ming military engagements in the north, then, the proposed date of 1389 for the creation of the *Amalgamated Map* was situated in a renewed period of Ming aggression towards the Mongols. In this sense, the map's lack of fortifications on the frontier reflects an open vision towards the boundaries—or lack thereof—of the northern frontier, and a rhetorical desire for an extension of Ming authority over strategically troublesome area. It is also

[267] Rossabi, "The Ming and Inner Asia," 228–29.
[268] Ibid., 231.

worth noting that the names of Ming princely estates, created for the purpose of maintaining northern military preparations, are one of the identifiers scholars have used to determine the date of the map's creation.[269] The conscious efforts of the creator of the *Amalgamated Map*, given the military context of the time, suggests an awareness of the crucial situation along the heavily militarized northern frontier and the desire to encompass former Yuan territory for the glory and security of the Ming empire.

As Liu has noted, scholars have repeatedly concluded that the author(s) of the *Amalgamated Map* and the *Kangnido* likely derived their knowledge from these Yuan maps and perhaps other sources of information obtained from Yuan archives.[270] The *Kangnido* probably drew its Central Asian place names from Arabic sources transmitted during the era of Mongol dominance of Eurasia.[271] However, I know of no scholarship that has placed the *Amalgamated Map* in a larger context, particularly one that situates the early Ming as part of a longer transition era beginning in the Song. It seems likely that its anonymous creator lived through the last years of the Yuan, and, if he was educated, was at least familiar with common perceptions of empire under the Yuan regime and the Yuan state's legitimating principles. Confucian elites who lived during the Yuan era often justified Mongol conquest and rule of China with the rationale that they had united the whole world, and had thus done something even the Tang dynasty and the ancient kings had not accomplished.[272] It was Heaven's will that the Mongols had received the Mandate, and thus that they governed all under Heaven. Therefore, in the fourteenth century, policy-makers and elites in the early Ming dynasty appear to have imagined the Ming empire as

[269] Wang Qianjin et al., "Juanben caihui *Da Ming hunyi tu* yanjiu," 54.
[270] Li Hongwei, "Chenji shu bainan yiming chuan tianxia: 'Da Ming hunyi tu,' yinqi shiren guanzhu," in *Lishi dang'an* (2004): pp. 133–6; and Sun Guoqing, "Hunyi Jiangli Lidai Guodu Zhu Tu," in *Ditu* (2005:4), pp. 89–90.
[271] Nurlan Kenzheakhmet, "Central Asian Placenames in the *Kangnido*," in *Journal of Asian History* 49.1/2 (2015): p. 155.
[272] Mote, *Imperial China*, pp. 505–7.

the imperial inheritor of the Yuan empire, and not as a deliberately conservative state in spatial terms. This single map, the *Da Ming Hunyi Tu,* serves as a snapshot of how early Ming literati and their emperor envisioned the empire. It is the only map we have from the period, but its importance cannot be understated, because it is wholly unique in Chinese cartographic history. No maps depicting a similar spatial extent appear in China again until the arrival of Jesuits and Western cartographic techniques during the late sixteenth century.

By the mid-Ming era, however, the familiar construct of the steppe-frontier fortification reappeared with vigour, indicating a spatially limited vision of empire. The *Guang Yu Tu*, an atlas compiled by Luo Hongxian (1504–64), very clearly depicts not only a continuous wall stretching from the Yellow Sea to Ningxia, but additionally represents the Gobi Desert as a single, solid barrier demarcated by a stark black band.[273] The *Guang Yu Tu* 广舆图, like the *Amalgamated Map,* was based on Zhu Siben's nonextant *Yuditu,* suggesting that it was primarily concerned with depicting the regions inside China, but the stark difference between how each represents frontier regions suggests a dramatically different way of thinking about the Eurasian world at large and the Ming empire's place within it. The *Guang Yu Tu* also omits many place names for frontier regions in favour of more labels within China, despite the fact that the *Amalgamated Map* indicates Ming court elites had access to geographical information about Eurasia.[274] The separation between the Ming empire and the steppe and the willingness to omit foreign place names, according to Luo Hongxian's representation, was one willed by Heaven and reinforced by man. Such a combination of artificial and geographic barriers was not unknown in

[273] Map accessed from the World Digital Library, Oct. 2016. PDF 7093.2: https://www. wdl.org/en/item/7093/
[274] Ren Jincheng, "*Guang Yu Tu* zai Zhongguo dituxue shishang de gongxian ji qi yingxiang," in *Zhongguo gudai dituji: Ming* (Beijing: Cultural Relics Publishing House, 1994), pp. 73–8.

the Chinese literary tradition. To take one representative example from the Han dynasty, Cai Yong (133–92) wrote:

> 天設山河，秦築長城，漢起塞垣，所以別內外，異殊俗也 … 雖或破之，豈可殄盡，而方本朝為之旰食乎？
>
> Heaven arranged [*she* 設] mountains and rivers, the Qin built long walls, and the Han constructed strategic fortresses. These [measures] divide the inner and outer, and separate the common from the coarse. . . . How could we [live] together with such beasts?[275]

What caused this change in Ming thought between 1389 and the 1500s? After the Yongle emperor's death, a series of strategic decisions, careful calculations, and military blunders changed Ming perceptions of empire into one that ended at the steppe. The Tumu Crisis of 1449, during which a large Chinese army was annihilated and the emperor captured, stands out as a particularly shocking turn of events that dramatically altered Ming strategic culture in Beijing's court. In state records compiled immediately after the Crisis and the Zhengtong Emperor's capture, we can find a representative reference to the role of walls and geography in separating the inner and outer, reflecting Cai Yong's attitude:

> …遼東宣府大同寧夏甘肅皆有高山大川長城固壘限隔延綏境外亦有黃河千六百餘里實天造地設之
>
> . . . Liaodong, Xuanfu, Datong, Ningxia, and Gansu all have high mountains, great rivers, and long walls. It is assured that their strong fortifications separate [us] and pacify the frontiers. Furthermore, the Yellow River extends more than sixteen hundred *li*. Truly Heaven created the earth and arranged [*she* 設] them.[276]

The Ming military's ability to operate in the steppe also deteriorated. The Yongle emperor's onerous campaigns into Mongolia were costly on the depopulated north, and the *weisuo* 衛所 and *tuntian* 屯田 systems that had organized and maintained the two-million-strong Ming army

[275] HHS, 90.2985.
[276] MSL, Xianzong, *juan* 40, p. 799.

eroded after the 1420s.[277] The expensive postal relay system, vital for communications during deep steppe campaigns, fell into disrepair, limiting the ability and willingness of the Ming court to dispatch expeditionary forces.[278] The reduction of Ming operations in the Mongolian steppe and interference in Mongol politics allowed the resurgence of Mongol power under new warlords, particularly the Oirat general Esen, who was responsible for defeating the Zhengtong Emperor's army in 1449.[279] The court's reaction to the emperor's decision to lead a campaign had been poor, and his capture caused panic over both the Ming empire's military situation and the line of succession.[280]

The Tumu Crisis was carved into the memory of Ming bureaucrats, elites and rulers long after the incident itself, and became a byword for disaster, misfortune and caution, lamented as the "Tumu hardship" (*Tumu zhi nan* 土木之難), the "Tumu calamity" (*Tumu zhi hai* 土木之害), and the "Tumu defeat" (*Tumu zhi bai* 土木之敗).[281] It fundamentally challenged Ming intellectuals' relationship with Song Confucian precedents, called into question Yongle-era standardizations of Neo-Confucian texts and interpretations, and complicated the relationship between adherence to orthodox philosophical models and effective government.[282] As de Heer notes, into the sixteenth century the crisis was cause for political disturbance when the Zhengde Emperor (r. 1505–21), known for his impetuous behavior, wished to lead an expedition against

[277] See: Liew, *Tuntian Farming System of the Ming Dynasty.*
[278] Lane J. Harris, "Into the Frontiers: The Relay System and Ming Empire in the Borderlands, 1368–1644," in *Ming Studies* 72 (2015): pp. 3–23.
[279] Flip de Heer, *The Care-Taker Emperor: Aspects of the Imperial Institution in Fifteenth-Century China as Reflected in the Political History of the Reign of Chu Ch'i-yü* (Leiden: Brill, 1986), p. 13.
[280] Ibid., 125
[281] See for examples: MSL, Xianzong, *juan* 102, p. 1987; Xiaozong, *juan* 75, p. 1427; Xiaozong, *juan* 114, p. 2066; Wuzong, *juan* 17, p. 523; Wuzong, *juan* 122, p. 2461; and Smith, "Impressions of the Song-Yuan-Ming Transition," p. 84.
[282] Hung-lam Chu, "Intellectual Trends in the Fifteenth Century," in *Ming Studies* 27 (1989): p. 5–7.

the army of Dayan Khan, but met opposition from an official who was willing to disobey his emperor and physically block the his passage in order to prevent a repeat of the Tumu Crisis.[283] The Crisis, then, called into question accepted imperial and Confucian norms, destabilizing Song-era philosophical precedents while at the same time cementing a theretofore fluid frontier along the lines of the existing fortifications and, by the end of the fifteenth century, the Great Wall itself.[284] We can conclude that the legacy of the Yuan imperium remained strong in the early Ming regime, and Ming ambitions to incorporate the former Yuan heartland lingered in the dynasty's founding decades, but after 1449 these ambitions largely dissolved. The absence in the *Da Ming Hunyi Tu* of an otherwise consistently depicted fortified steppe border, and the fact that the map more closely resembles its Yuan counterpart rather than those made during the Song, and its creation during a period of aggression towards the Mongol steppe speaks to these ambitions.

Visually, the Song and Ming maps differ in content and presentation. The *Da Ming Hunyi Tu* is purely a territorial map, with no accompanying text except for place-name labels. Each map of China in the *Lidai Dili Zhizhang Tu* includes text that explains what the map depicts, and the context of each historical era. Even considering only the region of China (which the *Da Ming Hunyi Tu* goes far beyond), the *Da Ming* includes much more detail, naming some several hundred local places and painstakingly depicting dozens of rivers and mountains. The Song maps are much more simplistic, and reflect a mapmaking tradition more concerned with contextualizing with written records rather than visually depicting a vast empire. The Song maps, then, suggest less concern with territorial majesty and more concerned with how places and

[283] Flip de Heer, *The Care-Taker Emperor*, p. 125; and MTJ, *juan* 47, p. 275.
[284] Frederick W. Mote, "The T'u-mu incident of 1449," in *Chinese Ways in Warfare,* eds. Frank A. Kierman, Jr. and John K. Fairbank (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1974), p. 269.

people within a strictly defined region changed over time. The *Da Ming* purports to show the empire in a single moment – or at least the vision Ming rulers maintained for the new empire – encompassing the old Mongol empire and demonstrating the vast reach of the Ming polity.

C. THE POLITICS OF HISTORIOGRAPHICAL INCORPORATION

Early Ming documents reflect, in subtle language, the idea in the early Ming that Mongolia, at least, was properly part of the Ming empire. In a diplomatic letter to Japan, the Hongwu emperor referenced his military expeditions into Mongolia:

> …北夷遠遁沙漠將及萬里特遣征虜大將軍率馬步八十萬出塞追獲殲厥渠魁大統已定…
>
> . . . The northern barbarians [i.e. Mongols] distanced themselves and evaded us in the desert, travelling as far as ten thousand *li*. I have dispatched a special expeditionary general to lead a cavalry army of 800,000 to march through the passes, and capture and destroy the rebels. *Unification is certain* . . . .[285]

These discussions extended beyond territorial incorporation into an intellectual inclusion of the Mongols into the Ming state's reckoning of the imperial past. The use of the term "unification" (*datong* 大統) implies the northern steppe as part of the Ming empire.

Ming emperors, furthermore, did not consider the Mongols themselves and their customs as the reason for the Yuan collapse. In the minds of early Ming rulers, the Yuan fall came about because of rather "traditional" failings on the part of its state and statesmen: avarice and the inability to govern. A 1379 decree from the Hongwu emperor admonished his own administration for his shortcomings and drew direct parallels between his subordinates and the Yuan court:

[285] MSL, Taizu, *juan* 212, p. 3141. Emphasis mine.

> 元本胡人起自沙漠一旦據有中國混一海內建國之初輔弼之臣率皆賢達進用者…以政治翕然可觀及其後也小人擅權奸邪競進舉用親舊結為朋黨中外百司貪婪無話由是法度日弛紀綱不振至于土崩瓦解卒不可救今創業之初若不嚴立法度以革奸弊…故必選賢能以隆治化爾等有所荐引當慎所擇
>
> The *hu* [胡] who established the Yuan arose from the desert and in a short time amalgamated China with the whole world [中國混一海內]. At the founding of the country the assisting officials generally attained use. . . Thus government was harmonious and ordered. [But] petty men accumulated power and craftily competed for advancement; they selected relatives and friends for positions and produced cliques. Officials at home and abroad were avaricious and without shame. Because of this, laws became loosened on a daily basis and the code lacked vitality. Finally as a result, [the dynasty] collapsed—soldiers could not save it.
>
> Now at the beginning of our great venture it is like [we too] are not strict, and that laws are passed through wickedness and treachery. . . . In this instance we must select the sage-like through a renovation of great government. You, the officialdom, to some extent ought to carefully select [in this manner.][286]

According to the Hongwu emperor, the great accomplishment of the Mongols was to bring together the entire world, and to subsequently govern in a "harmonious and ordered" fashion. Over time, however, the Yuan administration became corrupt, ineffective, and factionalized. The Hongwu emperor saw the same pattern occurring within his state apparatus and sought to stamp out such practices before they could become entrenched. His concern was great enough that he often repeated them to his court, and similar pronouncements are found elsewhere:

> 自古聖賢之君不以祿私親不以官私愛惟求賢才以治…元朝出於沙漠惟任一己之私不明先王之道所在官司輒以蒙古色目人為之長但欲私其族類羈縻其民而矣非公天下愛民圖治之心也…末年以來其弊尤甚以致社稷傾危而卒莫之救卿等宜以為戒選官之際慎擇其人而用之勿徇其弊也
>
> Since ancient times, the sagacious ruler would not selfishly [benefit] himself with salary, or selfishly love [himself] through government. . . . When the Yuan came from the desert they only took responsibility for their own personal gain, and did not illuminate the way of the former kings. The government and ministries abruptly employed Mongolians and Central Asians. They only desired selfish gains for their clansmen and to tyrannize over the people. They did not have the intention of benevolent rule over all under heaven, [nor did they] love the people or consider the heart of governance. . . . From the last years of

[286] MSL, Taizu, *juan* 15, p. 211.

> the dynasty this abuse became especially pronounced. Consequently the state collapsed and all was in peril, and among the soldiers none saved it. The ministers should have assumed to warn against [this]. [Thus I instruct:] establish your officials' boundaries. Carefully select your men and employ them [properly]; do not give in to this sort of abuse.[287]

It was not demeaning to make these comparisons, because the Yuan held a place in imperial history. In the end, according to Hongwu, it was the classic encroachment of ineptitude that had brought down the Yuan state, not its Mongol origins.

The Hongwu emperor's son and third ruler of the Ming dynasty, the Yongle emperor, is often presented in modern historiography as a pragmatic sovereign who utilized Mongols in his court and army when they proved useful.[288] Like his father, he understood the place of the Mongols in both the Ming empire during his reign, and in the dynasty's imagining of its imperial past. Particularly, referencing his Mongol predecessors, he noted that, "The Yuan used the northern barbarians to rule the Chinese [元 以 胡 人 主 中 夏]."[289] This curious wording makes a clear distinction between the Yuan dynasty state (or court) and the *huren,* a term traditionally used to describe nomadic horse-riding peoples living north of China. It was the Yuan state that received Heaven's Mandate to rule, and the Mongols who were a tool deployed to achieve that purpose. No doubt the Yongle emperor understood that the Yuan dynasty was dominated politically by Mongols, but he chose to deculturalize the Yuan state as a means of shamelessly incorporating the Mongols into the legitimizing history he referenced.

Early Ming emperors were also quite conscious of the historical dangers of military weakness, particularly lambasting the Song dynasty for its failures. They were astute in their knowledge of the reasons for Tang and Yuan military superiority, praising their military

[287] MSL, Taizu, *juan* 28b, p. 471.
[288] See: Tsai, *Perpetual Happiness*; and Brook, *The Troubled Empire*, pp. 91–3.
[289] MSL, Taizong, *juan* 217, p. 2171.

pragmatism and effective organization of armed campaigns. Under the Yongle emperor's scrutinizing eye, this deployment of comparative military history was particularly judicious:

> 自古國家盛衰存亡未有不係於武備之張弛漢唐世遠置不言近代宋太祖太宗受天命將勇兵強削除暴亂四海晏然及其子孫弗率武備不修醜虜僭竊至海內分裂宗社…
>
> 世祖時戎部嚴整甲兵強…數世嗣主荒淫王綱紐軍致廢弛…我皇考太祖高皇帝受天命定天下于時將帥效忠士卒奮勇肅清奸宄遂建洪業
>
> 朕嗣位以來夙夜惕厲唯恐蹈宋元覆轍以墜皇考丕緒
>
> Since ancient times the country has flourished and declined, living and dying. [This] has never been unconnected to the tension and relaxation of defensive preparations. The ancient Han and Tang put [such measures] into place. [The same] cannot be said of recent times. Song Taizu and Taizong received the Mandate of Heaven and through armed strength, suppressed rebellion. All within the four seas were at peace. But their descendants did not command the military and did not study their enemies, who overstepped their boundaries, secretly encroached upon the whole world and divided up the broken royal house. …
>
> During Kublai Khan's time, the military offices were ordered and armor and weapons were strong. . . . [However], successive kings were licentious, and the army fell into neglect . . . . Our great founder [Ming] Taizu, the high emperor, received the Mandate to rectify all under Heaven. At that time the generals vowed loyalty and the soldiers were dauntless to purge evildoers; they thereupon established this great undertaking [i.e. the Ming empire].
>
> Since I [the Yongle emperor] have inherited the throne, day and night I have been on guard for fear that [we] will follow in the footsteps of the disastrous policies of the Song and Yuan and collapse the founder's great undertaking.[290]

Here we see a series of judgments. The Han and Tang were to be presented as repositories of strong policy. The Song was to be considered a failure for its unwillingness to "study its enemies"—the steppe-and-forest Khitans and Jurchens. The Yuan was to be admired for its strong military but regarded as a warning for its failure to manage the excesses of its ruling elite and to control its military forces. Such references to the duty of soldiers and the place of military

[290] Ibid.

power in the Chinese order appear frequently in early Ming records as ideals and policies to be reinforced. Modern scholastic notions of China and its Confucian civil tradition as pacifistic cannot be said to hold water.[291] The Ming emperors harboured disgust with Song weakness and admiration for Khubilai Khan's strength, and actively abandoned Song dynastic models.[292]

D. CONCLUSION

If we combine these two discussions – one of spatial representations of empire and the other of Ming treatments of the Mongol Yuan – a picture of parallel imperial constructions between the Yuan and Ming emerges. Instead of a sharp break from Mongol practices, ideas, and imperial visions, we see a continuation of those elements through the first half century of Ming rule, at least until 1449. Understanding that martial values remained vibrant and strong among Ming rulers in the early years of the dynasty clarifies why the *Amalgamated Map* overlaps Yuan realities with Ming depictions.

A few problems remain: These are merely Ming depictions and ideas, and do not describe the real territorial extent of the Ming empire. However, these observations serve to place the early Ming years in a larger context. While scholars have suggested that the northern border was firmly entrenched as early as the late fourteenth century, I believe that these arguments are premature. Zhao Xianhai has pointed to the early Ming princedoms and the Taiyuan garrison, established during the Hongwu reign after the end of campaigns in 1372, as the foundations for the construction of the Great Wall, but this is a teleological argument that anticipates the

[291] For an excellent treatment on this issue, see Wang, *Harmony and War*; and Nicola Di Cosmo, ed., *Military Culture in Imperial China* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011).
[292] John Dardess, "Did the Mongols Matter? Territory, Power, and the Intelligentsia in China from the Northern Song to the Early Ming," in *The Song-Yuan-Ming Transition in Chinese History,* p. 133.

construction of the Wall a century before Ming court bureaucrats and emperors imagined it as a single defensive concept.[293] It seems more likely that the early Ming fortifications were intended to extend Ming power into the steppe, an intention later redoubled with the Yongle emperor's movement of the capital to the edge of the frontier at Beijing.[294] This is not to say that the *reality* of Ming empire extended significantly beyond the defensive arrangements on the frontier, but the expression of Ming military authority and ability was much more fluid until the mid-fourteenth century, and only truly became intellectually and physically congealed after 1449. Zhao is otherwise correct to point out that after 1372 Ming expeditions and diplomatic endeavours focused on the northwest and northeast, rather than Mongolia itself, in an effort to outflank Mongol power, but I would also note, perhaps speculatively, that this mirrors Mongol attempts to outflank the position of the Southern Song in the mid-thirteenth century.[295]

This argument is intended to treat the first century of Ming rule not as a military-despotic anomaly, but as a period of time that demonstrates temporal and intellectual overlap with the Yuan dynasty. It also suggests that the early Ming era should not be ignored in favour of rushing to discuss the entanglement of Ming state and society with the early-modern world economy. This examination of Ming martial values and ambitions serves to recalibrate Ming historiography and seek a place for an ambiguous era.

[293] Zhao Xianhai, *Ming dai jiu bian*, 46, 78, 157.
[294] Smith, "Impressions of the Song-Yuan-Ming Transition," p. 83.
[295] Ibid., 124.

IV. CHAPTER 3: STRATEGIC IMPERATIVES ON THE STEPPE FRONTIER IN THE YUAN AND MING

Historians have long observed the parallels between the Yuan and early Ming states, particularly with regards to the organization of military structures and strategic concerns on the agricultural-steppe frontier zone. The Mongol empire and its successor in China, the Yuan Dynasty, looked southward across that frontier and over Yangtze River as it attempted to outflank and defeat the Southern Song. The Mongols wished to govern the south from the north, but the Song, diminished yet economically vibrant and possessed of a formidable array of defensive fortifications and natural barriers, resisted the Mongols' attempts at conquest for forty years. Over a century later, the early Ming state expanded at the expense of the collapsing Yuan and looked north across the agricultural-steppe frontier. Its first and third emperors wished to reconstitute the territory of the old Yuan empire under the Ming banner, and govern the north from the south.

Beyond a cursory overview of centralized military systems, however, there are few studies that compare the personalized policies and decisions of Mongol and early Ming rulers. Timothy Brook offers an innovative approach to Yuan-Ming studies in *The Troubled Empire* by examining how the courts and literati of these two dynasties recorded and explained large-scale crises, particularly macroenvironmental changes and social upheaval. This chapter aims to forge a similarly uncharted path and make new, fruitful comparisons between three major imperial phenomena in each empire. The similarities between these phenomena are not just ephemeral,

but represent the similar strategic problems, imperatives, and solutions that the Yuan and Ming states faced.

The first is a comparison between the Mongol arrangement of the appanage and the early Ming princely estates. In short, the Mongol appanages were gifts of territory and households granted by the Mongol *khagan* or other members of the Chinggisid lineage to successful or favored subordinates, most often military commanders. The Ming princely estates were small "fiefs" of territory located in strategically important regions of the empire, in which the first Ming emperor enfeoffed his sons and charged them with maintaining defensive preparations and undertaking military campaigns when ordered. I disagree with previous assertions that the Ming princedoms were incomparable to the Mongol appanages.[296] They are only incomparable if we confine our consideration to the limited authority that Ming princes exercised under royal law. Once we understand that the Ming princes accumulated powers, privileges, and authority far beyond those delineated by the Ming founder, the Hongwu emperor, then we can imagine the early Ming princes and their estates as functionally similar to Mongol appanage-holders and their appanage territories.

The second phenomena this chapter examines is the relocation of dynastic capitals. Two emperors of the Yuan-Ming era beg parallel examination: Khubilai Khan, the fifth *kaghan* of the Mongol empire and the founder of the Yuan Dynasty; and Zhu Di, later the Yongle emperor, third ruler of the Ming Dynasty. Scholars have compared Khubilai and the Yongle emperor before, particularly in the arenas of military action, diplomatic relations, naval expeditions, and eventual imperial overreach.[297] I propose to analyze the political and strategic reasons for which both emperors moved their capitals to what is today Beijing. Khubilai Khan relocated his capital

[296] See: Endicott-West, *Mongolian Rule in China,* p. 103.
[297] Dreyer, *Early Ming China,* pp. 173-4.

from Shangdu, a site about 150 miles north of Beijing. The Yongle emperor moved the capital of the Ming Dynasty from Nanjing in central China, a distance of about 720 miles. The Beijing site is 80 miles from the coast of the Yellow Sea and is not connected via river to the major riverways of central and south China. It is not easily supplied, and the logistics involved in building, populating and feeding the city under both Khubilai and the Yongle emperor were extraordinarily challenging. These two imperial rulers selected the Beijing site for its strategic importance in the Yan region, the ancient name for an amorphous and loosely defined yet historically important area roughly encompassing the northern half of modern Hebei and the western half of Liaoning.

The third phenomenon this chapter examines is the redeployment of Yuan military organizational structures by the early Ming state. Beyond simply observing that the organization of the early Ming military was similar to that of the Yuan, I suggest that Ming emperors adopted Yuan military organizational models because the emperors understood the efficacy of those systems. The Mongol conquest of much of Eurasia introduced new methods of military organization to numerous polities, who assimilated and adopted those methods. Chinese rulers after the Yuan fall did the same. The Confucian veneer that the Hongwu emperor espoused in Ming records was a rhetorical curtain that obscured the Yuan-style structural foundation of the Ming Dynasty's heavily militarized founding decades. Confucian literati did benefit greatly under the Ming regime, as they were once again allowed access to the highest official posts that had been off-limits under the Yuan, but they still contended politically with the prestige, power, and wealth of military officers, who enjoyed rewards, titles, and meaningful political purpose during the Hongwu and Yongle reigns. By drawing and explaining connections among all three of these phenomena between the Yuan and Ming, I will demonstrate that these states found

reason to use similar approaches to deal with similar military and territorial problems, and drew from the same repository of military and state-building strategies.

A. FUNCTIONAL SIMILARITIES BETWEEN MONGOL APPANAGES AND MING PRINCEDOMS

1. MONGOL APPANAGES

The unit of the "appanage" was only one part of a larger Mongol administration. It was also irregular in the sense that the circumstances and traditions surrounding the creation, management, and responsibilities of appanages were not consistent or standardized. However, in terms of how they managed territory and assigned political positions, the Mongol court was not as hands-off as scholars have previously thought.[298] The appanage did serve as a territorial prize that the *khagan* could reward to loyal subjects who rendered service to the empire, but the purpose and use of the appanage as an imperial resource was not left entirely to the appanage-holder. Rather, the appanage as a reward served as one of the *khagan's* most powerful political tools while also functioning as a semi-autonomous source of food, financial resources, and manpower for the Mongol empire at large.

In order to discuss similarities between Mongol and early Ming princely estates, we must know what an "appanage" was in the Mongol world, how they were assigned, and what role they played in the political landscape of the Mongol empire. In the simplest terms, the appanage (Chinese: *touxia* 投下, *weixia* 位下, *fenti* 分地, *aima* 愛馬; Mongolian: *ayimagh*), sometimes called "fief," was an inheritable territorial award – including the population therein – granted to a

[298] David P. Morgan, "Who Ran the Mongol Empire?," in *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 114.2 (1982): pp. 134-6.

noble of the Mongol empire as a reward for service to the empire.[299] Where did the appanage fit into Mongol administration? To summarize the overview of Mongol historian Timothy May, the appanage was a local reflection of the relatively decentralized nature of the highest levels of Mongol government. At the empire's political apex resided the *kaghan*, who theoretically held absolute power and whose Chinggisid lineage technically possessed all land and people within the empire. The *kaghan's* center of power, the *ordo,* was a camp – often nomadic – of military guards, administrators, servants, and kinsmen that functioned as his administrative capital. The major Chinggisid princes underneath the *kaghan* also maintained smaller *ordo* of their own in the expanding frontiers of the empire, and their sons and grandsons maintained even smaller *ordo*. When the Mongol empire fractured in the mid-thirteenth century, the princely *ordo* became the highest centers of power within the four post-imperial khanates, in effect assuming the role of the *kaghan's* ordo. A given *ordo* might have a very different administrative structure from any other *ordo,* as a given Chinggisid prince had virtually limitless authority to decide how he would staff and manage his own camp. The *kaghan,* and princes of khanate *ordo*, could also hand out parcels of territory as rewards for service to members of the royal family, distinguished military commanders, and loyal civil officials; these parcels of territory were what we call the appanage.[300]

Appanages varied in size and importance depending on the relative standing of its holder. There remain unresolved historiographical questions over how interchangeable the above terms are for "appanage," the degree to which appanage-holders operated within regularized "legal" limits laid out by the empire's central administration, and how the privileges and powers of

[299] David M. Farquhar, *The Government of China Under Mongolian Rule: A Reference Guide* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 1990), p. 17; and Hsiao Ch'i-ch'ing, *The Military Establishment of the Yuan Dynasty* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978), pp. 11, 132.
[300] May, *The Mongol Conquests in World History*, pp. 159-61.

appanage-holders changed over time.[301] However, we can outline some generalities. The *kaghan* and his princes had ultimate authority to hand out appanages to subjects in return for rendered services, most frequently after a significant campaign that involved territorial conquest, from which the *kaghan* carved appanage territory.[302] Appanage-holders often fielded their own armies, collected their own taxes, and in the early decades of the Mongol empire were not strictly beholden to the *kaghan's* fiscal oversight.[303] Appanage-holders also had significant authority to appoint their own officials (if they were inclined to operate a bureaucratic administration), and could conduct law and punish offenders with considerable leeway.[304] The material goods, households, and people granted to appanage-holders (particularly during the Mongol conquest of northern China) were considered the property of the holder and were not recorded in central registrars; later efforts by the Mongol court to re-register northern Chinese households for tax purposes met opposition from appanage-holders.[305] In the broadest sense, the pre-Yuan Mongol administration valued the people of a territory more than the territory itself, especially as a source of manpower for the production of food and conscription of soldiers. The military contributions of an appanage-holder and the political capital the *kaghan* generated by rewarding territory were more important than the prospect of the *kaghan* holding direct power over the territory itself. This diminished the incentive for the *kaghan* and his court to retain personal control over all conquered territories.[306]

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[301] Endicott-West, *Mongolian Rule in China,* p. 90; and Karl Wittfogel and Chia-sheng Feng, *History of Chinese Society: Liao (907-1125)*, (Philadelphia: The American Philosophical Society, 1970). p. 65
[302] Thomas Allsen, "The Rise of the Mongolian Empire and Mongolian rule in north China," *The Cambridge History of China, Volume 6,* p. 379.
[303] Herbert Franke and Denis Twitchett, "Introduction," in *The Cambridge History of China, Volume 6,* p. 26.
[304] Farquhar, "Structure and Function in the Yüan Imperial Government," in *China Under Mongol Rule,* ed. Langlois (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), p. 47.
[305] Elizabeth Endicott-West, "The Yüan government and society," in *The Cambridge History of China, Volume 6,* p. 662.
[306] May, *The Mongol Conquests in World History*, p. 161.

Despite this loose system of administration, appanage-holders did not enjoy complete control of their territories at all times, and their privileges waned over the course of the thirteenth century. In general, the *kaghan's* administration monitored the general status of appanages, and if a prince or noble had grossly mismanaged his or her appanage, responsible officials could notify the *kaghan* who, as the theoretical owner of all imperial territory, could intervene to halt mismanagement if he so desired.[307] In the early-thirteenth century the second Mongol *kaghan* Ögedei (r. 1229-1241) began to rescind the rights of appanage-holders. He restricted their ability to collect impromptu taxes, and implemented loose tax regulations, while in return issuing regular stipends to appanage-holders as a means of controlling their financial resources. Under the fourth *kaghan* Möngke (r. 1251-59), princes could no longer collect taxes *ad hoc* without prior approval from the *kaghan's* court, and the *kaghan's* court replaced all princely taxes with a unified imperial tax code.[308] By the reign of the fifth *kaghan* and founder of the Yuan Dynasty in China, Khubilai (r. 1260-1294), Mongol officials understood that it was more lucrative and reliable to encourage and tax agriculture than it was to destructively loot agricultural regions. The Mongol court took measures to promote the cultivation of fertile land, and created an agricultural department which was responsible for disseminating agricultural techniques in Yuan China.[309]

Khubilai's reign marks the most thorough and well-recorded attempts by the Mongols to control appanages. In his efforts to regularize administration, Khubilai ensured that that the centers of political decision-making, particularly the Yan region of northeast China, were separated from the arbitrary power of appanage-holders:

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[307] Allsen, "The Rise of the Mongolian Empire," p. 397
[308] Ibid, p. 399.
[309] Elizabeth Endicott-West, *A History of Land Use in Mongolia: The Thirteenth Century to the Present* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), p. 46-7.

詔諸投下毋擅勾攝燕京路州縣官吏.

By imperial order: the appanages shall not exert influence over or assimilate the officials of the Yan capital region.[310]

The Yan region, a province-sized area of land centered on modern Beijing, has been a contiguous territory governed by various independent states as early as the eleventh century BCE. The region became geopolitically important in the tenth century CE when the Song Dynasty in China had to interact as an equal with new empires situated in northeast Asia: the Khitan Liao and later the Jurchen Jin. The emergence of large, imperial powers in northeast Asia transformed the Yan region from a remote peripheral zone to a contested frontier with enormous strategic value.[311] The Mongol conquest of the Jin Dynasty, Korea, and Khubilai Khan's attempted invasions of Japan further ensured that the Yan region was the crossroads of major movements of supplies, soldiers, and imperial endeavors.

As part of his consolidation of power, Khubilai also attempted to consolidate appanages into regularized administrative divisions, manage local official appointments, and streamline household registration:

詔：「諸路州府，若自古名郡，戶數繁庶，且當衝要者，不須改併。[…] 各投下者，併入所隸州城。其散府州郡戶少者，不須更設錄事司及司候司。附郭縣止令州府官兼領。括諸路未占籍戶任差職者以聞。」

Imperial pronouncement to all circuits and prefectures: ever since ancient times, named counties and populous household regions have been treated as important locations, and how they are assembled should not be altered. […] All those in appanages shall be attached to a prefecture or city. As for those few who are scattered and far from a prefecture or county, they shall not be placed under the watch of the Municipal Affairs Officer or Municipal Police. Suburban counties shall cease appointing prefectural officials to multiple posts at once. This includes all circuits that have not yet created household registries or assigned officials to conduct registration.[312]

[310] YS, *juan* 47, unification year 4 (1263): p. 93.
[311] Rawski, *Early Modern China and Northeast Asia,* p. 60.
[312] YS, *juan* 47, Khubilai year 2, p. 107.

These efforts represented the centralization of Mongol power and a reduction of the arbitrary power of entitled nobles, a process that the court struggled to continue through the Yuan Dynasty. Ultimately, however, the Mongol (and later Yuan) court never removed the appanage as an important unit of political power, a frustration that inhibited the late Yuan state from curbing corruption and quashing rural rebellion.[313] Certain aspects of the original appanage system remained during Yuan times, including the valuation of people as manpower: Yuan state stipends granted to appanage-holders were handed out as both silver and manpower, "distributing conquered peoples or tribes as shares."[314]

In China, the Mongol court issued appanages primarily in the north, which Elizabeth Endicott-West suggests was a conscious decision intended to avoid disrupting the complex, burgeoning economic activity of southern China.[315] The militarized nature of northern China during the Mongol-Jin and Mongol-Song wars explains why administration was often left in the hands of nobles instead of court-appointed officials: the imperial Mongol court valued military ability, and trusted appanage-holders to support the empire's military campaigns rather than live as isolationist lords (a personal relationship between court and noble that finds its ideal model in Khubilai Khan's early history, detailed below).[316] Appanages assigned to members of the Chinggisid lineage, such as Khubilai's appanage in northern China, functioned as a foundation for the extension of military power and a means of handing over administrative authority to trusted kinsmen, particularly in the expanding frontiers of the empire.[317] For instance, fourteen appanages in northern China, northeast Asia and Yunnan – all frontier regions – served as

[313] Endicott-West, "The Yüan government and society," pp. 588, 607-8.
[314] Ibid, p. 608; and Endicott-West, *A History of Land Use in Mongolia*, p. 44.
[315] Endicott-West, "The Yüan government and society," p. 612.
[316] May, *The Mongol Conquests in World History,* pp. 160-2.
[317] Lisa Balabanlilar, "Lords of the Auspicious Conjunction: Turco-Mongol Imperial Identity on the Subcontinent," *Journal of World History* 18.1 (2007): p. 10; and Maria Eva Subtelny, "The Timurid Legacy: A Reaffirmation and a Reassessment," *Cahiers D'Asie Centrale* 3/4 (1997): p. 14.

centers of warhorse-breeding for the purpose of supplying horses for military campaigns, postal stations, and the *kaghan's* personal stables.[318]

2. EARLY MING PRINCELY ESTATES

The early-Ming princely estates, like the Mongol appanages, were only one part of a larger administration, and like the appanages, the estates overlapped irregularly with formal bureaucratic territorial divisions – in this case, the province (*sheng* 省) and prefecture (*fu* 府). Like the appanages, the princely estates had two primary functions: to provide foundations for military preparedness, and to hand over military-administrative authority to trusted members of the imperial lineage. In the years following the defeat and expulsion of Mongol Yuan forces, the Hongwu emperor's strategic decisions reflected two goals: 1) to create a robust network of security in northern China to deal with Mongol conflicts, and 2) to balance the distribution of military power between the center and periphery in order to avoid a concentration of armed strength under any one individual.[319] Hongwu found his solution to these problems in the princely estates. In order to understand the nature of the estates, it is necessary to briefly go over the military history of the early Ming.

Following the formal establishment of the Ming Dynasty in 1368, the Ming re-conquest of northern China was not complete or straightforward. Mongol Yuan military forces remained coherent and powerful, and the most successful late-Yuan general, Kökö Temür, controlled significant territory in modern Gansu and Shaanxi. Between 1368 and 1370, Kökö Temür continued to score victories against Ming forces and raided southern Gansu as far south as Pingliang and west into Lanzhou. The uncertain military situation in northwest China only

[318] Farquhar, "Structure and Function," pp. 45-6.
[319] Tsai, *Perpetual Happiness,* p. 48.

swung in favor of the Ming when a Ming army stationed near modern Dingxi in Gansu repelled one of Kökö Temür's last great offensives, and only at great cost.[320] Political infighting among Kökö Temür's political overlords and erstwhile subordinates then forced him to abandon Gansu and retreat into Mongolia, but he remained a military threat to the Ming, and loyal to the last Yuan emperor. Later Ming expeditions into the Mongolian heartland failed to decisively defeat the Mongols, and often met with disaster. In 1372, the Hongwu emperor's most decorated general, Xu Da (then undefeated), marched from northern Shanxi into Mongolia with as many as 150,000 infantrymen, where Kökö Temür crushed his forces. This defeat marked the last Ming attempt to push into Mongolia for the remainder of the decade.

As the Hongwu emperor crystallized the permanent administrative structures of the Ming empire, he created two levels of military elites in order to formalize a new military arrangement. The first level consisted of the military commanders who had served under him during the tumultuous final years of the Yuan. Once enthroned, the Hongwu emperor granted them formal titles, commands, and monetary rewards, while also elevating them above the civil officialdom.[321] Military service was virtually the only way to enter this level of nobility.[322] Above them, the Hongwu emperor began to transform his male offspring into "the highest stratum of the military nobility" by grooming them under the tutelage of his military officers, enfeoffing them in regional commands, and, once mature, granting them command of military units and charging them with the defense of their respective regions. The most heavily militarized zones were on the northern frontier, and the princes in the north were charged with curtailing Mongol raids and, when issued imperial orders, launching counter-offensives into the

[320] Dreyer, *Early Ming China,* pp. 71-3.
[321] Dreyer, "Military Origins of Ming China," p. 105.
[322] Dreyer, *Early Ming China,* p. 137.

steppe. The emperor's second, third, and fourth oldest sons began to personally exercise the management of their northern military commands in the late 1370s, and eventually became the most powerful of the princes: Zhu Shuang (1356-95), enfeoffed near modern Xi'an; Zhu Gang (1358-98), enfeoffed in central Shanxi; and Zhu Di (1360-1424), enfeoffed in Dadu (renamed Beiping, and later Beijing), the former capital of the Yuan Dynasty.[323] By the 1390s the Ming princes held a monopoly on military power and control over military resources in the most active zone of conflict: northern China.[324]

Through imperial decrees we know the actual and nominal authority that the princes had over their estates, the limits of that authority, and the ways in which princes often circumvented the emperor's proscriptions. The first emperor frequently revised and reissued a document entitled the *Imperial Ming Ancestral Injunctions* (*Huang Ming zu xun* 皇明祖訓), which served as a theoretically enforceable code of conduct for his statesmen, successors, and imperial relatives. The majority of the *Injunctions* dealt with princely behavior, and a plurality of its princely behavioral laws governed quotas and limits on the princes' military and security forces.[325] In geographic terms, the estates themselves began as territorially delineated "fiefs" that the Hongwu emperor granted to his sons when they turned twenty years old. Each son received a fixed stipend and an inheritable piece of land, rather like the appanages under Ögedei Khan. A retinue of officials, statesmen, and military officers assisted the prince in the management of his estate's affairs. Princes initially held authority to exercise military command over delineated units in times of conflict and lead troops into battle, but over time they also assumed peacetime

[323] The oldest son, Zhu Biao, remained in the capital and was groomed as the heir-apparent until he predeceased his father in 1392. Zhu Biao's son, Zhu Yunwen, reigned briefly as the Jianwen Emperor (r. 1398-1402) upon the Hongwu Emperor's death.
[324] Dreyer, "Early Ming China," p. 85.
[325] Farmer, *Zhu Yuanzhang and Early-Ming Legislation*, p. 68-9.

management of the soldiers stationed in and beyond their described estates, including provincial armies.[326] Nominally each prince only had the legal authority to permanently command three princely guards, or a few hundred to three thousand men, a limit set by strict imperial order:

> …置親王護衛指揮使司每王府設三護衛衛設左右前後中五所所千戶二人百戶十人. …
>
> …[This order] establishes departments of personal guards for the princes. Each princely estate will set up three guards with a lefthand, righthand, rear, front, and central *suo* [military units]. Each *qianhu* [suo] unit shall have two [officers], and each *baihu* [*suo*] shall have ten [sub-commanders]."[327]

However, the location of the most powerful princes on the northern frontier meant that they commanded as many as 15,000, even when not actively on campaign.[328] The *Ancestral Injunctions* also permitted princes to take as many military officers and soldiers as they liked whenever they departed from their fief,[329] a stipulation that appears at odds with the *Injunctions*' obsession with controlling princely movement. Outside of military affairs, the princes had "virtual sovereignty" over their estates: they could punish the infractions of those living on their estates; recruit, reward, dismiss, and punish officials; assign military officers and organize their own small bureaus.[330] They could also award their sons and grandsons smaller parcels of inheritable land.[331]

Over the course of the Hongwu emperor's reign, the princes' authority changed, expanding in some capacities while retreating in others. For instance, by the final 1395 edition of the *Injunctions,* the princes could no longer appoint and dismiss estate officials at will, but rather

[326] Ibid, p. 144-5.
[327] MSL, Taizu, *juan* 71, p. 1313.
[328] Dreyer, *Early Ming China,* pp. 148-52.
[329] HMZX*,* p. 40.
[330] Langlois, "The Hung-wu reign, 1368-1398," pp. 132-3; Tsai, *Perpetual Happiness,* p. 46; HMZX*,* p. 36.
[331] LBZG*, juan* 75, section 2333, 598-285-1 & 2.

had to await approval from the emperor's court in Nanjing.[332] However, the princes actively expanded personal authority over their soldiers by ignoring longstanding rules. The princes were only supposed to personally keep a small, permanent escort guard of a few hundred men, and only command regional military forces when the emperor's court issued orders to conduct a campaign or military exercise. They were also not supposed to use soldiers as labor for unauthorized projects, an occurrence that was nonetheless common enough that the Hongwu emperor reprimanded several of his enfeoffed sons for their mismanagement. One such entry in the *Ming Shilu* records the emperor berating Zhu Gang, the Prince of Jin, for using soldiers as labor:

> …征伐之事不可輕舉向命爾與燕王各統將校出塞以振揚威武禦備胡寇燕王深入虜庭掃清沙漠爾不及而還.
>
> Dispatching soldiers is not a matter to be taken lightly. I order you, together with the Prince of Yan [Zhu Di] to gather your men and depart for the strategic passes, exercise your military might, and prepare for *hu* raids. The Prince of Yan has led distant expeditions to capture prisoners and sweep clean the desert, but you fall short of this standard.[333]

Despite the emperor's admonishments, some princes, notably Zhu Gang and Shuang, continued to violate the imperial laws designed to constrain their activities and ostentations.[334] By the 1390s, the three eldest princes – Zhu Shuang, Gang, and Di – absorbed regional military soldiers into ever-swelling personal escort guards, creating a concentration of power that the elderly Hongwu emperor recognized as threatening but did not or could not prevent. Zhu Di, the Prince of Yan, was only supposed to command three guards, or 3,000 men, but as his estate was located in Beiping, in reality he exerted influence over all six guards stationed in the city, and the five

[332] Dreyer, *Early Ming China*, p. 175-6.
[333] MSL, Taizu, *juan* 226, p. 3309.
[334] See: Hok-lam Chan, "Ming Taizu's Problem with His Sons: Prince Qin's Criminality and Early-Ming Politics," in *Asia Major* 20.1 (2007).

additional regional branch guards nominally commanded by the bureaucratic Beiping Military Commission.[335] Like the later Mongol *kaghans,* near the end of his reign the Hongwu emperor attempted to monitor and fix the princes' stipends in order to control them, an effort that ultimately failed.[336] His court realized this as the source of potential future crises as early as the 1380s, but the Hongwu emperor's decrees intended to remove military authority back to centrally-appointed officials failed to address the underlying problem, as the princes often came to influence and control these officials.[337] Why the Hongwu emperor did not address this problem further may be explained by his favorable attitude towards Zhu Di, who Hongwu trusted as the commander most capable of managing the northern frontier.[338] The emperor was fond of saying, "The Prince of Yan is he who will clear the desert." (上喜謂群臣曰清沙漠者燕王也).[339]

The authority of the *Injunctions* appeared to completely collapse upon the Hongwu emperor's death. His successor and grandson, Zhu Yunwen (reign title Jianwen), surrounded himself with experienced court advisors who were wary of the princes' influence, while at the same time the most powerful prince, Zhu Di, began to deliberately violate the codes of the *Injunctions.* When Zhu Di attempted to visit his father's tomb, the new Jianwen Emperor barred him and his large armed guard from attending the ritual funeral. Zhu Di's effort to render filial obeisance to his deceased father actually violated one of his father's decrees in the *Ancestral Injunctions:* princes were not permitted to leave their fiefs and visit the capital unless expressly instructed by the emperor.[340] The episode, along with Zhu Di's efforts to create a second court in Beijing in direct violation of the *Injunctions,* demonstrates that he no longer considered the

[335] See overview of data in Dreyer, *Early Ming China,* p. 150; and MS*, juan* 90, pp. 2193-228.
[336] MSL, Taizu, *juan* 242, pp. 3517-9.
[337] Mote, *Imperial China,* p. 585.
[338] Ibid, pp. 177-81.
[339] MSL, Taizu, *juan* 201, p. 3010.
[340] HMZX, p. 25.

Injunctions legally or morally binding, thus rendering the only real checks on princely conduct ineffective without direct court intervention, and theoretically creating an unlimited political space in which Zhu Di could exercise power in his estate. We will see in the next section how the unchecked power of the princes created Mongol-style tanistric strife at the end of the fourteenth century.

Perhaps the most notable differences between the authority of Mongol-era appanage-holders and the princes was that the Ming princes' status and power were much more dependent upon the emperor in Nanjing. The enfeoffment of Ming princes in their estates was only made in one direction: from emperor to prince, and only to the emperor's immediate offspring.[341] While both the *kaghan* and Mongol princes could issue appanage rewards to subordinates, in early Ming China only the emperor held the authority to issue and organize the princely estates, because the whole arrangement was his deliberately-designed brainchild. As the founder of a new dynasty, the Hongwu emperor had a long history of empire-building and a huge canon of political philosophy from which he could draw administrative examples and precedents. As we saw in Chapter 2, he frequently chose primarily to pull inspiration and political structures from Tang and Yuan models, rather than Han and Song models. His overriding concerns were the military security of the new polity, and the allegiance of those to whom he gave command of Ming military forces. These priorities are reflected in some of the limits of the princes' power: in regards to criminal issues relating to the mismanagement of military supplies and arrangements, the dynasty's official judicial apparatus superseded princely authority.[342] However, in the event

[341] One exception can be found in the example of Ma Ying (d. 1392), a military commander and adopted son of Hongwu charged with conquering Yunnan. After Ma Ying's successful Yunnan campaign, he was enfeoffed there in a similar manner as the Hongwu Emperor's princely sons, and posthumously granted the title of Prince of Qianning (黔寧王). The Ma family escaped the purges of the Jianwen and Yongle emperors, but gradually lost the privileges and titles granted to imperial princes over the course of the fifteenth century.
[342] Langlois, "The Hung-wu reign," p. 132.

that military inadequacies or violations were discovered in a princely estate, the princes themselves were not questioned or held accountable, and local civil officials were responsible for conducting the investigation.[343] Naturally, given the influence that more powerful princes held over the officialdom in and around their estates, these regulations amounted to an extremely weak form of oversight that a prince could easily circumvent. The Hongwu emperor's enfeoffment system trapped him between ensuring military preparedness and monitoring the conduct of his princely sons.

The formal boundaries of Ming estates were also much smaller than Mongol-era appanages. According to Dreyer, the estate stipends and allocations were, "ideally ten thousand shih [of rice annually] and one thousand ch'ing [of land]," or a few square miles, "though the amounts varied according to imperial favor."[344] However, if we consider the authority that the princes held over provincial military armies near the end of Hongwu's reign, then the geographical and numerical extent of the princes' power is greatly expanded. The fact that Mongols measured appanages in households rather than territorial units would seem to complicate the comparison, but the number of people and soldiers a Ming prince could command lends credence to a comparative exercise. The eleven guards of the Beiping locality under Zhu Di's command, or about 11,000 men plus Mongol auxiliary units, would per *weisuo* regulations and modern household calculations draw from about 3,000 households.[345] This is comparable in scale to, if smaller than, the 10,000 household Khubilai Khan held across all his appanages before his Dali campaign.

[343] HMZX, p. 28.
[344] Dreyer, "Early Ming China," p. 148.
[345] Cao Shuji, *Zhongguo Renkou Shi (Di Si Juan): Ming Shiqi* 中國人口史 (第四卷): 明時期 (Shanghai: Fudan University Press, 2000), pp. 18-56.

Both Dreyer and Langlois observed the contradictions created when the Hongwu emperor created the princely estates: the emperor wished to simultaneously move the princes away from the capital to prevent them from possibly accumulating political power in the event of the emperor's illness, but he also empowered them with military and civil authority to defend and maintain the frontiers. We can resolve this apparent contradiction if we imagine the princely estates as an echo of the Mongol appanage system – the Mongol Yuan court was also concerned with centrifugal tendencies of power, but entrusted military authority to many princes; in fact, the Hongwu government and subsequent emperors managed to centralize authority better than the Mongols did for a considerable length of time, until conflict upon the Hongwu emperor's death erupted, caused by an uneven balance of power in the Ming enfeoffment arrangement. This suggests that, if we think about the Ming princedoms as the evolution of Mongol appanages, then the early Ming state represents the evolution of the Yuan state and an attempted solution to the political tensions that tore it apart.

What about earlier enfeoffment arrangements, such as those employed in the Zhou, Han, and early Tang? The decentralization and enfeoffment of nobles during the Zhou and Han was necessitated by the inadequate administrative technology of the time, and the inability of a single imperial center to rule such a vast polity.[346] By the time of the Mongols and the Ming, however, the administrative and technological ability to rule a large empire from a single center did exist – as the Song Dynasty and post-Yongle Ming Dynasty demonstrate[347] – and yet the Mongols and

[346] Sergey V. Dmitriev and Sergius L. Kuzmin, "Conquest Dynasties of China or Foreign Empires? The Problem of Relations between China, Yuan and Qing," in *International Journal of Central Asian Studies* 19 (2015): p. 61; Cho-Yun Hsu and Katheryn M. Linduff, *Western Chou Civilization* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), p. 147, and Chapter 5; Michael Loewe, "The Former Han Dynasty," in *The Cambridge History of China, Volume 1: The Ch'in and Han Empires* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), pp. 123-4.
[347] Frederick W. Mote, "The Growth of Chinese Despotism: a Critique of Wittfogel's Theory of Oriental Despotism as Applied to China," in *Oriens Extremus* 8.1 (1961): pp. 1-41; Ellen F. Soullière, "Reflections on Chinese Despotism and the Power of the Inner Court," in *Asian Profile* 12.2 (1984): pp. 129-32.

early Ming rulers specifically chose to decentralize the *military* apparatus of their respective empires. Mongol appanages functioned not only as a means of ensuring military preparedness but also as a method of rewarding loyal service to the empire and placing military resources in the hands of trusted members of the imperial lineage. Mongol appanages, particularly in the Yuan, were not required or designed to administrate the majority of the empire's non-military needs, as the lack of appanages in the rich south and the Yuan dynasty's efforts to re-assimilate appanage resources and prevent the centrifugal distribution of power demonstrate. Similarly, the early Ming princely estates were designed to place military resources in the hands of trusted royal family members, with some modifications intended to ensure that the center retained ultimate military authority, essentially distributing the burdens of military maintenance and operational command to subordinates while maintaining true power in the center.

This is in contrast to the negotiated foundation of enfeoffment arrangements in the Zhou and Han, in which nobles (or confederates during unification wars) were granted large, sweeping powers to govern sizable territories *on behalf of* the center, *because of* the center's inability to manage huge swathes of territory, or because the center owed rewards to those who had helped the central ruler achieve power.[348] Neither the Mongol nor Ming arrangements were intended by the center to be negotiations – i.e. give-and-take between the center and enfeoffed nobles – as they were in the Zhou and Han. Instead, they were designed to be strictly controlled arrangements and delegations of particular powers, the levers of which were all theoretically in the hands of the center at all times. In this administrative structure, the privileges granted to or claimed by Mongol appanage-holders and Ming princes were compensatory for their prestigious

[348] Hsu and Linduff, *Western Chou Civilization,* p. 61; Loewe, "The Former Han Dynasty," pp. 123-4.

role in the military apparatus of the empire, and often could be exercised without the center's permission, but were ultimately not intended to be autonomous from the center.

According to this interpretation, the *Ancestral Injunctions* as a document was supposed to act as the binding, enforceable codification of this arrangement, essentially a legal stopgap for the obvious and historically demonstrable problem of slippage of power towards the enfeoffed peripheral nobility. The *Ancestral Injunctions* was intended to be a strictly codified solution for the centrifugal tendencies that plagued the Yuan Dynasty and its lack of a universal legal code, but the ultimate inability of the *Injunctions* to stop the Hongwu emperor's fourth son, Zhu Di, from launching a tanistric civil war and seizing the emperorship indicates that the Confucian legal differences between the Mongol and Ming arrangements were merely superficial. Afterwards, Zhu Di as the Yongle emperor followed in Tang Taizong's footsteps and succeeded where Khubilai Khan failed as he consolidated power in his own administrative stronghold (Beijing) and finally dismantled the enfeoffment arrangement, thus removing remaining potential sources of centrifugal conflict. We will see the beginnings, consequences, and strategic problems surrounding these processes in the next section below.

B. MOVING THE CAPITAL: STRATEGIC CONCERNS AND THE YAN REGION

1. KHUBILAI KHAN AND DADU

The story of Khubilai's decision to move the Mongol capital to Dadu begins before his ascension to the throne as *kaghan* of the Mongol empire. From a young age Khubilai's center of political power resided in the North China Plain: Khubilai's uncle and the immediate successor of Chinggis Khan, Ögedei (r. 1229-41), granted Khubilai the region of Xingzhou (modern Xingtai,

Hebei) as his personal appanage, a territory of about 10,000 households.[349] Khubilai's territory grew during the reign of Khubilai's elder brother, Möngke Khan (r. 1251-59), who ordered Khubilai to lead the Mongol conquest of the kingdom of Dali, situated in modern Yunnan province. Möngke's strategic goal was to outflank Southern Song riverine defenses and provide another base of operations for future wars against the Song. Khubilai used the task as a chance to demonstrate his military ability and strategic foresight. After Khubilai successfully subjugated Dali in 1253, Möngke granted him additional appanage territory in Shanxi and Hebei. Khubilai then spent the next several years consolidating his rule over his appanage by establishing a regularized government, deploying Chinese-style tax laws, and surrounding himself with a variety of religious and political experts. Ostensibly upon the advice of a trusted Buddhist monk, Khubilai built a new capital on a site about 150 miles north of modern Beijing; this would become his summer capital, Shangdu, on the frontier between the steppe and agrarian worlds.[350]

The Mongol empire survived as a single administrative entity only through the end of Möngke's reign. Although Möngke had presided over the expansion of Mongol territory into western Asia, Korea, and southwest China, he failed to clearly designate a successor and prepare for an orderly transfer of power to whomever followed him. After his death, the empire fractured into four autonomous khanates: the Chagatai Khanate in Central Asia, the Il-Khanate in Persia, the Kipchak Khanate in northwest Asia (also called the Golden Horde), and the direct domains of the *khagan* in Mongolia and northern China (which would later become the Yuan Dynasty).[351] As soon as Möngke died, his brothers Arigh Böke and Khubilai each assembled a separate princely diet (*kurultai*), and both assemblies declared their respective patrons the *kaghan* of the

[349] Morris Rossabi, *Khubilai Khan: His Life and Times* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), p. 14, 28.
[350] Allsen, "The rise of the Mongolian empire," p. 417-9.
[351] Allsen, "The rise of the Mongolian empire," p. 411.

Mongol empire. Historians have characterized the subsequent civil war as a conflict between Arigh Böke's Mongol "traditionalists," who wished to preserve Mongol laws across the empire and maintain the empire's center of power in Mongolia; and Khubilai's faction, which was more inclined to adopt and deploy Chinese political and social practices in order to more effectively rule the economically rich regions of China.[352]

The Kipchak Jochids and the Chagatai Khanate supported Arigh Böke, while the Il-Khanate nominally supported Khubilai, but the Il-Khanate ruler Hülegü was unable to send military aid to Khubilai due to Kipchak disruption. Khubilai therefore relied heavily on the resources (in the form of money, food, and conscripted soldiers) of northern China to support his struggle for the Mongol throne, and throttled Arigh Böke's access to supplies, already thin after the relationship between Arigh Böke and the Chagatai khan Alghu deteriorated.[353] These resources, drawn from his appanage which extended across the North China Plain, the Beijing region, and Shanxi, included 10,000 horses purchased from horse-rearing regions in China, 100,000 piculs (*shi*) of rice, and 150,000 infantry.[354] Unable to best Khubilai in military engagements, Arigh Böke surrendered in 1263 and later died in captivity.

Now the master of the eastern section of the formerly united Mongol empire, Khubilai was faced with the challenge of consolidating his rule and managing his empire's affairs. Shangdu would no longer suffice as the capital, given its remote location relative to the North China Plain, and in 1267 he ordered the construction of a new capital, Dadu, where modern Beijing stands. In the history of nomadic and semi-nomadic peoples of continental East Asia, including the Mongols, permanent walled capitals tended to function as centers from which

[352] See: Ibid, pp. 422-29; and Dardess, *Conquerors and Confucians,* pp. 7-9.
[353] Allsen, "The rise of the Mongolian empire," p. 424.
[354] Rossabi, *Khubilai Khan,* pp. 57-8.

rulers governed agricultural regions. The Liao and Jin states managed their respective empires with multiple capitals – five in the case of Liao – an innovation borrowed from the Balhae people of northern Korea/Manchuria. No distinction existed between the civil and military administrations of these capitals, and nomadic rulers, including the Mongols, often moved their court from one city to the next, either to rotate the center of power or maintain seasonal migration patterns crucial for the pasturage of horses.[355]

Khubilai's decision to move his capital from Shangdu to Dadu followed some of this historical precedent. The site itself was the location of the Liao "Southern Capital" (*Nan-ching* 南京)[356] and the Jin "Central Capital" (*Zhongdu* 中都), and under those regimes it had served as the administrative center overseeing the sedentary agricultural regions of northern China. In this sense, the movement of the capital to Dadu indicated that Khubilai, now *kaghan,* imagined "his" empire as encompassing both Northern China and Mongolia. Perhaps most importantly, this decision moved the center of the Mongol world into the region where Khubilai held the most military and political power, his appanage. From Dadu, he could draw upon the resources of China while keeping tabs on Mongolia, from which the greatest political threats against his rule spoke.[357] John Dardess summarized the problems facing Khubilai upon his ascension to the throne of *kaghan:* "Was it more advantageous to control the agrarian regions from a power center in the steppes, or to control the steppes from a power center in the agrarian realms?"[358] In Dardess' analysis, Arigh Böke represented a Chinggis Khan-style political order that wished to

[355] Isabelle Charleux, "The Khan's City: Kökeqota (Höhhot) and the Role of a Capital City in Mongolian State Formation," in *Imperial Statecraft: Political Forms and Techniques of Governance in Inner Asia, Sixth-Twentieth Centuries,* ed. David Sneath (Bellingham: Western Washington University Center for East Asian Studies, 2006), pp. 181-9; and Endicott-West, *Mongolian Rule in China,* pp. 3-15.
[356] This paper renders the Liao "southern capital" in the Wade-Giles form, *Nan-ching,* to avoid confusion with the first capital of the Ming Dynasty and the modern city of Nanjing.
[357] Morris Rossabi, "The Reign of Khubilai Khan," *Cambridge History of China, Vol. 6,* p 455.
[358] Dardess, *Conquerors and Confucians,* p. 22.

preserve arrangements of power and resource extraction that benefited Mongolia, while Khubilai represented a Mongol empire based in, focused on, and more closely aligned with the political traditions of China. Khubilai's triumph over Arigh Böke quashed this contest temporarily, but did not eliminate the underlying problem completely. Instead, it created a tension between Mongolia and the Yan region that remained throughout the Yuan Dynasty, and in the mid-thirteenth century contributed to the centrifugal forces that tore apart the factional alliances keeping the Yuan state together, ultimately leading to the dynasty's collapse at the hand of peasant insurrectionists.[359]

The costs of maintaining Dadu were enormous. It served as the center for Khubilai's Chinese-style administration, and the farmlands around Dadu could not support its population of government officials and retainers.[360] Under the Liao Dynasty in the early twelfth century, the Nan-ching circuit on the same site (南京道) supported a population of about 100,000.[361] In the Jin Dynasty, Daxing prefecture (大兴府), which contained the city of Zhongdu, was home to 225,000 people.[362] In 1270 the population of Dadu circuit (大都路) was between 400,000 and 500,000, and by 1330 it had reached approximately 1 million, second on a global scale only to Hangzhou in southern China.[363] The Dadu/Beijing site does not reside on a river network naturally connected to southern China, and it is relatively far from the coastline (nearly 100 miles), so it was necessary for Khubilai to ship huge quantities of grain from central and southern China in order to feed his capital. This prompted him to order the re-dredging and

[359] Ibid, pp. 8-9.
[360] Ibid, p. 457.
[361] Wu Songdi, *Zhongguo Renkou Shi (Di San Juan): Liao Song Jin Yuan Shiqi* 中國人口史 (第三卷): 遼宋金元時期 (Shanghai: Fudan University Press, 2000), p. 180-1
[362] Ibid, p. 217.
[363] Ibid, p. 334, 588. The boundaries of Dadu circuit remained largely unchanged despite differences in administrative nomenclature, inherited from the Liao and Jin with few alterations. See: YS*, juan* 518, p. 1347.

reconstruction of the Sui-era Grand Canal, a project that required three million laborers and nearly a decade to complete.[364] In 1286, three years before the Canal was opened to traffic, the Yuan state shipped by sea to Dadu 300,000 piculs of rice, or about 23 million kilograms.[365]

Khubilai Khan formally founded Great Yuan in 1271, signaling that he intended to govern continental East Asia as a Chinese-style dynasty, complete with a bureaucratized administration, patronization of Confucian scholarly schools, reintroduction of Chinese monarchical rituals, state integration of Confucian political and moral ideals, implementation of agricultural policies, and a rationalized tax code that tempered the *ad-hoc* methods of extraction and authority commonplace in the pre-Yuan Mongol empire.[366] He also oversaw the construction of Dadu along Chinese patterns of imperial urban planning. Never before had the Mongols built a city outside the Mongolian steppe. The basic plan was intended to invoke the capital of the ancient kings of the Zhou Dynasty, with a central square around which all walls were supposed to be equidistant. Three rings of walls surrounded Dadu, a protective arrangement modeled after Liao Nan-ching, Jin Zhongdu, and the Northern Song capital Bianjing (modern Kaifeng). The layout of Dadu's roads and placement of imperial temples for dynastic sacrifices followed a different architectural lineage, that of Chang'an, the Tang capital. Shangdu, Khubilai's former capital and the base from which he fought Arigh Böke, was constructed under the supervision of a Chinese architect, but it had been a fusion of Mongolian and Chinese styles.[367]

All of this indicates that Dadu was not only intended to be a decidedly Chinese city, but also a center of rule deep in the heart of Khubilai's power base, from which he could turn his

[364] Rossabi, "The Reign of Khubilai Khan," pp. 455, 477-8.
[365] YS, Khubilai year 26, p. 319.
[366] Rossabi, "The Reign of Khubilai Khan," p. 418.
[367] Nancy S. Steinhardt, "The Plan of Khubilai Khan's Imperial City," in *Artibus Asiae,* Vol. 44, No. 2/3 (1983): pp. 137-158; and Nancy S. Steinhardt, "Imperial Architecture under Mongolian Patronage: Khubilai Khan's Imperial City of Daidu," Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard University, 1981.

attention to China while marginalizing Mongolia and maintaining a watchful eye on it as a source of political challenges. If Shangdu served as a bridge between the Mongol and Chinese worlds, then Dadu firmly placed Khubilai's regime in China. In the *Yuanshi,* the *History of the Yuan* written in the early years of the Ming, Khubilai's movement of the capital is frequently associated with the reunification of China and the creation of proper offices.

> 中統元年，世祖遷都中興，始置宣慰司都元帥府.
>
> In the year of unification, Khubilai Khan moved the capital and [initiated] a resurgence, beginning with the establishment of the Pacification Commissions.[368]

The association of bureaucracy with the Yuan did not extent to the Liao or Jin, however, indicating either a desire on the part of Ming court officials to match their dynastic predecessor with "proper" civilization, or a special observance of Khubilai Khan as an enlightened monarch in the Confucian sense:

> 大都路，唐幽州范陽郡。遼改燕京。金遷都，為大興府。元太祖十年，克燕，初為燕京路，總管大興府。太宗七年，置版籍。
>
> 世祖至元元年，中書省臣言：「開平府闕庭所在，加號上都，燕京分立省部，亦乞正名。」… 四年，始於中都之東北置今城而遷都焉
>
> In Tang times, Dadu circuit was called Fanyang county in You prefecture. During the Liao its name was changed to Yanjing.[369] The Jin moved the capital there and named the prefecture Daxing. In the tenth year of the reign of Yuan Taizu [Chinggis Khan], he conquered the Yan region and named the circuit Yanjing, and placed it in charge of Daxing prefecture. In the ninth year of the reign of Yuan Taizong [Ögedei Khan], he established a household registry.
>
> In the first year of the reign of Shizu [Khubilai Khan], the Central Secretariat suggested: "At the site of the Kaiping prefecture imperial hall, we gave it the name Shangdu [Upper Capital]. Yanjing, having separate provincial departments, also begs a proper title."… In the fourth year of Khubilai's reign, he began to construct the site of the modern city just northeast of Zhongdu, and named it Dadu [Great Capital].[370]

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[368] YS*, juan* 58, p. 2305.
[369] An alternative name for Nan-ch'ing.
[370] YS*, juan* 58, *dili, zhongshusheng,* p. 1347.

One hundred and thirty years after construction on Dadu began, another dynastic emperor moved his capital to the same site, and for similar reasons: the Yongle emperor of the Ming Dynasty.

2. THE YONGLE EMPEROR AND BEIJING

When the Hongwu emperor founded the Ming Dynasty, he established his capital at modern Nanjing in the Yangzi River Delta. Upon his death in 1398, his fourth son Zhu Di, stationed in what had been Dadu, now Beiping, was the most politically powerful of his enfeoffed sons, but he was not the designated heir. The eldest prince and heir apparent, Zhu Biao, had predeceased Hongwu in 1392, leaving Zhu Biao's eldest surviving son, Zhu Yunwen, to ascend the throne as the Jianwen Emperor. The new emperor and his court advisors understood the extensive military power that his uncles in northern China held, and perceived their status as a threat, while the enfeoffed princes sensed the weakness of the new regime. This tension manifested in the earliest days of the Jianwen Emperor's reign. In his first year on the throne, the emperor's court began to systematically dismantle the power of extant princes and laid out new rules to ensure future princes would not assume so much authority. The princes were barred from conducting civil or military affairs without orders, limited in how often they could leave their estates or visit other princes, and were forbidden from amassing additional soldiers without the express instructions of the court. Zhu Di had the most to lose from these stipulations, as he maintained the most important strategic estate in the Yan region, and had not only assumed command of the region's provincial armies, but also had attached numerous auxiliary units to his forces, including a regiment of Mongol cavalry.[371]

[371] See: Chan, "The Chien-Wen, Yung-Lo, Hung-His, and Hsüan-Te Reigns, 1399-1435," pp. 191-3.

Within a month of enthronement, the Jianwen Emperor took the first overt steps towards dismantling his uncles' positions. Hongwu's fifth son, Zhu Su, the Prince of Zhou (modern Kaifeng, Henan), was arrested and charged with treason. The emperor and his court shortly thereafter ordered the arrest of Zhu Fu, Bo, Gui, and Bian, the seventh, twelfth, thirteenth, and eighteenth sons, respectively.[372] Only Zhu Di's prominent and entrenched position stayed Nanjing's attempts at removing him as well. As these political maneuvers removed potential challengers to the Jianwen Emperor, Zhu Di began to build his own "court" of advisors, bureaucracies, and departments in Beiping.[373] Then, in 1399 Zhu Di launched a rebellion against the Jianwen Emperor and the court in Nanjing, ostensibly to remove the corrupting influence of the "evil advisors" at the emperor's side. The ensuing conflict raged for three years, until Zhu Di's armies defeated his nephew's forces and Nanjing surrendered. The fate of the Jianwen Emperor remains undocumented, but it seems likely he perished in a palace fire during the final days of the war.

We can see parallels between the two civil wars detailed above: the tension between the Jianwen Emperor in Nanjing (Yangzi delta) and Zhu Di in Beiping (North China Plain), and the tension between Arigh Böke in Karakorum (Mongolia) and Khubilai Khan in Shangdu (North China Plain). Both conflicts involved one party located in the original center of the empire, intent on maintaining the existing political order (Karakorum and Nanjing); and the other party located on the periphery, drawing resources, soldiers, and position from an established fringe power base. These challengers' peripheral bases had emerged from a deliberately decentralized arrangement of political and military power, first designed under an expansionist authority (the Chinggisid lineage and the Hongwu emperor) who created each empire's respective arrangement

[372] MS, Jianwen year 1, *juan* 24, p. 61.
[373] Mote, *Imperial China,* p. 584.

as a means of maintaining military security and expanding martial strength beyond existing borders.

Like Khubilai, Zhu Di assumed the mantle of emperor, or *huangdi,* once the conflict was behind him. He took the reign title Yongle, or "everlasting happiness." In 1403, the second year of his reign, he re-named Beiping ("Northern Peace") to Beijing ("Northern Capital"), creating a second center of power where he firmly controlled the "phantom" court he had set up there, and did not have to worry about hidden Jianwen loyalist holdouts who might have still felt resentment towards the usurpation. Historians have alleged that the Hongwu emperor also wished to locate his capital at Beiping in order to better monitor and command frontier armies, but his advisors may have dissuaded him from doing so.[374] Thus Yongle probably had several reasons for moving the capital: to consolidate his power base, to prioritize his father's imperial policies of security and expansion on the northern frontier, and to consolidate the bureaucratic apparatuses of the empire under his influence while reducing the influence of Nanjing's officials. Nanjing remained an auxiliary capital during Yongle's reign, but over the next two decades its status and administrative power vis-à-vis Beijing declined.

The logistical problems that Khubilai and his court faced in supplying Dadu had not changed in the century-and-a-half between 1263 and 1403. Largely intact but depopulated after the Yuan fall, Dadu/Beiping/Beijing remained far from the sea and difficult to supply. Now, under the Yongle emperor, it once again became the administrative center of a vast empire and needed to house the civil officials, departments, laborers, and military units necessary to staff, protect and maintain the city. The emperor forcibly relocated 10,000 households from Shanxi to fill out the city's population, and brought thousands of workers and artisans to construct the

[374] Chan, "The Chien-wen, Yung-lo, Hung-his, and Hsüan-te reigns," p. 237; also see: Chan, *Legends of the Building of Old Peking.*

necessary state structures. Grain shipments from the south were also increased, and the Yongle emperor, like Khubilai, had the Grand Canal redredged and rebuilt to streamline the delivery of food supplies.[375] The total costs associated with the movement of the capital and the construction of the Forbidden City, the Yongle emperor's palace, were so great that they drew criticism and protests from his own officials.[376] In the late 1370s to 80s, when the Yongle emperor was still the Prince of Yan, the population of Beiping prefecture (北平府) hovered around 190,000, much diminished from its mid-Yuan height of one million by the conflict of the Yuan-Ming transition.[377] When the Yongle emperor permanently moved the capital to Beijing in 1420, its population had reached 700,000.[378]

The strategic importance of the Yan region and Beijing was not lost on early Ming emperors. In one of his final imperial orders before his death, the Hongwu emperor emphasized the importance of the Yan region and Zhu Di's command of Beijing as integral to the empire's frontier defense. He dispatched a high-ranking official as a military commander to assist Zhu Di in maintaining defensive preparations:

> 勑左軍都督楊文曰兵法有言貳心不可以事上疑志不可以應敵為將者不可不知是也朕子燕王在北平北平中國之門戶今以爾為總兵往北平參贊燕王以北平都司行都司并燕谷寧三府護衛選揀精銳馬步軍士隨燕王往開平隄備.
>
> By imperial order to the commander of the Lefthand Army, Yang Wen: The Art of War says that if you have two intentions, you cannot serve your superiors, and if you doubt your will, you cannot face the enemy. A general must know these things. *My son is the Prince of Yan in Beiping, and Beiping is the gateway into the Central Kingdoms*. Now, you [Yang Wen], gather soldiers and embark to Beiping. With the military offices of Beiping, combine the three guards of Yan, Gu and Ning, select your best soldiers and officers, and follow the Prince of Yan to guard Kaiping.[379]

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[375] Ibid, p. 237-44.
[376] Tsai, *Perpetual Happiness,* p. 126-7.
[377] Cao Shuji, *Zhongguo Ren Kou Shi (Di Si Juan): Ming Shiqi* 中國人口史 (第四卷): 明時期 (Shanghai: Fudan University Press, 2000), p. 35; and MSL, Taizu, *juan* 66, p. 1246.
[378] Ibid, p. 218.
[379] MSL, Taizu, *juan* 257, p. 3715. Emphasis mine.

In this order, we see that the Hongwu emperor not only named Beiping as a crucial lynchpin of defense, but also Kaiping prefecture, the location of Khubilai Khan's first capital of Shangdu. The Hongwu and Yongle emperors had extensive geographic knowledge of the region as a center of military action. Beiping was the primary urban center of the region, and, while remote, could be resupplied with supreme planning and effort, while old Kaiping/Shangdu was on the transition zone between the agricultural Yan region and the steppe proper.[380] The Yongle emperor drew upon the resources of China in order to maintain his costly capital and launch military expeditions into the steppe. Beijing, like Dadu for Khubilai, was the fulcrum of the his political and military might, and the means by which he could both control China and manage military matters in the steppe world. If his campaigns into Mongolia had succeeded and he had fulfilled his father's visions of a dynasty that recaptured the entirety of the old Yuan, then Beijing, like Dadu, would have likely been the center of an empire that straddled both worlds.

C. YUAN MILITARY ORGANIZATION AND THE EARLY MING PERIOD

When Zhu Yuanzhang formally founded the Ming Dynasty and took the reign title Hongwu, he and his advisers faced the challenge of transforming his rebellion into a proper, functional imperial state. Early Ming state rhetoric, as we have seen in previous chapters and will see below, highlighted the Confucian source of Ming legitimacy and blamed the Yuan Dynasty's decayed morality and lack of civil efficacy as the causes of its fall. However, a century of Mongol rule had introduced structures of military organization that had proved to be extremely potent tools for conquest and pacification. The Mongol empire's expansion across Eurasia

[380] Chan, Hok-lam, "Exorcising the Dragon: A Legend about the Building of the Mongolian Upper Capital (Shangdu)," in *Central Asiatic Journal* vol. 55.1 (2011): p. 6.

disseminated effective military-bureaucratic structures and techniques of warfare that the Mongols' enemies and subjects rapidly adopted and deployed as Mongol authority over Eurasia declined. China under the Ming was no different. The Hongwu emperor appropriated numerous formal political structures that the Yuan itself had used to manage its occupying military forces. He also injected a martial ethos into a bureaucracy that was, in theory, governed by a newly liberated Confucian gentry. His son, the Yongle emperor, continued Hongwu's martially-focused policies and political arrangements in an effort to maintain a militarily powerful empire that could ensure its own security and launch campaigns into the Mongolian steppe.

1. MILITARY ORGANIZATION SYSTEMS: *WEISUO* AND *TUNTIAN*

The bloody campaigns of the Ming founding years help explain the development of the military situation on the northern frontier and how that situation evolved over the first five decades of the dynasty. Prior to the Ming founding, the Hongwu emperor commanded an enormous number of troops, and those numbers swelled as he defeated his rivals and accumulated resources and territory. Once he had defeated the last Yuan armies in China, mass demobilization of his forces might have caused considerable social unrest, but the taxes required to support a large peacetime army would have been an onerous burden on the peasantry.[381] The emperor and his advisors appropriated two military organizational systems from the Yuan experience, *weisuo* and *tuntian,* to reorganize and sustain the hundreds of ad-hoc rebel units that were to function as the formal Ming army.

Weisuo (literally: guard garrison) was a method of formally structuring the military into distinct and regular command units. It divided the military into groups of 5,000 to 5,600 men

[381] Dreyer, *Early Ming China,* p. 65.

called guards, or *wei*, which were subdivided successively into *qianhu suo* units of 1,000 to 1,120 men, *baihu suo* units of 100 to 112 men, 2 *zongqi* banners, 10 *xiaoqi* sub-banners, and 10 man squads.[382] In the 1350s and 60s, during the late Yuan rebellions, the future emperor's military was largely made up of disaffected peasants and of soldiers enlisted from the ranks of defeated enemies. However, enemy commanders who surrendered to Hongwu often did so on the condition that they retain their soldiers. Thus surrendered units and their leadership were a "nontransferable corps of regimental officers," inflexible and with little personal loyalty to the Hongwu emperor when he and his court advisers were still building the Ming state.[383] He had to win the loyalty of his subordinate commanders through continued success and victory.[384] Once his rebellion had begun to consolidate and operate more as a state than as a rebellion, the Hongwu emperor gained the authority to reorganize the military along formal lines. In 1363 when the future emperor defeated and killed a major rival, another anti-Yuan rebel warlord Chen Youliang, the pre-Ming rebel state annexed the rich and populous territory on the upper Yangzi River. Thereafter he could conscript armies far larger than those that remaining warlord states could bring to bear. As a result the Hongwu emperor began to adapt the *weisuo* system to his soldiers in 1364, and in 1365 moved to annex the densely populated Yangzi River Delta, where the warlord Zhang Shicheng ruled. By 1367 Ming armies had eliminated Zhang and all Chinese rivals south of the Yangtze. The *weisuo* system itself "arose from the need to establish regular procedures for processing the large numbers of troops gained [through conquest],"[385] and Hongwu's complete victory over his rivals both generated from and enabled its use. Chen Youliang's defeat gave the Hongwu emperor the prestige and men he needed to enact a major

[382] Ibid, p. 78.
[383] Ibid, p. 77.
[384] Peter Lorge, *War, Politics and Society in Early Modern China, 900-1795* (New York: Routledge, 2005), p. 103.
[385] Dreyer, "Military origins of Ming China," p. 104.

formal reorganization like the *weisuo* system, while incorporating the populous Yangtze Delta region required such a thorough reorganization.

Supplying the early Ming armies required millions of piculs of rice annually; it was expected that one picul (about 71.5 kilograms in Ming measurements) would feed one soldier for one month.[386] Given the estimated size of the Ming military in the 1390s at 1.2 million men, this would amount to a total yearly consumption of 14,400,000 piculs of rice, or 1.03 billion kilograms.[387] This would have likely been an inordinate burden on the farming peasants of China, particularly in the war-torn and depopulated north. The Ming state organized most of its soldiers into farming colonies, called *tuntian* (literally: soldier-farming), an organization in which the state military commissions assigned each *wei* of the *weisuo* system state-appropriated farmland. Out of every ten soldiers, 5-8 farmed at any one time, while the remaining 2-5 men remained on active duty. This system functioned with reasonable results and the *wei* guards produced enough foodstuffs to support themselves.[388] Naturally, logistical preparations for offensive campaigns necessitated additional levies, but *tuntian,* as the early Ming state's solution to the taxation problem, allowed the Ming under the Hongwu emperor to maintain a powerful and reasonably fiscally responsible military during the first half of his reign.[389]

Neither the *weisuo* nor the *tuntian* systems were Ming inventions. *Weisuo* came about during the Yuan as bureaucratized version of Chinggis Khan's decimal organization of his soldiers. Its structure, already tried and tested, served the purposes of the Hongwu emperor, who could employ former Yuan technical experts familiar with how it functioned. When the Mongols

[386] MSL, Taizu, *juan* 56, p. 1089.
[387] Dreyer estimates that the military registers were inaccurate and the total strength of the Ming military was probably five-eighths of its recorded strength, or about 750,000. This would mean the Ming military's annual rice consumption in the 1390s may have been closer to 644 million kilograms, still a substantial amount.
[388] Cheng Liying, "Mingdai bingzhi de shanbian yu caizheng zhichu guanxi shulun," in *Junshi Jingji Yanjiu* 6 (2006): p. 71.
[389] Wei Zhanbin, "Zhu Yuanzhang de fangbian sixiang jiqi dui Mingdai fangbian de yingxiang," p. 80.

conquered the Southern Song, they left civilian systems of government intact in southern China but completely replaced and supplanted old military structures. The Jurchens had done the same when they conquered North China in 1127, as would the Manchus in their conquest of the Ming in 1644.[390] Organizing all of the dynasty's armed forces on *tuntian* farmlands was a Yuan innovation. The Han and Tang dynasties had also maintained military colonies similar to *tuntian*, but only on the frontiers. Jurchen Jin generals individually organized *tuntian* systems but no central state initiative required or encouraged its military commanders to do so. The Yuan state organized all of its soldiers stationed in the agricultural regions of China on *tuntian* military farms. The Ming recycled *tuntian* to ease the burdens of military demobilization and grain production across the empire.[391] Furthermore, the state labeled households that supplied soldiers as "hereditary households," and a soldier's descendants were also obliged to serve in the military. The whole system was designed to be as self-sufficient as possible and to perpetuate the conscription of soldiers over several generations.

2. BUREAUCRATIC SYSTEMS: MILITARY PATHS TO OFFICIALDOM AND HIGH OFFICE

Song Dynasty-style meritocratic bureaucracy did not survive under the Yuan. While Confucian-educated literati maintained a measure of social status during the Yuan, they no longer held a monopoly on high court positions. As we saw in Chapter 2, Southern Chinese in particular were denied access to any but the most lowly of official posts, and military and pragmatic concerns became the bedrock for state personnel positions. The willingness of the Mongols to fill posts with clerks, military officers, and other technical experts who did not necessarily have formal

[390] Taylor, "Yuan origins of the Wei-so system," p. 24.
[391] Liew, *Tuntian Farming System of the Ming Dynasty*, 82.

Confucian education fundamentally changed paths to officialdom in China. When the Ming Dynasty defeated and supplanted the Yuan, it appeared as though the Hongwu emperor would return educated Confucian elites to the pinnacle of power. Nominally, this did occur, but the existential importance of an experienced body of military officers to maintain dynastic security ensured that military commanders remained influential and well-rewarded for the first fifty years of the dynasty.

As we have seen, Yuan administration did not functionally separate military and civilian offices or affairs, and throughout the century of Yuan rule military prestige remained an important avenue to official service.[392] The Yuan position of *darughachi* (governor of a *darugha*, a centrally-managed territorial unit of the Mongol Empire, particularly in southern China) began in pre-Yuan years as a loosely defined lower army office obtained through standard military advancement. By the Yuan imperial period it had transformed into a civilian office (in theory open only to Mongols and Central Asians), its holders tasked with governing counties alongside Chinese magistrates. However, one could still access the *darughachi* office through military accomplishment or by demonstrating knowledge of military technology.[393] Imperial decree also permitted *darughachi* to carry weapons while Chinese magistrates could not, though the extent to which this decree was enforced is questionable (perhaps because in later years both Han Chinese and Mongols staffed *darughachi* offices).[394] Similarly, the branch secretariats (*xing zhongshusheng*), officials who oversaw the macropolitical affairs of multiple provinces, possessed both civilian and military responsibilities and managed the logistical matters of

[392] Endicott-West, *Mongolian Rule in China*, pp. 9, 74-5.
[393] Ibid, p. 75.
[394] Endicott-West, "The Yüan government and society," p. 595.

imperial garrison troops.[395] The Mongols themselves placed a premium on those with practical knowledge and skills rather than Confucian bureaucrats. Therefore, the most common routes to official career ran through the military and clerkly professions.[396]

Another method for attaining office was through recommendation privilege, known as *yin*, which was usually exercised by high-ranking officials who nominated family members, friends, or protégés to lower official positions. Despite the suggestions of his Confucian court advisers, Khubilai Khan did reintroduce the examination system, and it was not reinstated until 1313 under Yuan Rezong (Buyantu Khan, r. 1311-1320). This allowed the practice of *yin* to become widespread and entrenched, primarily because its patrimonial and nepotistic appointment practices meshed well with Mongol social, economic, and political customs.[397] The Yuan court exempted Mongols from *yin* nomination requirements (usually apprenticeship), and both Mongols and Central Asians could legally forgo the exams altogether once they were reinstated. The Yuan government restricted direct hereditary inheritance to offices to ensure established Chinese literati families would not monopolize posts. However, Chinese of all origins probably outnumbered Mongols in the government simply because Mongols only made up a small fraction of the Yuan Dynasty's population.[398] Native Chinese aspirations to office remained intact even after the Mongol conquest despite the fact that it was more difficult to exploit standard paths via exhibition of Confucian values.[399] Given the existence of alternate avenues to civilian office, traditional paths to officialdom were thus underused. The military

[395] Yuan administrative levels in descending order were as follows: branch secretariat, circuit (*dao* 道), route (*lu* 路), prefecture (*fu* 府), subprefecture (*zhou* 州), county (*xian* 县).
[396] Endicott-West, *Mongolian Rule in China,* p. 111.
[397] Ibid, p. 65.
[398] Estimates vary, but there seem to have been about 400,000 Mongols in China after the conquest of the Song Dynasty, or 3% of the total population.
[399] Ibid, p. 85.

nature of both low and high office allowed those with martial expertise to quickly advance within the bureaucracy.

The Hongwu emperor had the opportunity to realign the Ming government along more traditional Confucian lines, but the Ming bureaucratic apparatus bore striking similarities to its Yuan counterpart. As mentioned previously, the Hongwu emperor's authority was entirely dependent on continual military success until he defeated the other major rebel leaders active in the last years of the Yuan. Once assured of his supremacy in the Yangtze region, he initiated deep reforms designed to reorganize his state into a full-fledged imperial dynasty. He could, and did, set about ordering a disordered world. After he founded the Ming Dynasty he issued a decree:

> 天必命中國之人以安之夷狄何得而治哉予恐中土久汙膻腥生民擾擾故率群雄奮力廓清志在逐胡虜除暴亂使民皆得其所雪中國之恥爾民其體之如蒙古色目雖非華夏族類然同生天地之間有能知禮義願為臣民者與中夏之人
>
> How can Heaven necessarily order the people of China to use peace to bring order to the barbarians? I feared that China's territory has long been soaked in the rank odor of sheep flesh [i.e. corrupted by barbarian customs], causing distress to the people. Thus I led heroes and spared no effort to sweep these things away. My aspirations resided in expelling the barbarous enemy and quelling rebellion, and allowing the people to wipe out China's shame. The Mongolians and Central Asians – although they are not people of China – are nonetheless also born between Heaven and earth, and among those who can know righteousness and wish to become subjects, fostering them is no different from fostering the people of China.[400]

It appeared that Hongwu believed that Mongol customs were responsible for the late-Yuan chaos and collapse, and that those customs constituted a "shame" (*chi*) that required removal. Before he founded the Ming Dynasty Hongwu had turned to Confucian scholars for learning and guidance. As he gained power in the south many scholars saw him as the one ruler capable of

[400] MSL, Taizu, *juan* 26, p. 404.

reestablishing order amidst late-Yuan chaos.[401] He eagerly sought out Confucian advice and asked questions about proper methods of governance. When he became emperor, he professed his desire for a return to pre-Yuan models. His words were not, on the surface, empty: once in power he established a nine-rank system of officials similar to the one used during the Tang Dynasty and gave his government institutions Han and Tang labels. In many cases he even decided that returning to Han and Tang models was not sufficient, and that the pre-imperial Zhou Dynasty should serve as the ideal, a goal to be accomplished through the "restoration of antiquity" (*fugu*).[402] He stylized himself a sage-king of the ancient sort and often spoke of correcting the world and the role of Confucian scholars as teachers and educators.[403]

The emperor's proclamations indicated he would transform his regime into a civil bureaucracy governed by officials drawn from the Confucian community, but in 1370, after he established Ming control over the North China Plain, he granted his top military generals noble titles and formalized their official status. This stratum of military nobles, which we briefly touched upon in the previous section, also possessed state responsibilities. In addition to the nobles' standard military obligations, the Hongwu emperor expected them to establish and manage *tuntian* colonies, organize famine relief efforts, and inspect the regions they governed. They all reported directly to the emperor. Hongwu placed other military men in top levels of civilian administration throughout the early Ming, and assigned those with experience from the mixed civil-military Yuan state to official posts. He saddled the commanders of the chief *wei* guards with administrative tasks. Hongwu's institutions, including the nine ranks, took after Yuan models of officialdom, and sons could inherit the military officer ranks of their fathers in

[401] Farmer, *Zhu Yuanzhang and Early-Ming Legislation*, pp. 5, 28.
[402] Dardess, *Confucianism and Autocracy,* p. 195.
[403] Bol, *Neo-Confucianism in History*, pp. 145-6.

the Yuan fashion. He also rewarded and promoted former Yuan generals who surrendered to his forces.[404]

The early Ming state recycled a Yuan frontier prefectural system, known as *tusi* (土司, "indigenous office"), in which the Ming emperors granted formal Ming titles to local leaders of non-*hua* ethnic groups living on the edges of the empire, in exchange for nominal submission. The Mongols had adapted *tusi* from a similar Tang-Song system, *jimi fuzhou* (羈縻府州, "horse and bridle government").[405] The Yuan differentiated operation and acquisition of *tusi* offices for civilian and military *tusi*. Yuan and Ming military *tusi*, established in northern and southwestern frontier zones, were physically and bureaucratically remote from the central court. They had more power, autonomy, and greater freedom to pursue land policy. They possessed different customs and enforced different laws from interior provinces, and were generally accommodating to non-Han peoples and practices. These offices "were quite different from the *jimi fuzhou*" in their strict separation of military and civilian ranks, and were the foundation for Ming and Qing frontier offices.[406] "[T]he Ming empire," writes Edward Dreyer, "was thus Mongol in form and structure; it was only Chinese in rhetoric and personnel."[407]

Ming civil offices, naturally, were open to and dominated by classically educated elites, and there is no doubt that the opportunities available to Ming literati were much more numerous and liberated than those offered to those living under the Yuan. Although Hongwu had recruited many Confucian literati as tutors and educators, once enthroned he became increasingly

[404] MSL, Taizu, *juan* 56, pp. 1097-8.
[405] For an overview of the *jimi* system, see Skaff, *Sui-Tang China*.
[406] John E. Herman, "The Cant of Conquest: *Tusi* Offices and China's Political Incorporation of the Southwest Frontier," in *Empire at the Margins: Culture, Ethnicity, and Frontier in Early Modern China*, ed. P. Crossley, H. Siu, D. Sutton (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), p. 136-7. And: John E. Herman, "The Mongol Conquest of Dali: The Failed Second Front," in *Warfare in Inner Asian History, 500-1800,* ed. Nicola Di Cosmo (Boston: Brill, 2002), pp. 311, 328.
[407] For a detailed explanation of the Ming military in the 1360s and 70s, see Dreyer, *Early Ming China*, p. 82-7.

suspicious of the men who became his officials. The court literati demanded the imposition of ethical controls, and they maneuvered to act as the emperor's advisers. Hongwu viewed the government hierarchy in a different manner. He believed his officials existed to carry out his commands and provide occasional advice, not to guide him in all aspects of governance. This friction culminated in the infamous mass purges of the 1380s, during which Hongwu ordered the execution of some tens of thousands of officials and their families. He also abolished the highest civilian post of chancellor (*zaixiang*) and reorganized the government so that, "no one but him had significant personal power."[408] Scholars and officials had demanded a ruler who would reorder the post-Yuan world, and in the warlord years Hongwu had emerged as a strong figure that was capable of such a feat. Hongwu's purges remained well within what John W. Dardess calls the "ethically oriented world view that [the Confucian scholars] had developed in conjunction with [their] demands."[409] Thus Confucian scholars were unable to reassert themselves as a group, despite their desire to exert moral influence on the new emperor. Though they enjoyed a higher status than they did during the Yuan, they could only watch as the central government handed rewards and recognition – traditionally granted to effective civil bureaucrats – to the Yuan-like military elite.[410]

D. CONCLUSION

In the Yuan-Ming era, rulers made great logistical efforts to ensure the strategic security of their empires in China. Mongol appanages and Ming princedoms existed and operated under very

[408] Lorge, *War, Politics and Society in Early Modern China*, p. 109.
[409] Dardess, *Confucianism and Autocracy,* p. 12.
[410] Dreyer, *Early Ming China*, p. 87.

different formal arrangements, but the centrifugal tendencies of power in both circumstances ensured that Ming princes exercised levels of power similar to those of Mongol appanage-holders. The efforts of central imperial institutions – the Mongol *kaghans* and Ming emperors – produced mixed results and met with resistance when they attempted to limit the civil and military authority of these peripheral, autonomous territories. The necessity of maintaining order and security in crucial frontier zones, however, in both cases produced a simultaneous and opposite trend in which the center was somewhat willing to permit continued excesses of power. When power struggles did emerge from these tensions – as in the case of the conflict between Arigh Böke and Khubilai Khan, and between the Jianwen Emperor and Zhu Di – the peripheral victors relocated the center of imperial power to better suit their own political needs, strategic visions, and military institutions. Underpinning these transformations and tensions, the basic organizational structure of the military remained remarkably stable from the Yuan to the Ming. For the founding figures of each empire – Chinggis Khan's Yuan successors and the Hongwu emperor – the innovations of Chinggis himself and the early Mongol *kaghans* provided an effective military foundation upon which the Yuan and Ming both constructed dynastic armies. These conclusions suggest that the classic, Confucian-centric government in the early decades of the Ming Dynasty was built around much longer-term political and military phenomena: namely, the formalization of patrimonial military relationships, the new geo-strategic importance of the Yan region beginning in the tenth and eleventh centuries, and the crucial role of military experience (and the military officers who possessed it) in maintaining imperial security. In order to solve very similar strategic problems – managing security in northern China, and preparing to simultaneously rule two very different geographic zones – the Yuan and Ming employed similar military and state-building techniques

V. CHAPTER 4: POLITICAL RHETORIC, THE TUMU CRISIS, AND WALL-BUILDING, 1424-1505

This study has thus far concerned itself with the early "martial" years of the Ming dynasty, or the fifty-six years between its traditional point of founding in 1368 and the death of the Yongle emperor in 1424. If we mark 1424 as the "end" of the Ming "martial" period, then we must suppose that the era between 1424 and the Tumu Crisis of 1449 is a period of shrinking imperial vision as military preparedness declined. However, as this chapter argues, it is more accurate to say that Ming imperial visions of Yuan-style empire remained quite strong, while military ability did not keep up with those visions. This dissonance ultimately culminated in the Tumu Crisis itself, which I characterize as the meeting of far-reaching imperial visions and inept leadership. The crisis did not merely re-align imperial visions with military ability, but completely changed Ming attitudes towards the Mongols and open visions of empire. These cornerstones of Ming imperial rule were not latent Chinese Confucian attitudes suppressed by the charisma and military goals of the first and third emperors, but new formulations resulting from disastrous defeat and political crisis.

The Tumu Crisis had two major effects on Ming attitudes towards the Mongols living both within and without the Ming empire. The first is that the court language surrounding Mongols changed, a transformation reflected in two terms used to describe the Mongols: *hu* and *lu. Hu* 胡 (or *huren* 胡人, literally "*hu* people") was used in Ming discourse as a traditional descriptor of Mongols and other nomads who originated from the steppe belt immediately north

of China. *Hu* also applied to Mongols living under Ming rule, either as soldiers under Ming military command or as settled non-military subjects. As such, it could be considered an ethnic label, or a label that had become ethnic by the Ming era as discussed in Chapter 2. *Hu* did not necessarily have a positive or negative connotation beyond the fact that the labelled party was considered "barbarian." Being a "barbarian" in Ming discourse did not signify that the Ming court thought of the labelled subject as inherently hostile or a hopeless target of "civilizing" endeavors. Rather, it distinguished them from *hanren* 漢人, or settled subjects from the core provinces of the Ming empire who practiced agriculture. The second label, *lu* 虜, was much more derogatory and politically charged. *Lu* literally translates as "prisoner" or "slave," and was universally applied to steppe raiders and other Mongols who were part of steppe polities in conflict with the Ming state. When Mongol horsemen attacked the Ming frontier under the banner of the Northern Yuan, its fractured successors, or Esen's Oirat Mongol polity, Ming court records almost always label them *lu.* This was true for the Hongwu and Yongle reigns as well, but in those decades the Ming state applied *lu* to the targets of Ming campaigns, and relaxed its use when the frontier was relatively peaceful.

The court language used to describe Mongols remained ethnically and politically flexible between 1424 and 1449. Ming emperors and high-level statesmen consciously separated the terms *hu* and *lu,* usually using the former to describe submitted or subject Mongols, and the latter to describe Mongols living outside the Ming who conducted raids into Ming territory. When in the 1440s the Ming court realized the threat Esen posed, and when Esen defeated and captured the Zhengtong emperor in what came to be called the Tumu Crisis, both terms started to mean one and the same thing. The *hu* became *lu,* and the *lu* became *hu.* This reflected the Ming court's adoption of a siege mentality. Ming court bureaucrats immediately became suspicious of all

Mongols, including those who were nominally Ming subjects. The scholars David Robinson and Frederick Mote have observed the political consequences of this change, as described later. This chapter adds to the intellectual and linguistic angle, arguing that the change in court language used for Mongols marks the end of a territorially open and inclusive empire in the Yuan style.

The second major effect of the Tumu Crisis was the decision by Ming ministries and rulers to enact large-scale constructions of heavy fortifications along the frontier, the results of which we call the Great Wall. Scholars including Arthur Waldron, Leo Shin, and Mote have traced the development of Ming wall-building projects over the last half of the fifteenth century to a great degree. This chapter briefly adds to their contributions by pointing to the specific linguistic phenomena in Ming state orders issued to initiate wall-construction. In particular, these orders are overwhelmingly concerned with *lu* incursions in an almost paranoid fashion, and they specifically instruct local military garrisons to build fortifications out of brick, stone, and iron, rather than the more common rammed-earth method.

In order to build the foundation for these arguments, this chapter begins with an overview of the history and scholarship of defensive fortifications and wall-building in Ming China between 1368 and 1500. Then it offers a brief history of Ming military and imperial affairs between the death of the Yongle emperor in 1424 and the aftermath of the Tumu Crisis. Then I present an analysis of various excerpts from the *Ming shilu* on the subject of Mongols, *hu* and *lu,* raids, attacks, defensive preparations, and wall-building projects. While the selection of excerpts presented jumps from one reign period to another and covers a significant length of time, the excerpts reflect the current state of scholarship and add another crucial dimension to our understanding of the Ming dynasty's relationship to its Mongol subjects and enemies. This chapter is also intended to be paired with Chapter 1, which discusses Ming wall-building and

Confucian attitudes towards nomads as a Eurasian phenomenon, rather than a uniquely Chinese one.

A. WALL-BUILDING IN EARLY/MID-MING CHINA

As we discussed in Chapters 2 and 3, fortifications and military stations along the northern steppe frontier served as the backbone of political security in the Ming empire. Forts, passes, and the princely fiefs all served a role in a larger protective arrangement. As in much of the rest of early-modern Eurasia, forts served as supply depots for campaigning armies and functioned as strongholds from which stationed soldiers could extend force. In the early Ming dynasty, the most crucial forts were the eight outer garrisons, built far beyond "interior" lines of defense. Fortified passes functioned as vital chokepoints where it was difficult for nomadic militaries to apply their major advantages in speed and mobility. The princely fiefs were intended to function as extensions of imperial power and authority, and were expected to retain loyalty to the throne while also independently managing security affairs in their fiefs and regions of military command. Of all these security arrangements, the most visible among them, the Great Wall, did not exist in the early Ming era. The Ming constructed it in fits and starts in the late fifteenth century, in response to the declining ability of the Ming military to operate offensively in the steppe, and the increasing unwillingness of Ming statesmen to treat diplomatically with *lu:* Mongols. Locally-constructed models, like those overseen by the official Qiu Jun (1421-1495), served as successful models of static defense.[411]

[411] Leo Shin, *The Making of the Chinese State: Ethnicity and Expansion on the Ming Borderlands* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 159-166; and Perdue, *China Marches West,* pp. 63-4.

Given the importance of these fortifications, one of the more perplexing issues facing Ming historians today is why the Yongle emperor, the most militarily aggressive Ming ruler, ordered the dismantling of the eight outer garrisons that served as the first screen of protection against nomadic incursion.[412] Given that forts both protected and served as resupply points, the issue is a vexing one. My own speculation is that Yongle understood that on the flat plains of the Mongol steppe, static defense was an ineffective tool of war against mobile Mongol cavalry forces, and decided that a sparse network of resupply forts rather than a robust network of defensive structures was more cost-effective. As discussed in Chapter 3, the Yongle emperor went to great lengths to procure great numbers of warhorses for the Ming military, and to maintain the administrative structures necessary to feed, train, and deploy those warhorses. It seems likely that he knew that as long as the Ming military possessed a robust, mobile cavalry force to respond to Mongol raids, static forts would be less useful, and the state could forgo the expense and hassle of maintaining forts far afield.

Regardless of if my speculations on Yongle's motives are correct, we do know that large-scale fortifications like the Great Wall proved to be costly and cumbersome solutions to the problems of Mongol incursion, especially when compared to diplomatic solutions (again, like those the Yongle emperor deployed). It seems that the military lessons of the Yongle era were lost in the years following his death. What changed? To put it simply, the eroding efficacy of the Ming military precluded offensive campaigns. Then, in 1449, something dramatic happened: the Zhengtong emperor chose to personally lead an army afield to defeat the Mongol ruler Esen, but suffered a massive defeat. Esen captured the emperor, plunging the Ming court into a military and succession crisis. The installation of Zhengtong's half-brother as the Jingtai emperor staved

[412] Wang, *Harmony and War,* p. 116; Lorge, *War, Politics and Society,* pp. 65-66; Smith, "Impressions of the Song-Yuan-Ming Transition," p. 83; SSJSBM 77:814; SS 361:11

off political collapse, but the Ming military never again operated in the steppe with success. The Tumu Crisis marked a turning point in the military-intellectual ethos of Ming rulers and statesmen. After the crisis, the boundaries of the Ming empire solidified rhetorically and in reality, and the mental divides between the steppe and sedentary worlds congealed.

Part of this discussion surrounding the decline of Ming military preparedness is necessarily related to the treatment of the Ming bureaucracy, the Ming military establishment, and the Ming imperial lineage in modern political histories. Many historians (admittedly myself included) tend to fall into the trap of describing the levers of power in the Ming government and court as a spectrum, one that shifted away from the emperors and the military towards the civil scholar-bureaucracy over the course of the Ming period. David Robinson reminds us that the capital court was far more complex. It included scholars and soldiers, but also "religious specialists, palace women, and entertainers," all seeking influence and power.[413] Moreover, civil bureaucrats did not constitute a single coherent body, and different scholarly factions emerged and dissolved as interests changed and political alliances shifted. During the Hongwu reign, Beijing was not the capital but a frontier military city named Beiping, and the military's entrenched role as both the city's defenders and participants in imperial rituals ensured its officers and nobility could make their suggestions, ideas, and grievances known to Ming rulers. They were "visible symbols not only of the empire's power but also of the emperor's role as supreme military leader" whose purpose was to maintain security, project awe, impress foreign envoys, and remind scholar-officials of the connections between dynastic legitimacy and military strength.[414] The most visible legacy of the civil bureaucracy's influence on our perception of

[413] David Robinson, "The Ming Court," in *Culture, Courtiers, and Competition: The Ming Court (1368-1644),* ed. Robinson (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008), pp. 44-5.
[414] Ibid, p. 45.

Ming military and imperial attitudes comes through the court records that are also our most straightforward resource. Civil officials naturally compiled and transcribed these records, so a simplified view indicating a shift away from military *wu* rule towards proper, Confucian civil *wen* rule naturally jumps from the page.[415]

The takeaway is that no single, simplified narrative sufficiently characterizes Ming attitudes towards the steppe. As scholars have demonstrated over the past several decades, the Ming dynasty was certainly not isolationist. We also cannot bifurcate it into two distinct, opposing parts. Suggesting that the early Ming up to 1424 is strictly *wu*, or martial, and the later Ming after 1424 is strictly *wen,* or civil, conceals the complexities of court politics, of Ming-Mongol relations, of intra-Mongol relations, of imperial attitudes, and of the military situation on the northern frontier. We can still examine the highest court records, which are also the most rhetorically charged and injected with over simplified self-characterizations of the Ming empire and its relationship to the Mongols (and non-Chinese peoples), but as this study has done in previous chapters, we must cut through rhetorical language to uncover the structural underpinnings of Ming state policy. One way we can do this is to examine how supposedly timeless rhetorical language changed before and after periods of political evolution and major events. The intent of this chapter is to suggest that the era between 1424 and 1449 was one in which language was fluid, and only shifted in response to major crisis, rather than "reverting" to some level of "normal" Confucian rhetoric.

[415] David Robinson, "The Ming Court and the Legacy of the Yuan Mongols" in *Culture, Courtiers, and Competition,* p. 370.

B. MILITARY AFFAIRS AND THE NORTHERN FRONTIER, 1424-1449

The fifteenth century enjoys significantly less coverage in overviews of Ming history when compared to the tumultuous fourteenth century and the economically vibrant sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In the seventh volume of the *Cambridge History of China,* the Yongle reign (1402-1424) alone occupies seventy pages, while the combined reigns of Hongxi and Xuande (1424-1435) only occupy twenty-nine, the combined reigns of Zhengtong, Jingtai, and Tianshun (1435-1464) forty-eight, and the combined reigns of Chenghua and Hongzhi (1464-1505) sixty-two. Yet the period between the death of the Yongle emperor and the Tumu Crisis and its aftermath covers an era in which expansive imperial ideals remained strong, but military ability declined. In order to understand how Ming perceptions of empire became limited and bound, it is necessary to briefly outline Ming political and military history between 1424 and 1449.

The Hongxi emperor (personal name Zhu Gaochi) was the oldest of Yongle's sons. During the Yongle reign, Zhu Gaochi often took up the administrative roles of the ruler when his father was away on Mongolian campaigns. When the Yongle emperor died, Zhu Gaochi, now the Hongxi emperor, released the high official Xia Yuanji, a minister who Yongle had imprisoned for objecting to the Mongolian campaigns and oceanic voyages of Zheng He. This was the first indication that the Hongxi emperor's attitude towards foreign relations would break from his father's precedents. He also cancelled Zheng He's next voyage and closed down the steppe-frontier horse trade markets. The heavy taxes and labor requisitions imposed upon the northern provinces to pay for military campaigns were reduced. The only major military affair in which the Hongxi administration took great interest was unrest in Vietnam, which the Ming military had invaded and annexed during the Yongle reign. In 1425, the Hongxi emperor prepared to

move the Ming capital back to Nanjing, a move that would have clearly shifted Ming priorities away from the northern frontier and towards domestic issues, but his premature death halted those plans.[416]

The Ming dynasty under Hongxi's, successor, the Xuande emperor, (1425-35) continued the pattern of reorienting administration towards solving fiscal, bureaucratic, and infrastructural problems. Internal unrest further distracted efforts to reinvigorate the northern military campaigns. Upon Xuande's ascension to the throne, his uncle Zhu Gaoxu (Yongle's second son, who had military experience from steppe campaigns) launched an armed rebellion to take the emperorship for himself. The incident recalled memories of the Yongle emperor's own insurrection against his nephew, the Jianwen emperor, and indeed, Zhu Gaoxu repeated many of the charges Yongle had levied against Jianwen as justification for his rebellion. This time however, the incumbent emperor's forces defeated the insurrection, and Xuande retained the throne. Xuande himself took command of the army that defeated and captured Zhu Gaoxu, suggesting that personal imperial force and military prowess remained valid identifiers of the ruler's legitimacy. Vietnam, however, remained an intractable thorn, and after Ming armies suffered a series of defeats, the Ming state under Xuande's orders withdrew Ming armies from Vietnam, and later re-confirmed a member of the Lê dynasty as a formal king rather than an "administrator."[417]

The most important change to the Ming military that took place during the Xuande reign was the gradual growth of civilian control over the military apparatus. In 1430 the emperor ordered handpicked officials to tour frontier provinces and zones known for unrest, in an effort to reduce corruption and maintain central oversight in distant regions. At first these dispatches

[416] Chan, "The Chien-wen, Yung-lo, Hung-his, and Hsüan-te reigns, 1399-1435, pp. 276-84.
[417] Ibid, pp. 288-291

remained irregular, but they soon became a formalized part of the bureaucracy, and in conjunction with the slow erosion of the military nobility and the reduced independence of frontier commanders, the civil bureaucracy took an increasing interest in military affairs. At the same time the emperor took a personal hand in maintaining military cohesion and morale, parading troops in Beijing and bringing soldiers with him on hunting expeditions.[418]

In the Yongle era, the northern frontier had been a constant source of tension and diplomatic jockeying as the emperor and his bureaucrats played Mongol groups off one another and coaxed some into participating in the horse fairs. Even though the Hongxi emperor discontinued the horse fairs, the frontier remained stable and peaceful, in part thanks to the Yongle emperor's successful attempts to keep the Mongols disunited. Minor Uriyangkhad raids enjoyed little success, and the emperor himself again personally commanded a cavalry army that repelled one such raid near the capital. However, over the course of the Xuande reign Ming military commanders slowly retracted Ming frontier garrisons and defenses towards the cities, leaving critical strategic regions farther into the steppe like Kaiping unguarded, a process that increased Ming vulnerability to concentrated incursions.[419] It was also in the Xuande years that the Oirat Mongols, whose leader Esen would capture the Zhengtong emperor in 1449, became ascendant.

The Ming military's ability to operate in the steppe had deteriorated since 1424. The Yongle emperor's onerous campaigns into Mongolia had been costly on the depopulated north, and the *weisuo* and *tuntian* systems that had organized and maintained the two-million-strong

[418] Ibid, p. 292-4; Robinson, *Martial Spectacles,* pp. 55-6. 266.
[419] Chan, "The Chien-wen, Yung-lo, Hung-his, and Hsüan-te reigns," p. 299; Pokotilov, *History of the Eastern Mongols during the Ming Dynasty,* trans. Rudolf Loewenthal, *Studia Serica,* Series A, No. 1 (Chengdu: West China Union University, 1947), pp. 36-7.

Ming army eroded after the 1420s.[420] The expensive postal relay system, vital for communications during deep steppe campaigns, fell into disrepair, limiting the ability and willingness of the Ming court to dispatch expeditionary forces.[421] The reduction of Ming operations in the Mongolian steppe and interference in Mongol politics allowed the resurgence of Mongol power under new warlords, particularly the Oirat general Esen.

Xuande's successor, the Zhengtong emperor, inherited the Ming throne at eight years old, making him the youngest ruler of the Ming dynasty. His inheritance revealed structural weaknesses in the bureaucracy, which had heretofore relied extensively on the formal power and personal charisma of the ruler.[422] Thus during the emperor's formative years, an informal regency ruled, made up of his grandmother, high officials, eunuchs, and influential military commanders related to the imperial family. The classical account of Ming history suggests that, when the emperor came of age and various members of the regency passed away in their old age, the eunuch Wang Zhen gradually accumulated power and influence over the emperor. Those classic accounts suggest that it was on Wang Zhen's insistence that the emperor led his ill-fated campaign into the steppe, and that Wang's concern for his baggage train left the emperor's army out in the open when Esen's army attacked. Regardless of the personal motivations or faults of Wang Zhen, the Zhengtong emperor increasingly relied on – and trusted – his eunuch staff and bodyguards, an insular system that strangled meaningful communication between the ruler and his bureaucracy.

In the Zhengtong years, the Ming military dealt with numerous uprisings and periods of unrest in north and central China, largely owing to floods, epidemics, and famine. In southwest

[420] See: Liew, *Tuntian Farming System of the Ming Dynasty*.
[421] Harris, "Into the Frontiers: The Relay System and Ming Empire in the Borderlands," pp. 3–23.
[422] Twitchett and Grimm, "The Cheng-t'ung, Ching-t'ai, and T'ien-shun reigns, 1368-1464," in *The Cambridge History of China, Volume 7*, p. 305.

China, border states invaded Yunnan several times, requiring nearby provinces to dispatch soldiers and provisions for campaign in a logistically unfavourable corner of the empire. These campaigns did little to suppress unrest in the long-term, and were expensive. In the north, Esen's father died, leaving Esen the ruler of the Oirat Mongols. Under Esen, the Oirat broke the relative peace of the Xuande era and began raiding Ming territory, invading modern Xinjiang, and attempted to win over Mongol soldiers serving the Ming as garrison forces in Gansu.[423] After arranging marriages and alliances with other Mongol tribes, Esen brought the Uriyangkhad under his control, effectively eliminating the last Mongol group willing to treat diplomatically with the Ming dynasty.

While Esen's political power in the steppe grew, the military situation in the Beijing had declined considerably. As Twitchett and Grimm argue, the withdrawal of the defensive line under Yongle left northern China more exposed to incursion, especially in the absence of the early-fifteenth-century horse procurement system and offensive steppe campaigns, but given that the purpose of the withdrawal was to concentrate on defending the capital it "had therefore some sound reasons."[424] Between 1424 and the late fifteenth century, defenses were rather light:

> It must be remembered that at this time the border itself was marked only by a line of beacon fires which had been extinguished since Yung-lo times and was simply patrolled by Chinese cavalry. There was no Great Wall until the late 1470s; the only solidly built wall protecting Peking was the brick-faced city wall itself which, with its nine fortified gates, had been completed only in 1445.[425]

The armies responsible for defense of the northern Beijing passes were concentrated in Xuanfu and Datong, which in the mid-fifteenth century consisted together of some 125,000 soldiers. The main problem with Beijing's defenses was that they possessed no "defense in depth." The Ming

[423] Ibid, pp. 311-7.
[424] Ibid, pp. 320-32.
[425] Ibid, p. 321.

state had withdrawn many frontier garrisons, and many others were below-strength. Other than the armies in Xuanfu and Datong, the nearest reinforcements served in the mountains south of Beijing, and in Henan. Any potential defense of Beijing "depended upon quick and efficient counterstrikes in case of an enemy attack, a feasible scheme perhaps under efficient command … and competent leadership… In 1449, when an attack actually came, neither of these requirements was met."[426]

When Esen launched his attacks on the Ming, he hit three points: Liaodong, Xuanfu, and Datong. Court records tell us that when Ming forces at Datong suffered defeat, the emperor's eunuch Wang Zhen urged Zhengtong to lead his army afield, over the objections of his bureaucratic advisors. The army left Beijing in August with Zhengtong in command, and by early September suffered the defeat called the Tumu Crisis. The initial reactions in Beijing, and the negotiations between Esen and Beijing, encompassed ransom demands, territorial concessions, possible royal marriage between Esen and the Ming dynastic family, and even the Ming court's retreat to Nanjing (echoing the Song retreat during the Jurchen invasion). Powerful figures in the ministerial government, particularly the vice-minister of war Yu Qian, insisted on remaining in Beijing, enthroned Zhengtong's half-brother, and had many of Wang Zhen's eunuch associates executed. The new Jingtai emperor and pro-Jingtai court advisors immediately bolstered the defenses, soldiers, and military stockpiles of the capital region. Esen thereafter lost or abandoned his military initiative and retreated to the steppe, launching only raids into northern China. By 1450, Esen's captive ex-emperor had become something of a hindrance and was greatly reduced in political value. Esen released Zhengtong back into Ming custody, where the new Jingtai emperor ceremonially welcomed Zhengtong's return and subsequently put him under

[426] Ibid, p. 321-2.

luxurious house arrest. Seven years later, with loyalist officials and soldiers at his side, Zhengtong would launch a coup of sorts and retake the throne under the reign title Tianshun, or "obeying heaven."

C. CONSEQUENCES OF THE TUMU CRISIS

The Ming dynasty had not faced a political catastrophe of this kind in its eight decades of existence. Ming armies during the Hongwu reign suffered defeat when operating in the steppe, and the Yongle emperor's campaigns failed to achieve the goal of eliminating the Mongol threat entirely, but never before had a Ming emperor been captured, or the Ming capital threatened with conquest from an outside source (excepting Yongle's rebellion against the Jianwen emperor). Given the dissonance between Ming imperial visions and the capacity of Ming military forces, the sudden confirmation that Ming armies and Ming leadership were not up to the task of protecting the integrity of the polity sent shockwaves through intellectual and political circles. Imperial visions and dreams shrank in a matter of years, replaced with the rhetoric that mid-twentieth-century scholars attributed to isolationist attitudes.

The Tumu Crisis was carved into the memory of Ming bureaucrats, elites and rulers long after the incident itself, and became a byword for disaster, misfortune and caution, lamented as the "Tumu hardship" (*Tumu zhi nan* 土木之難), the "Tumu calamity" (*Tumu zhi hai* 土木之害), and the "Tumu defeat" (*Tumu zhi bai* 土木之敗).[427] It fundamentally challenged Ming intellectuals' relationship with Song Confucian precedents, called into question Yongle-era

[427] See for examples: MSL, Xianzong, *juan* 102, p. 1987; Xiaozong, *juan* 75, p. 1427; Xiaozong, *juan* 114, p. 2066; Wuzong, *juan* 17, p. 523; Wuzong, *juan* 122, p. 2461; and Smith, "Impressions of the Song-Yuan-Ming Transition," p. 84.

standardizations of Neo-Confucian texts and interpretations, and complicated the relationship between adherence to orthodox philosophical models and effective government.[428] As de Heer notes, into the sixteenth century the crisis was cause for political disturbance when the Zhengde Emperor (r. 1505–21), known for his impetuous behavior, wished to lead an expedition against the army of Dayan Khan, but met opposition from an official who was willing to disobey his emperor and physically block the emperor's passage in order to prevent a repeat of the Tumu Crisis.[429]

We can see the effects of the Crisis beyond the traditionally political sphere as well. The number of court artists in the imperial painting academy increased dramatically after the Crisis, and again after the Zhengtong emperor retook the throne from his half-brother in 1457. When Esen first captured Zhengtong, most of the emperor's men were massacred, including many non-military advisors and courtiers who had attended the mission, expecting no real battle or a quick victory. After Zhengtong's coup, many of those who pledged their support were granted inheritable status and honors, some of which included positions in the court painting academy.[430] Eunuchs at court suffered without imperial patronage, and an emboldened group of officials stubbornly insisted of the Jingtai emperor that he punish Wang Zhen's family, while others beat several court eunuchs to death.[431] The Crisis, then, called into question accepted imperial and Confucian norms, destabilizing Song-era philosophical precedents while at the same time cementing a theretofore fluid frontier along the lines of the existing fortifications and, by the end of the fifteenth century, the Great Wall itself.[432] We can conclude that the legacy of the Yuan

[428] Chu, "Intellectual Trends in the Fifteenth Century," pp. 5–7.
[429] De Heer, *The Care-Taker Emperor*, p. 125; and MTJ, juan 47, p. 275.
[430] Hou-Mei Sung, "Rediscovering Zhang Jin and the Ming Painting Academy," in *Archives of Asian Art* 63.2 (2013): p. 181.
[431] Mote, "The T'u-mu incident of 1449," p. 268.
[432] Ibid, p. 269.

imperium remained strong in the early Ming regime, and Ming ambitions to incorporate the former Yuan heartland lingered in the dynasty's founding decades, but after 1449 these ambitions largely dissolved.

The place of Mongols in the eyes of the Ming state changed to a considerable degree over the fifteenth century. We can identify three periods that, in broad terms, reflect different Ming attitudes towards the Mongols. The first, roughly encompassing the reigns of the Hongwu and Yongle emperors, was one of inclusion. As the previous chapters have argued, the Yuan dynasty enjoyed a significant place in Ming rhetorical historiography as a legitimate dynasty, one that Ming rulers measured alongside previous "Chinese" dynasties, and one from which the Ming drew its imperial ambition and imperial structures. Mongols served the Ming state as rightful subjects, and though they practiced crass customs and wore improper clothing, were nonetheless welcome into the new world-empire that the Hongwu emperor had rhetorically built. The second period, between 1424 and the Tumu Crisis in 1449, was one in which Ming rhetoric towards the Mongols and the Yuan stepped into a more familiar framework: Ming rhetoric treated Mongols both within and without the empire as simply one kind of "barbarian" among many, capable of cultural reform but often recalcitrant and disobedient inside the Ming geopolitical sphere. As we will see below, the language in Ming records concerning Mongols retained a "fatherly" tone, discussing the use of "punishment" and "forgiveness" in response to various "crimes" perpetrated by Mongols, including raids on the Ming frontier. The third era, after the Tumu Crisis in 1449, constituted a far more disjointed break than the shift from the first to second period around 1424. Suspicion about the motivations of Mongols exploded, and both emperors and bureaucrats argued that they were fundamentally incapable of reform. Perhaps most telling,

the use of the derogatory term "*lu*" 虜 ("prisoner," "slave," or "northern barbarian") to describe Mongols increased significantly.

Mote has argued that the Crisis "served to shake the Chinese government free from its incompetent and demoralizing eunuch management and to bring able and aggressive leadership to the fore."[433] It is more apt to say that the moment of catastrophe permitted some within the Beijing court to take executive action beyond their prescribed roles, and to overrule the personal power invested in eunuchs. The fact that central leadership "slunk" back into one of "incompetence" and "demoralization" with the Zhengde period suggests that the actions of vice-minister Yu Qian and his colleagues was a temporary instance of dynamic decision-making.

Past scholars have noted that the Tumu Crisis marked a shift in military policy from offensive to defensive strategies. The Ming "had behaved like the Yüan, or even the Han or T'ang rulers" but "incompetent application of that policy" resulted in disaster.[434] While this policy shift was almost immediate, the tangible formulation of it – the construction of walls – took quite a while. The first walls built as part of a coherent defensive strategy emerged in 1474, and the more robust walls that exist today were not laid down until decades later.[435] This shift towards an almost exclusively defensive posture gained intellectual support during the late fifteenth century. Qiu Jun 丘濬, an official who commented frequently on the recovery of the Ordos region, wrote a treatise on statecraft titled *Da xue yan yi bu* 大學衍義補 or "Supplement to the Extended Meaning of the Great Learning," a collection of commentaries on a text written by the Song dynasty scholar and statesman Zhen Dexiu (1178-1235). In his Supplement, Qiu Jun was perhaps the most vocal official to push for a fundamentally defensive strategy to deal with

[433] Mote, "The T'u-mu incident of 1449," p. 265.
[434] Arthur Waldron, "The Problem of the Great Wall," in *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 43.2 (1983): pp. 660-1.
[435] Ibid, p. 661.

Mongol incursions.[436] Both Zhen Dexiu's original work and Qiu Jun's commentary discussed defensive arrangements and fortifications: in Zhen Dexiu's case, to prepare against Jurchen attacks. Qiu Jun used the history and military situation of the Ordos region as a microcosm for the Ming dynasty's strategic problem. The Ordos was difficult to defend from northern invasion, given the lack of natural barriers between the Ordos and Mongolia, but it could be protected if the state constructed fortifications to "extend" the natural barriers, mountains, and rivers that protected other stretches of the northern frontier.[437] Reaching back to precedents established by Cai Yong, Qiu put forth that "extending" natural barriers with man-made walls simply confirmed pre-existing divides between sedentary and nomadic, between civilized and barbarian.

Qiu Jun had been a student in Beijing during the Tumu Crisis, and the political and military panic that had ensued after the Zhengtong emperor's capture influenced his perception of Ming-foreign relations, including with the Mongols.[438] Immediately after the loss of the emperor, Qiu wrote a treatise on the "defense of the boundaries between *hua* and *yi*."[439] Decades later, when he presented his Supplement to the Hongzhi emperor (r. 1487-1505), he argued that the rulers of *zhongguo* had always maintained territorial separation between the civilized and barbaric, and that past rulers had decided to avoid integration in the interests of maintaining peace. As we have seen in Chapters 1 and 2, Qiu's memory appears to be selective, as the Tang and early Ming regimes invested political time and energy into assimilative practices. Nonetheless, Qiu recommended that the Ming state maintain and expand the "natural" boundaries between the civilized *hua* and non-civilized *yi* and *man*, both in the north and the

[436] Waldron, *The Great Wall,* p. 112.
[437] Ibid.
[438] Leo Shin, "The Last Campaigns of Wang Yangming," in *T'oung Pao* 92.1/2 (2006): p. 122.
[439] Shin, *The Making of the Chinese State,* pp. 193-4.

south.[440] He argued that border troubles stemmed from the failure of past regimes to reinforce peripheral frontiers.[441] This attitude stands in stark contrast to the proclamations of the Hongwu and Yongle emperors, a shift so complete that, according to historian Leo K. Shin, "by the mid-fifteenth century the political confidence that had accompanied the rise of the Ming had clearly been replaced by an acute sense of vulnerability," largely thanks to the Tumu Crisis.[442]

There were certainly officials and emperors who clung to an assimilative or open imperial attitude. Yao Mo 姚鏌 (1465-1538), one of Wang Yangming's predecessors, argued for older *jimi* styles of "barbarian" management, including the retention of local chieftains and the gradual replacement of their rudimentary administrative structures with robust Ming-style bureaucracy.[443] The statesman Lü Kun 呂坤 (1536-1618) attacked the practice of wall-building, not necessarily because he believed in an open empire, but because he thought them ineffective and the ministers in charge of defense too preoccupied with maintaining a rigid border.[444] And as mentioned, the Zhengde and Wanli emperors maintained some level of militarist ethos, and the option to use offensive military force against Mongol nomads remained a tempting option. However, the prevailing feeling of empire had become less expansive and more limited.

Militarily, the Crisis formalized the defensive line of what would become the Great Wall. The state abandoned the remaining outposts in the steppe frontier region and withdrew to more geographically defensible regions. Societies living along the frontier developed an "atmosphere of tension" and became more militarized, as Qiu Jun's experience suggests. In Mote's view, anti-

[440] Ibid, p. 123.
[441] Ibid.
[442] Ibid, p. 121.
[443] Ibid, p. 124.
[444] Alexander Woodside, "The Centre and the Borderlands in Chinese Political Theory," in *The Chinese State at the Borders,* ed. Diana Lary (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2007), p. 17; and Chen Zilong, ed., *Huang Ming jingshi wenbian* (Taibei: Guofeng chubanshe, 1964), 416: 1-22b.

Mongol sentiment also originated in the last half of the fifteenth century. Mongols living in northern China were seen as less worthy of trust and respect, and the "anti-alien" and "anti-Mongol feelings" sometimes attributed to the rhetoric of the early Ming period in fact emerged only after 1449. These anti-Mongol attitudes were relatively new phenomena that were absent even during the Yuan era, but rather the creation of a new history and a new attitude towards the Yuan period in the minds of late Ming scholars. The revelation that northern China was extremely exposed in the face of a united Mongol polity was profoundly unsettling, and considering that the capital was situated right on the frontier itself thanks to Yongle's strategic policies, impacted the attitudes of those at the empire's helm.[445]

D. THE EVIDENCE FOR CHANGING MING RHETORIC ON MONGOLS, 1400-1449: *HU* AND *LU*

Beginning with the Yongle reign, Ming court language surrounding the Mongols was defined largely by two topics: raids and tribute. In the fourth year of the Yongle reign (1406), Zhu Su 朱橚 (d. 1425), Hongwu's fifth son enfeoffed as the Prince of Zhou, submitted a memorial to the throne on the problem of rebellious *huren,* or Mongols, near the horse market cities on the Gansu frontier. The emperor's response indicated that he viewed the problem as a minor one, and that his solution of using horse markets to placate the Mongols, and approaching the Mongol "younger brother" as an "elder brother" was the correct policy:

> 胡人難服易叛昔有降虜居大寧因邊將市馬拂其所欲即叛而去今西比諸胡兄盡心撫綏又屢…數年之間來者日眾邊境遂以無事今賢弟雖 … 此盖邊境安危所係賢弟已之可也.

[445] Mote, "The T'u-mu incident of 1449," pp. 269-71.

> The *huren* can be quick to revolt. In former times we invited submitted barbarians to settle on the frontier in Daning and [participate in] horse markets, thereby curbing their desire to revolt. Now, in the west we have defeated the barbarians, and in the manner of an elder brother have pacified them again and again. … In the intervening years, the barbarians have come to the frontier daily in great numbers. They are satisfied and have no cause to attack. Now they are worthy of [being called] a younger brother. … Closing the border is a matter of [balancing between] safety and danger. We can treat them like a younger brother.[446]

It is clear that the Yongle emperor viewed repeated military clashes and unrest among frontier Mongols as a problem, but not a cause for major concern. To close the border at the slightest sign of trouble would be a kneejerk reaction. Long-term security in the north was better achieved with a careful, diplomatic approach couched in the Confucian rhetoric of brotherly relations, alongside the massive military campaigns to punish aggression. This is in keeping with the attitudes, policies, and imperial visions of the Hongwu and Yongle periods, which imagined the Mongols as part of a greater Ming empire.

The horse-markets and Mongol tribute missions remained problematic throughout the early part of the fifteenth century, but again, the Ming court appeared to consider the problems that Mongols caused as relatively minor, in contrast with the later, post-1449 attitudes that viewed Mongols on northern frontier as a grave threat. The lack of immediate concern continued into the brief Hongxi reign, characterized by a report submitted by the Ming Ministry of War on the growing costs of hosting Mongol tribute missions to the capital:

> 他人馬來貢既名貢使得給驛傳所貢之物勞人運至自甘肅抵京師每驛所給酒食芻豆費之不少比至京師又給賞 … 此胡人慕利往來道路貢無虛月緣路
>
> They [Mongols] ride on a tribute mission, and declare they are bringing horses as their tribute. [Our] laborers must transport them from Gansu to the capital, supplying each with food, drink, fodder, and beans. The cost is not small. Then when they arrive in the

[446] MSL, Taizong, *juan* 59, p. 860.

> capital, we give them a reward. … These *huren* admire profit, coming and going along [the tribute] roads. There is not a month in which they do not have cause to travel. …[447]

The report goes on to detail the precise cost for each mission, reckoned in provisions and personnel. While the image this report paints of the Mongol tribute missions and their motivations is not flattering, it is also hardly politically alarmist, and only demonstrates concern on a financial level. Despite the fact that the Hongxi emperor's father had engaged in military campaigns into the steppe, it does not appear that the Ming court was seriously concerned with the security of the empire and the northern frontier. The use of the relatively neutral term *huren* suggests that the court did not consider the exploitive activity of the Mongols a new or unexpected development. The negative description of Mongol motivations as "admiring profit" (*mu li*) 慕利 falls within standard Confucian moral structures. Nonetheless, in the Hongxi emperor's single year on the throne, northern barbarians still had a place within the Ming political sphere: Hongxi permitted a troupe of seventy to come and pay respects at the tomb of Prince of Zhuang of Su 肅莊王 (d. 1419), who had been enfeoffed on the Shaanxi frontier.[448] This obeisance of a "barbarian" people to a Ming imperial price fit within the Yuan-style imperial sphere imagined by Ming rulers and officials.

We know that negative attitudes towards particular Mongol groups were not universal or entirely racial, because the *Ming shilu* contains entries through the subsequent Xuande reign that praise various Mongols serving the Ming empire, particularly in military fields. One such commemoration lauds the long service of a deceased Mongol officer named Huo Lidai 火里歹. The use of *huo* (lit: "fire") in the officer's Sinicized surname, and *dai* (lit: "evil, bad, wicked") in

[447] MSL, Renzong, *juan* 5.1, p. 158.
[448] MSL, Renzong, *juan* 9.1. p. 296.

his given name is commonplace for Sinicized foreigners, but his commemoration was quite positive and only mentions Huo's nomadic origins once:

> 本遼陽胡人初名火里歹及貴始改今姓名洪武中襲父職為新安衛千戶以功陞指揮同知永樂五年調甘肅備禦七年陞陝西行都司都指揮僉事八年充驃騎將軍從征北虜以功陞都指揮同知後復從征北虜洪熙元年陞右軍都督府 … 上遣官賜祭
>
> Originally a *huren* from Liaoyang named Huo Lidai, he reached noble status. In the middle of the Hongwu reign, he inherited his father's post as a *weiqianhu* commander in Xin'an [modern Henan], where he served with merit and was promoted. In the fifth year of the Yongle reign, he was transferred to Gansu where he defended [the region] for seven years and was promoted to regional commander of all military affairs in Shaanxi. For eight years he commanded soldiers, and led attacks on the northern Mongols [*lu*]. He was again promoted and brought on steppe campaigns. In the first year of Hongxi he was promoted to commander-in-chief of the righthand army branch… The emperor dispatches an official to confer sacrifices [upon his grave].[449]

This commemoration is one of the few Ming entries to use both *huren* and *lu* to describe the Mongols. It affixes the neutral *huren* to Huo, and the derogatory *lu* to the Mongol enemies against whom the Yongle emperor launched his campaigns. Here, *lu* does not carry a universal racial component, but more a political one, indicating the rebellious refusal of the independent Mongol tribes to recognize Ming suzerainty. It consciously separates the *hu* subjects who serve the emperor and the enemy *lu* who defy him.

In a sense, the disappointed language used in the post-Yongle court does reflect a more negative reflection of Mongols, a pattern of "soft" reversion to general Confucian rhetoric that permeates the Hongxi and Xuande records. Again, however, existential concerns are not apparent in these court entries. When the Xuande emperor ascended the throne, he cautioned against the "profit-seeking motives" of the "*yi* and *di*" who came to present tribute, and

[449] MSL, Xuanzong, *juan* 60, p. 1439.

suggested keeping a close eye on the frontier, but his overarching concern was still to reduce expenses and retain financial responsibility:

> 夷狄獸心難以德服其曰歸誠朝貢實皆慕利 … 來朝者或三年五年一至其餘悉且禁止則送往迎來免困民力府庫之財不至妄費
>
> It is difficult for barbarians to serve with moral virtue. They say they have recovered sincerity and come to present tribute, but in reality they covet profit … As for those who come tomorrow, or for the next three or five years or beyond, we must make [this matter of the treasury] clear. Moreover, we should prohibit those who come continually to seek profit from the national treasury. After all, it is not a limitless source of wealth.[450]

Such an attitude continued even during times of strife and conflict. When Mongol raids on the frontier increased, the Xuande emperor's language lamented the fact that the raiders had squandered the Yongle emperors "kindness," and focused on tribute exchange and the frontier markets as a source of both cooperation and conflict, but he specifically forwent the option of retaliating militarily:

> 我皇祖太宗皇帝大恩積有年矣朕即位以來上體皇祖之心加意撫綏屢敕邊將毋肆侵擾 … 今邊將屢請發兵勦捕朕慮大軍一出 … 良善之人必有受害者茲特遣人齎敕諭爾宜互相勸戒 … 朝貢往來相通買賣優游足給豈不樂哉
>
> My imperial ancestor Taizong [Yongle] generated great kindness over many years. Since I succeeded the throne, I have paid special attention to my ancestor's wishes, and repeatedly pacified the frontier. Yet harassment continues. … Now the frontier generals continue to ask me to dispatch an army, and I have considered this very carefully … [If I were to dispatch an army], many good people would become casualties. Thus I will dispatch a special envoy to present my orders, urging the soldiers to be on guard … When tribute comes and goes, and the [frontier] markets are bustling… how can the [barbarians] be unhappy?[451]

The Xuande emperor's "soft" reversion to classic Confucian rhetoric on the barbarians stretched to individual incidents, and did not reflect a feeling of imperial insecurity. Rather, it reflected a

[450] MSL, Xuanzong, *juan* 3, p. 67.
[451] MSL, Xuanzong, *juan* 58, p. 1373.

disappointment with the northern nomads and the continuing possibility of bringing them back into the fold of Confucian civilization. In 1431 a series of Mongol raids on Ming-controlled parts of southern Mongolia left several Ming subjects dead. Officials blamed the local commander, a Mongol named Kun Jilai 困即來, but the emperor passed off the raiders' conduct as stemming from ignorance:

> 固無知然事亦須審實遂敕困即來察之如果革古者等所為即追還之而宥其罪 … 彼既為盜不可復容宜驅而出之使歸本土仍戒約之再犯必不宥
>
> The barbarians are undoubtedly ignorant of proper proceedings, and we must investigate the truth of this matter [of raiding and plundering]. We shall order Kun Jilai to examine the incident, and if the culprits are found, to take reparations from the perpetrators and forgive them. … Those who stole cannot be allowed to repeat their crime. If they do, it is suitable to expel them and force them to return to their country. Repeat offenses cannot be forgiven.[452]

Examining the early years of the Zhengtong reign before the Tumu Crisis shows that this rhetorical pattern continues. *Huren* remains a relatively neutral term, and court-level concerns about the *huren* are primarily logistical, financial, and cultural, not related to military security or political suspicion. An excerpt from the pre-1449 Zhengtong period reflects the larger characterization of *huren* in court records. The excerpt below is an imperial order issued to a *qianhusuo* commander named He Fu, who oversaw Mongol soldiers in the Ming military who had been resettled in key military locations:

> 近制歸附胡人驗口給糧今年久弊滋多買漢人詐為己子冒支糧餉請令歸附年久已成家業者戶止一人給糧餘悉停止其所買漢人令歸本籍從之
>
> Strictly control the provisions given to *huren* who have submitted [and been resettled]. This year abuses have increased. *Hanren* have concealed this graft purchase of grain from army supplies. Tell those [*huren*] who submitted years ago and became merchants to halt this practice. [Even] if only one person has given away grain, then all must know that it is

[452] MSL Xuanzong, *juan* 89, p. 2044.

> prohibited. As for those *hanren* who purchased graft grain [from the resettled *huren*], they must return to their place of origin.[453]

While this excerpt may seem unremarkable, it suggests that cultural and proto-ethnic classifications inherited from prior dynasties remained a structural component of the emperor's vision of his realm. However, even as it distinguishes between *huren* and *hanren,* it also classifies them together as subjects of the Ming empire with the appellation *ren* 人, a suffix rarely applied to the more derogatory and politically-charged *lu.*[454] By classifying *huren* and *hanren* together, the emperor suggests that both are contained within his political power to issue imperial orders within the framework of Ming structural systems.

What happened to Mongols in China after the Tumu Crisis, and how did Ming attitudes towards Mongols transform? We can observe how the relationship between the Ming state and Mongols changed by looking for ways in which Mongol self-awareness about their place in the Ming empire changed, and also by studying how Ming court language about Mongols became more rhetorically negative. David Robinson has shown the former in great detail with examples drawn from political incidents and discussions in Beijing: in addition to becoming targets of suspicion by Ming intellectuals, Mongols serving in the Ming military and court became more acutely aware of their tenuous position. Thanks in part to the Hongwu court's attempts to entice Mongols to settle in northern China and accept the new Ming regime, large-scale migration of Mongols into Ming territory had continued throughout the first century of Ming rule.[455] Certainly, while some officials and intellectuals retained suspicion of Mongol subjects, it was not

[453] MSL, Yingzong, *juan* 69, p. 1329.
[454] There are some instances of *luren* 虜人 in the *Ming shilu,* particularly in the Yongle reign, but they occur less frequently when compared to the separate terms *huren* and *lu* until after the Tumu Crisis. Further study is required to understand what connotations *luren* might possess.
[455] David Robinson, "Banditry and the Subversion of State Authority in China: The Capital Region during the Middle Ming Period (1450-1525), in *Journal of Social History* 33.3 (2000): p. 533.

until the Tumu Crisis that suspicion boiled over into action. One Ming statesman, Liu Dingzhi 劉定之 (1409-1469) suggested that Mongols living in the north and those with court positions should be relocated, separated, and have their salaries and commensurate political influence reduced.[456] Liu directed many of these suggestions at Mongols serving in the Ming military. The long-term result was an increasing feeling of isolation and self-dependence among these court Mongols. In 1461, when a Ming general named Cao Qin launched an attempted coup intended to replace the newly-restored Zhengtong emperor (now Tianshun), numerous Mongol officers supported him because they believed Cao was more amiable towards Mongol interests.[457] Given that some of Liu's resettlement policies were carried out, including the resettlement of Mongol soldiers in southern China and the confiscation of the property of several Mongol officers, their decision to support Cao Qin made political sense.

In the *Ming shilu* entries following the Tumu Crisis, a "siege mentality" began to overtake discussions of Mongols and their fundamental ability to become civilized. The term *zei* 賊*,* which means "thief," "criminal," or "traitor," begins to appear much more frequently as a descriptor of Mongols, sometimes in the form of the compound *zeilu.* Immediately following the Zhengtong emperor's capture and his half-brother's enthronement as the Jingtai emperor, the panic that overtook the capital bled into the rhetorical language of Mongol relations:

> 近日遼東報聲息此必因徵調遼東軍馬其守將瞰境外一二達賊往來即詐稱虜寇數千犯邊以上其問調之軍甘肅寧夏大同宣府亦然且遇賊十餘人輒稱見賊數千 …
>
> 皇上臨御凡天下祀典並令有令脩舉矧今方將奮揚神武復仇雪恥滅彼賊虜以成中興之功 …

[456] Liu Dingzhi, "Jianyan bianwu shishi shu," *Liu Wenan zoushu,* in *Huang Ming jingshi wenbian,* ed. Chen Zilong et al. (1638: rpt. Taibei: Guolian chuban youxian gongsi, 1964), 48.8b-9a.
[457] For a comprehensive study of the attempted coup, see: David Robinson, "Politics, Force, and Ethnicity in Ming China: Mongols and the Abortive Coup of 1461," in *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 59.1 (1999): pp. 79-123.

> In the past few days, Liaodong [garrisons] have reported [the presence of Mongols]. This must be cause to recruit and transfer soldiers to Liaodong. The military generals guarding the frontier must carefully watch the border. Even if only one or two [Mongols] come and go, it may conceal an invasion of thousands of *lu* or more [i.e. as a scouting party]. They ask for additional soldiers. Gansu, Ningxia, Datong, and Xuanfu also make similar reports. If they meet several tens of them, it may conceal several thousand thieves [*zei*]. …
>
> [After hearing this report], the [Jingtai] emperor made sacrifices. He instructed the generals to exert themselves in the manner of great conquerors, to avenge [the Tumu disaster], and to extinguish the *zeilu,* thereby bringing about restoration.[458]

The term *lu* increases in frequency as a primary descriptor of Mongols. At the same time, while both *huren* and *lu* appeared as terms for northern Mongols during and after the Yongle reign, after the Tumu Crisis *hu* was increasingly in conjunction with, and not separate from, *lu* and *zei,* suggesting that Mongols were inherently criminals and enemies of the Ming state:

> 敕言備邊 … 築立團堡鑿塹置橋一聞有警驅人畜入堡虜雖來寇將無所掠此不戰而勝之之道也又胡虜技藝雖便於騎射而謀畧終下於漢人莫若 … 又北虜入寇必以中國被虜之人為鄉導臨敵之際必令當先我軍殺傷多中國之人宜於胡人經行要路立牌時諭若有漢人被虜能棄甲來歸或斬首來獻或密報虜情者重加官賞 …
>
> [An imperial order to the commanders of the Shanxi passes:] Prepare the frontier. Construct earthworks and moats and install a bridge. When you hear news of an attack, drive your men and livestock into the fortifications. Although the *lu* will come to invade, they will have no means to take over the garrison. This is the way of avoiding combat but achieving victory. Although the *hulu* are skilled in horseback archery, they cannot plan in the manner of *hanren.* … Moreover, when the northern *lu* invade, they muse use captive Chinese to guide them to their enemies, and will kill many of my soldiers. We should set up barricades along their main routes [of invasion]. If captive *hanren* can discard their armor and return to us, or kill their captors and flee, or transmit secret reports on the situation of the *lu,* they shall be promoted and rewarded. …[459]

[458] MSL, Yingzong, *juan* 188, usurpation appendix 6 (*fei di cheng li wang fu li di liu*), Jingtai year 1, p. 3807. "Usurpation appendix" refers to the Jingtai reign, as these records were compiled after Zhengtong launched his coup from house arrest to re-take the throne]
[459] MSL, Xianzong, *juan* 170, p. 3088.

This passage is indicative of the increasingly common practice of heavily fortifying key locations along the northern frontier, such as the Great Wall, and it also distinguishes between *hanren* and *lu* in a stark manner. No longer are the *hu* "people" (*ren*), but rather they are barbarians who kill, invade, and take Chinese captive. Interestingly, this passage refers to captive Chinese with *lu* ("prisoner") but as an adjectival indicating an unwilling status (*zhongguo bei lu zhi ren* 中國被虜之人, or "Chinese who have been enslaved") rather than a title or name as it is applied to Mongols. This language carried over to post-Tumu state discussions of defensive preparations, and the planning of the first brick-and-stone fortifications that eventually became the Great Wall:

> 己卯六部會議甘肅宣府巡撫官所陳事宜一莊浪西寧二衛乃虜必犯之地見儲粮芻不足三月之用雖已召商中塩緣其地荐罹災傷粮值騰踊無應召者第恐秋高馬肥胡人入寇 …
>
> … 關東水口可通人馬北虜近欲從此入貢不為無意一旦竊發長驅為患非小請令分守參將督守備官軍修築墻壕務在高厚闊深仍以磚石甃塞關東水口量留小門或間以銕窗石條則地方可保無虞 …
>
> A meeting of the six Ministries discussed the arrangements in Gansu, Xuanfu, and Xunfu. The two guards at Zhuanglang and Xining will certainly be where the *lu* invade. Provisions there are insufficient for three months, even though they have called for salt merchants [to provide additional provisions]. As a result, commodity prices have soared. The [merchants] who do not respond to these calls are afraid that the *huren* will invade in autumn. …
>
> The waters in the northeast are still passable by men and horses. The northern *lu* nearby are desirous [of profit], and their attempts to enter to bring tribute are not accidental. We must expel them to prevent robbery. [We] order the military garrisons there to build walls and trenches in appropriately high and deep terrain with brick [i.e. as opposed to rammed earth] and wall up the passes. In the places along the water where gaps remain, construct [barriers] with iron and stone. In this way the region can be protected, and [its people] will no longer worry.[460]

[460] MSL, Xianzong, *juan* 79, p. 1527.

In the later years of the fifteenth century, the derogatory use of the label *lu* on northern Mongols briefly declined, corresponding with a short period of relative peace and stability on the frontier during the Hongzhi period (r. 1487-1505). The same Mongols who captured the Zhengtong emperor under Esen and conducted numerous raids into Ming territory had been *lu* immediately following the Tumu Crisis, but became *huren* again in the 1490s.

> 西域胡人成化中嘗進獅子等獸為中國害今聖明臨御復 … 皇上嗜好冀遂其往來互市之圖若不抑之於始四夷聞之必相率來貢蠹耗中國無有窮已乞如周武王 … 漢文帝 …
>
> In the Chenghua reign, the western *huren* tried to encroach upon the Central Kingdoms and cause harm. Now, our enlightened sage-like emperor resists and turns them back… The emperor's kindness has satisfied them, and they come and go to the market cities with mutual benefit. We do not restrain them. The four *yi* have heard of this, and they come to present tribute …but the emperor [refuses] in the manner of King Wu of Zhou … or Emperor Wendi of Han … [461]

However, the volatile nature of post-Tumu frontier politics soon reverted to the use of *lu.*[462] While this might suggest that the use of *lu* and *hu* changed flexibly in tandem with the frontier situation even after 1449, it better reflects the Hongzhi emperor's attempts to paint himself in the manner of the earlier Ming emperors. Hongzhi himself was one of two post-Tumu emperors (the other being Wanli, r. 1572-1620) who admired the large-scale campaigns of the early Ming dynasty.[463]

The change in Ming court language for Mongols reflects the sudden meeting of broad imperial visions with inadequate military ability to realize those visions. The early Ming ideas of empire, which embraced a Yuan-style open imperial space, ended when a united Mongol policy under Esen became an existential threat to the Ming empire and its highest figure, the emperor.

[461] MSL, Xiaozong, *juan* 34, p. 749.
[462] MSL, Xiaozong, *juan* 183, p. 3378.
[463] Smith, "Impressions of the Song-Yuan-Ming Transition," p. 84.

Ming ideas of an empire inclusive of the steppe and Mongols were terminated. Mongols became inherently untrustworthy, regardless of if they had lived under Ming authority for decades. The frontier transformed from a transient zone where imperial authority was military-based but expansive, into a closed frontier that necessitated constant supervision and robust defensive preparations. Court attitudes towards recalcitrant Mongols, once characterized by relatively minor concerns over hidden motives and finances, overnight became focused on military defense and exclusion. These patterns were also true for the change in the tone of court discussions and imperial orders on the subject of defensive preparations. The open Ming empire, whether it had existed in reality or only in the minds of Ming emperors and bureaucrats, now closed to the steppe.

VI. CHAPTER 5: NEW NARRATIVES OF THE MING DYNASTY, LATE IMPERIAL CHINA, AND WORLD HISTORY

In the first chapter, I laid out a chronology of China's history of empires that makes room for non-Chinese states – like the Northern Wei, Liao, and Jin – and highlights nomadic influences on patterns of state-building in China. I ended that chronology with what I called the "classic narrative" of the early Ming dynasty, in which the collapse of the Yuan and expulsion of the Mongols ejected Inner Asian and Eurasian influences from China. The most recent decade of work in Yuan-Ming studies has questioned this chronology but has not yet written an alternative narrative. Now, having discussed how Mongol Yuan practices and visions of empire influenced those of the early Ming, mapping these discussions atop one another builds an alternative early-Ming chronology (or chronologies). To put it succinctly, the arguments laid out in previous chapters of this dissertation together make two major historiographical claims: 1) that we cannot fully understand the early Ming without first understanding the Yuan, and 2) if we want to do early-Ming history from a world-historical perspective, we cannot ignore cross-Eurasian connections. Accordingly, this chapter tackles three remaining issues. First, when considered together, what kind of early-Ming chronology (or chronologies) do the previous chapters point toward? Second, how should historians approach state-building in Eurasia in the wake of the Mongol empire? Third, how do these arguments change our perspectives on late-Ming, Qing, late imperial, and world history?

A. A NEW CHRONOLOGY FOR THE EARLY MING DYNASTY

1. THE YUAN FALL AND THE HONGWU REIGN, 1350-1398

Edward Dreyer wrote that Zhu Yuanzhang was a man of the Yuan dynasty.[464] I propose a slight modification: Zhu Yuanzhang was a man of his time. Certainly, the child from an impoverished farming family who became an orphan was not born with premonitions of his future status as emperor, or with visions of restoring sacred Chinese antiquity as part of a plan to remove the historical anomaly of the Yuan, which had interrupted the proper dynastic succession. After the other members of his family died of disease and starvation, he entered a monastery to feed himself, not necessarily to learn Buddhist teachings for the explicit purpose of one day commanding a millenarian sect; and he only joined the Red Turban rebels after that monastery could no longer support their lay members, and so Zhu was forced to leave and find livelihood elsewhere. It seems entirely possible that, if one thing or another had worked out differently, Zhu Yuanzhang may have continued laboring as a subsistence farmer for the remainder of his years, or settled into life as a monk, or died of starvation, or been killed in battle as a foot soldier in one of the numerous rebel military forces marching across China in the fourteenth century. The point is that Zhu Yuanzhang was one of many millions experiencing the tumultuous events of mid-fourteenth century China. His experience, and the experiences of others, were colored by a lifetime as subjects of the only state authority they had ever known, as well as the chaos surrounding the end of the Yuan dynasty.

The Yuan fall, however, began in the 1350s, before Zhu became an important historical figure. The Yuan slowly collapsed due to all of the reasons laid out in chapter 1: loss of control

[464] Dreyer, *Early Ming China,* p. 155.

over military forces, court infighting, and politically-motivated dismissals of competent commanders and administrators, all of which hamstrung the state's ability to rectify local problems and put down numerous rebellions. Many of these causes mirror the oft-cited reasons for the fall of the Ming dynasty in the seventeenth century – and other, earlier dynasties.[465] As Yuan authority disintegrated, so did the coherence of its local structures, which inhibited attempts to manage natural disaster, famine, and flooding. The loss of life must have been immense: on the eve of the Jin invasion of the Song, China's population stood at 120 million, but by the beginning of the Ming, it had fallen to about 70 million. While few records remain to suggest in what portions these losses were due to the Jin invasion, the Mongol conquests, the chaotic Yuan-Ming transition, or simply poor census-taking, contemporary accounts suggest life was fleeting and few could count on Yuan protection to ensure their safety. Localities organized their own ad-hoc governments to manage policing, protection, and administrative needs.[466] Many of these local regimes came to be ruled by military strongmen, or charismatic and clever individuals who became military strongmen through necessity or political maneuvering. The Red Turban rebellions, however, had something else to draw support and adherents from disaffected workers and farmers: a millenarian message that went beyond simply protecting local populations or denouncing the failing Yuan dynasty, but promised the return of the Buddha Maitreya, who would bring about a world of bounty and peace. I have used the plural "rebellions" deliberately, because "Red Turban" describes a large number of quasi-independent, Buddhist-affiliated clandestine groups who popped up all across northern and central China in

[465] See: Ray Huang, *1587: A Year of No Significance: The Ming Dynasty in Decline* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), especially chapter 1.
[466] Mote, "The Rise of the Ming Dynasty," pp. 11, 29.

response to famine and flooding, and who did not formally coalesce under a single organizing structure until the late 1350s.

Zhu Yuanzhang was one of the central figures in centralizing the various sectarian rebellions and morphing them into the basis for a dynasty. Even so, it seems likely that any of his competitors, like Zhang Shicheng or Chen Youding, could have done the same, or perhaps have resisted Zhu Yuanzhang's armies and thereby ushered in another era of multistate equilibrium in continental East Asia. Zhu, however, initially proved himself not as a future emperor but as the most militarily and politically adept commander of the various infighting rebels. It was not until 1368 that he formally declared that he had received Heaven's mandate to rule and claimed the title of *huangdi,* emperor, to succeed the Yuan. His reign title, Hongwu, announced the military ability that would guard and extend his realm. The Hongwu emperor gave his new dynasty a name – Ming – an ideological concept that followed naming precedents established by Khubilai Khan a century earlier, and a concept that would guide dynastic naming in the mid-seventeenth century when the Manchus formally established the Qing dynasty. Beyond the dynastic name, the Hongwu emperor borrowed major foundational structures from the Yuan: he organized the Ming military and administration on Mongol Yuan models, incorporated Mongols into his military forces, and awarded members of the imperial clan enfeoffments across the empire as a means of both keeping them far from the center of power (the capital at Nanjing) and ensuring Ming security. But perhaps most importantly, the Hongwu emperor ruled as directly and personally as any of the greatest Mongol *qans,* demanded subordination (rather than advice and guidance) from his Confucian advisors, and issued sweeping decrees intended to rebuild and maintain exact control over a war-torn realm.[467]

[467] Dardess, *Confucianism and Autocracy,* pp. 1-12, and chapters 2 and 4.

The immediate challenge facing the new dynasty was the goal set by the old: the Yuan had managed to conquer and unify not simply northern China but also the Mongol steppe, Manchuria, and the southern, subtropical regions of China that had always been loosely governed by past dynasties. The thirty years of the Hongwu reign witnessed numerous attempts to diplomatically and militarily reconstitute the old Yuan empire and the larger Mongol ecumene of influence in East Asia. The emperor sent imperial decrees to every state in continental East Asia with whom the Yuan had established relations (or invaded, or attempted to invade). In these decrees he announced that the Yuan had fallen to his mighty armies, and he expected every kingdom that had paid obeisance to the Yuan would also do so to the Ming, under threat of invasion. He boasted of his impending conquest of the steppe, the last major obstacle to reunifying the old Yuan realm. However, the actual military attempts to reconstitute the Yuan empire failed – in the late 1360s and early 1370s, Ming armies met defeat on the steppe and were forced to withdraw, and the Hongwu emperor suspended further planned campaigns, leaving the responsibility of securing depopulated northern China and guarding against remnant Northern Yuan forces to his sons, especially his fourth son, Zhu Di, enfeoffed in modern Beijing as the Prince of Yan. Despite the failure of these campaigns, grand visions of empire remained vibrant in Ming circles of power. The *Da Ming Hunyi Tu* map, probably created in 1389 (and perhaps inspired by nonextant Yuan source maps), depicts the Great Ming empire as one that dominated Eurasia, including the Mongolian steppe, and no transition zone marked the frontier between the steppe and China. This vision represented a stark break from Song self-imaginations of empire, which on maps terminated at steppe-line fortifications. Other major military campaigns in the later years of the Hongwu reign were intended to maintain the status, glory, and security of the Ming empire, to pacify Manchuria, to strategically outflank the Mongols in the steppe

immediately north of China, and to finally complete the intended reunification of former Yuan territories, but the death of the emperor in 1398 curtailed these imperial ambitions for the time being.

2. TANISTRIC CONFLICT AND MILITARY CAMPAIGNS, 1398-1450

Upon the Hongwu emperor's death, the Jianwen emperor's ascendance to the Ming throne immediately stoked the beginnings of a political crisis. Some narratives suggest that Zhu Di, the founder's fourth son enfeoffed in Beijing, wanted (or even expected) his father to grant him inheritance of the throne, even though such a move would violate classic principles of primogeniture.[468] It seems possible that Zhu Di saw himself as his father's proper successor regardless of arbitrary inheritance rights, very much in a Mongol fashion. He was politically adept, diplomatically clever, personally charismatic, an excellent military leader, and commanded the loyalty of a court of subordinate officials and thousands of soldiers. What ultimately matters is that all of Zhu Di's elder brothers predeceased him, leaving him as 1) the most powerful general of the most heavily militarized region in the Ming empire, the northern frontier; and 2) the oldest remaining son of the Hongwu emperor. The only legal or moral obstacles to Zhu Di's inheritance of the throne were his late father's admonitions in the *Ancestral Injunctions* and the existence of his nephew, the Jianwen emperor, who was the first son of Hongwu's first son. This situation reflected the unstable state of the imperial throne for much of the Yuan dynasty after Khubilai's reign: a young, inexperienced ruler at the empire's helm, surrounded by politicking officials, with powerful imperial relatives in the margins harboring their own ambitions and acting upon those ambitions with force. Zhu Di's decision to go to war

[468] Tsai, *Perpetual Happiness,* pp. 47-53.

against a member of his own family in order to seize the empire made perfect sense in a world the grand and powerful Mongol empire had ruled just thirty years prior. Zhu Di launched his war on the Nanjing court on a flimsy pretext (that corrupt officials were leading his nephew astray), and after four years, eventually won thanks to his superior military leadership, the large number of experienced Mongols in his army, and the loyalty of competent commanders. Zhu Di, now the Yongle emperor, erased his nephew from the official Ming records and fabricated four additional years of his father's reign in order to historiographically mask what had been a tanistric effort to take the throne by force.

Zhu Di saw himself as another Khubilai Khan and made many moves similar to those that Khubilai made, for similar reasons. He centralized military power and curtailed the autonomy of his enfeoffed relatives to eliminate the risk that someone would do precisely what he had done – turn to infighting for the throne. He moved the capital to the steppe frontier at Beijing to oversee the empire's military security, draw from his established base of political operations, and reduce the importance of the old center of power (Nanjing in Yongle's case; Karakorum in Khubilai's). Finally, he launched and led massive military campaigns intended to complete the reunification of the Great Ming. The greatest of these campaigns were those that invaded the steppe, huge endeavors that severely taxed northern China in terms of manpower and food. They occasionally succeeded at breaking up Mongol power and ensuring no single Mongol group could conquer the rest and pose a unified threat to the Ming, but they did not successfully defeat or capture the last pretenders of the Yuan, or successfully conquer the steppe. Yongle likely intended to fully incorporate the Mongolian steppe into the empire, a move signaled by his retraction of many key defensive garrisons along the northern frontier that his father had established. The men and supplies of those garrisons would go towards offensive campaigns, and

the garrisons would ultimately be useless in an empire where the frontier divide no longer existed. The Ming also launched campaigns on other fronts, notably in Vietnam, where the Trâ'n dynasty, a former tributary of both the Yuan and Ming, was ousted and the Dai Viet throne seized by the Hô'. Ming armies invaded Vietnam to reinstate the Trâ'n and occupied the region for twenty years, another step in reconstituting the thirteenth- and fourteenth-century political order of East Asia. Beyond overland campaigns, Yongle commissioned the famous maritime voyages of Zheng He, which travelled as far as the eastern coast of Africa. The purpose of these voyages was to announce to the entire world the glory, power, prestige, and wealth of the Ming, and especially the emperor at its political apex, who wished to match or exceed the reach and voice of the Mongol empire, and also cement his legitimacy after having seized the throne through civil war.

When the Yongle emperor died in 1424, his son reigned for one year as the Hongxi emperor. He wished to move the capital back to Nanjing, a maneuver that may have been carried out had Hongxi not prematurely died less than a year after his enthronement. This turn of events extended one of the several Ming connections to the old Yuan capital for the remainder of the Ming dynasty and the following Qing, and beyond to the present day. The 1420s, 30s, and 40s witnessed the decline, but not disappearance, of the Ming state's desire to interfere in Mongol steppe politics and launch large military campaigns. While the period after Yongle's death is often characterized as the beginning of the slide of power away from emperors and back to the Confucian officialdom, this did not mark an end in military interests. The Ming continued to occupy Vietnam until 1427, and advised friendly Mongol commanders when they fought with other, hostile Mongol groups. Nor did Yongle's death mark a turn towards blatant anti-Mongol rhetoric, as though the emperor's whim alone kept back a surge of Ming nativism. The language

of Ming court documents and diplomatic communication made clear distinctions between political enemies to the Ming and ethnic Mongols – being a Mongol did not immediately place suspicion on one's head, at least not until the attempted coup of 1461, in which several Mongol officers participated.[469] The unification of the Mongols under the Oirats, however, spurred the Ming to act. Endeavoring to replicate the glory of Yongle's campaigns, the Zhengtong emperor personally led his own army afield into Mongolia, only to meet disaster. The Ming discovered that its military forces had greatly weakened. Factions within the capital court argued for, once again, moving the capital back to Nanjing, but Beijing's frontier location passed the test a second time. With few good options to appease frightened officials in the capital, deal with Mongol threats, and avoid the manpower and monetary expense of further campaigns, the Ming settled on a grand project of strategic wall-building to assist in protecting northern China.

B. NEW APPROACHES TO STATE-BUILDING IN POST-MONGOL EURASIA

While cultural, regional, and ethnic contingency certainly did affect the reconstitution of empire in various parts of Eurasia after the Mongol collapse, the argument laid out here suggests that China's state-building experience in post-Mongol Eurasia was not as unique as historians have assumed, or to put it another way, that experience was unique in unappreciated ways. It seems likely that this was also the case for other Eurasian polities like Muscovy and the early Ottoman empire. Ming rulers imagined a complicated relationship with the Mongol past, and lauded the many expansive accomplishments of the Mongol Yuan, attitudes that translated into early Ming projects to territorially rebuild the old Yuan empire and incentivized Ming state actors to adopt

[469] Robinson, "Politics, Force and Ethnicity in Ming China: Mongols and the Abortive Coup of 1461," pp. 79-123.

successful Mongol administrative and military practices. In Ming China, as elsewhere in Eurasia, the Mongols introduced useful organizational techniques, especially in areas of military application. The same is true of Ming reactions and decisions made in the face of continued Mongol threats long after the Yuan collapse. The Great Wall stands as a unique Chinese monument to ingenuity, engineering, and occasionally folly, but Muscovy's similar strategy of wall-building along the steppe frontier not only demonstrates that it was not a uniquely Chinese approach to managing steppe incursions, but that wall-building was not an inherently flawed strategy. Muscovy (and later the Russian empire) used strategic walls and fortifications to successfully warn against, curtail, and repel Crimean attacks, and eventually extended those walls for the purpose of protecting an expanding empire and to corner steppe nomadic polities. In the Ming case, the Great Wall was not used as a strategic offensive tool, but the Ming dynasty faced different military imperatives and dealt with different domestic considerations. First, as Nicola Di Cosmo has noted, Ming defenses along the Great Wall were not antiquated or representative of obsolete tactics, but remained quite robust, and the Ming made vigorous attempts to update its military arsenal and technological capacity.[470] Second, not only had offensive strategies become diplomatically untenable after the mid-fifteenth century, but once visions of reconstituting the Yuan empire had faded, there was no impetus to extend Ming territory north or northwest. After Esen, the Mongols never posed an existential threat to the Ming again. The uniqueness of the Ming experience instead derives from the events surrounding its fall: it was the Manchus who became the Ming's main concern. The Manchus – unlike the Crimeans, Kalmyks, or Kazakhs facing Russia, or the fractured Timurid factions facing the Ottoman empire after Tamerlane's death – emerged as a vibrant, motivated state and society with

[470] Di Cosmo, "Did Guns Matter? Firearms and the Qing Formation," pp. 134-51.

the means and ambition to establish a vast new empire. The Manchus posed an altogether more dangerous threat to the sedentary Ming empire, especially when compared to virtually every other post-Mongol nomadic or semi-nomadic group across Eurasia, save perhaps the Mughals in India. From the reverse perspective, the Manchus and Mughals were the only post-Mongol nomadic polities to successfully build another lasting empire in the Mongol fashion.

Direct comparative work is another simple yet underused tool in the arsenal of the post-Mongol world historian. If the experiences of post-Mongol empires are not obfuscatingly and incomparably unique, then comparative work is the easiest way to expand this field. Wall-building is just one example. The state's long-term response to catastrophic defeat in battle against nomadic groups and the capture of the ruler is another (i.e. the case of Ottoman sultan Bayezid and Ming emperor Zhengtong). Where else might historians look for lucrative comparative studies? Early-modern European empires provide the subjects for countless volumes of comparative work, on topics ranging from political economy to the imperial practices of colonial empires.[471] Often, comparative work involving post-Mongol Eurasian empires involves juxtaposing overland Eurasian empires with maritime European empires, and asking why the latter came to dominate the world and the former did not.[472] Where are the works that compare post-Mongol Eurasian empires for their own sake? Burbank and Cooper devote a chapter to the matter, and Christopher Beckwith does examine Eurasian-wide developments before and after the Mongol empire.[473] It is clear more can be done. Asking why different post-Mongol polities did or did not adopt Mongol administrative practices, military techniques, or visions of empire

[471] For a handful of examples, see: Sophus A. Reinert and Pernille Røge, *The Political Economy of Empire in Early-Modern Europe* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2013); Anthony Pagden, *Lords of All the World* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995); Arvind Sinha, *The Politics of Trade* (New Delhi: Manohar, 2002).
[472] The preeminent example being Wallerstein's works on World Systems Theory.
[473] Burbank and Cooper, "Chapter 7: Beyond the Steppe: Empire-Building in Russia and China," in *Empires in World History,* pp. 185-218; Christopher Beckwith, *Empires of the Silk Road: A History of Central Eurasia from the Bronze Age to the Present* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011).

covers the physical, spatial, and intellectual dimensions of the Mongol legacy. Understanding the differences in various empires' state-building strategies elucidates the particularities of Mongol practices of rule as much as the unique circumstances in conquered regions. The "Mongol moment" was not a simple process of annexation, rule, and dissolution that left the conquered region in the same condition it had been prior to the thirteenth century, but part of an extended transformative era in Eurasian and world history.

In long-term perspective, historians should define the era of the Mongol empire and the rule of its various successor khanates as not merely the sudden, unexpected Mongol eruption out of Inner Asia, but as the largest, most tumultuous, and closest phase of interaction between sedentary agricultural and nomadic-pastoralist societies. In East Asia, this is a phase that began not with Temujin's election as Chinggis Khan in 1206, but with the formation of the Khitan Liao state in 907. The emergence of the Liao alongside the Song transformed China's northern and northeastern frontiers from the simple logistical limit of agricultural settlement into arenas of interaction between competing empires in a multistate system. The Jurchen Jin conquest redefined the steppe frontier zone further: it became, once again, the marker of agriculture's limit, but *within*, rather than at the margins of, a single state, and therefore also a marker of administrative divisions. Then, the Mongol conquest and the establishment of the Yuan completed the process and folded China, the steppe frontier, and Inner Asia into a single region of interactivity and rule. This long-term process of construction, collapse, and recapitulation was reflected in other areas as well, such as the formation of legal ethnic categories, and the depiction of imperial limits and visions on territorial maps. The collapse of the Mongol Yuan reverted the steppe frontier to a boundary between competing states, but not necessarily a boundary or limit of imperial visions, as the Ming attempted to do precisely what the Mongols had done, except

this time from the south instead of the north. These Ming attempts met some success initially, but domestic economic concerns and the reunification of a single Mongol state under Esen to challenge Ming unipolarity aborted the process. Ultimately, the Mongol style of imperial reconstitution disappeared in the late fifteenth century, rather than the mid-fourteenth, and returned with the Manchu Qing. From this perspective, the Ming dynasty remains part of the post-Mongol story rather than apart from it, and moreover, the Liao and Jin remain part of China's chronology rather than outside of it.

C. LATE IMPERIAL CHINA: THE LATE MING AND QING IN THE NEW NARRATIVE AND WORLD HISTORY

By considering the era between 1368 and 1450 as, in many ways, an extension of the Mongol period that transitioned naturally (rather than abruptly) into the later Ming, the entire narrative of the late imperial period changes. First, the two centuries between 1449 and 1644 become an anomaly. This directly disagrees with older arguments that the Yuan was the anomaly in China's history, and creates a smoother continuity between the Yuan, Ming, and Qing that is less concerned with ethnic difference or adherence to classical Chinese Confucian culture, and more concerned with how Mongol and Inner Asian influences affected China and other parts of Eurasia. In this sense, between the founding of the Yuan and collapse of the Qing, for 430 years imperial states in China followed or borrowed from Mongol Yuan patterns of legitimization and state-building. Furthermore, if we take the case that the late Ming was not one of military weakness but of innovation and adaptation, as historians like Swope and Di Cosmo have argued, then the late-fifteenth and early-sixteenth centuries merely mark a dip in Ming military efficacy, a weakness that Ming rulers, statesmen, and commanders corrected in the face of military

challenges posed by pirates, Japan's invasion of Korea, and Manchu expansionism. Indeed, the Ming collapse does not appear to have resulted from military weakness so much as economic distress and administrative or financial inability to correct the problems facing disaffected peasants. The Yuan faced the exact same problem of disaster-induced unrest, one which the Mongols' famous military strength also failed to curb.

However, it remains true that the Ming never conquered and ruled the Mongol steppe as the Yuan and Qing did, though not for lack of trying. I have spelled out the numerous ways in which Mongol influences remained strong in early Ming imperial visions, and how Ming efforts to recapture the old Yuan empire were quite real. I contend that the fact those influences remained active in the early Ming, and that early Ming rulers consciously created links with the Mongol Yuan past, is enough to maintain Yuan-Ming-Qing continuity beyond simply grouping them as "late imperial." In this sense, then, "late imperial China" comes to mean more than a temporal collection of dynasties that roughly corresponds with the European early-modern era, or a time period of increasingly close contact with Europe, or merely the last pre-modern forms of government in China. Instead, it is the era in which China came to be influenced by Inner Asia more or less permanently.

The late Ming does complicate this narrative. Obviously, the time period between the end of the fifteenth century and the 1640s was an era of declining court interest in the steppe, and the plethora of sources on the vibrancy of Ming economic and cultural life has demonstrated that Ming rulers, elites, and subjects very much thought of themselves as *Mingren,* and not necessarily the inheritors of a barbarian Mongol legacy. As mentioned, this approach considers the late Ming an anomaly in the late imperial narrative, but just as Yuan historians have argued for years against sidelining the Yuan dynasty in Chinese history, the late Ming should also never

be sidelined (though it certainly is not in danger of that fate). It should also be placed into perspective. In the new narrative, the Ming dynasty represents an era of China's history entangled in two worlds: the overland Inner Asian and the maritime coastal. After Inner Asian and Eurasian concerns lost importance, the military lessons and martial ambitions of Ming rulers continued, applied out of necessity to the military problems facing the Ming empire. The growing importance of coastal trade, and maintaining security along that escalating front and Korea, shifted Ming military priorities. Emperors like Wanli carried the values of military strength through the late-sixteenth and early-seventeenth centuries.

In the field of world history, this study bring the Ming back into the discussion of Eurasian post-Mongol empires. The Ming was one formulation, rather than a rejection, of the Mongol empire's legacy. Early Ming rulers molded Mongol military and legitimating practices in ways that facilitated their goals, and the structures that maintained their power. Blaming Mongol rule and customs for the chaos of the late Yuan clearly juxtaposed the crumbling old model with the ordered new, and paved the way for the establishment of a new regime, but early Ming emperors could not afford to entirely throw away Yuan precedents. Even if they wanted to, or even if they knew what kinds of state-building models pre-Yuan dynasties deployed, they could not have simply stripped away the century of changes that the Mongols had brought to China. Language, customs, cultural patterns, and most importantly for this study, the grand empire that the Mongols established remained as important ideas in China after the Yuan fall, regardless of the rhetoric that the Hongwu emperor deployed to cement his claim to the Mandate of Heaven. This mirrors the experiences of Eurasian rim empires in the post-Mongol world, and is reflected in the ambiguous place of Russia between Europe and Asia; in the military and legitimating principles of the Islamic gunpowder empires (the Ottomans, Mughals, and Safavid

dynasty); and in the Ming's own successor, the Qing. This creates new spaces to discuss early-modern Eurasia in world history, not linked merely through the imperial maritime projects of Europeans, or in comparison to the European empires that came to dominate the globe in the nineteenth century, but through a shared Mongol legacy that changed the face of empire-building across the most heavily populated regions of the world. The Ming dynasty was not merely connected with the rest of the globe through oceanic trade, but through the nuanced interpretation of the Mongol past, and the institutional systems and imperial visions the Yuan bequeathed to China. The Mongol empire was not just a moment that dissolved with the resurgence of native styles of rule, but a key phase in Inner Asian interactions with Eurasian agricultural regions that molded patterns of state-building for the remainder of the millennium.

D. CONCLUSION

The military campaigns, administrative structures, and commissioned imperial depictions of the Hongwu and Yongle reigns escorted the Mongol legacy through the formative years of the Ming dynasty. Beginning with the decision to name the new dynasty after an ideological concept – Ming – rather than a place-name – such as Han, Tang, or Song – already marked this legacy. While no records indicate why the Hongwu emperor chose Ming as the dynastic name, I have a supposition that returns to my opening modification of Edward Dreyer's observation: Zhu Yuanzhang was a man of his time. The only dynastic imperial state he knew from lived experience was the Yuan. Perhaps this is a slight overapplication of Occam's razor – that the simplest explanation is often right – but the ideological pattern must mean something that connects the legitimating principles of the Yuan and Ming and reflects their similar imperial

structures. The reasons for the rhetoric in Hongwu's imperial decrees, communications, and orders are more known to modern scholars, but that rhetoric is couched in Confucian language. Looking to China's Mongol Yuan past helps circumvent charged Confucian language and understand both the administrative nuts and bolts and the visions of empire-building in the early Ming. Drawing on the rhetoric of Confucian antiquity and building an empire with the framework and vision of the Yuan provided the territorial and legitimating foundation of the Ming dynasty. It was not one or the other, but both.

VII. CONCLUSION

New political orders are not blank slates. Even as a state collapses, social norms, cultural values, and political aspirations do not necessarily disappear with it. Those things might transform or change in response to the whims of powerful actors, or the vagaries of contingency, but pieces or remnants of them in some way to influence the future. During the Yuan-Ming transition, as the Mongol Yuan fell and the Ming arose, the Yuan did not disappear entirely to make way for the recovery of pre-Mongol patterns of rule and legitimation. The effects of the Mongol conquests, one of the most tumultuous and impactful events in human history, did not vanish overnight. Early Ming rhetoric on the pollution of the Mongols was precisely that – rhetoric – and masks the very real ways in which early Ming rulers and statesmen borrowed from the immediate past. A century of Mongol rule had brought to China new state-building methods and new, grander visions of empire. The Mongols had connected, and devastated, Eurasia in ways its inhabitants had never previously experienced. When the Ming dynasty came into formal existence in 1368, the conquests of the early- and mid-1200s, and the Mongol rule over China from 1279, remained markers by which the new Ming empire would necessarily be measured.

I have outlined how the Mongols transformed ideas of empire by tracing the origins of what we call "empire" in China, and analyzing the applicability of the term to China's historical experience. Over the course of China's first millennium of imperial history, nomadic political orders profoundly changed how empires were built, legitimized, and managed in continental East

Asia. Contrary to the narratives of the "conquest dynasties," these were not necessarily the result of invasions, as in the case of the Northern Wei, whose Tuoba ruling elite already resided in northern China. By the fifth century, cosmopolitanism and merged nomadic-sedentary state-building methods had already formed the pillars of one kind of state in China. The Tang dynasty signaled a redoubling of cosmopolitan state-building and an era of broad imperial visions, this time beginning in China and extending into the steppe. The Song sits in Chinese historiography as a territorially small and inward-looking polity, but by contextualizing the tenth, eleventh, and twelfth centuries as ones in which a multi-state East Asia emerged and a sparse frontier limit had become a zone of interaction between the Song, Liao, and Xi Xia, this period changes from one in which Chinese civilization was under siege to one that continued the construction of empires from multiple and mixed traditions of empire-building. The Mongols brought about the reunification of continental, multi-state East Asia, and ushered in an era of permanent reunification until the end of the millennium. Their visions and ideas of empire formed a new repository from which future empires (the Ming and Qing) would draw legitimating practices and military/administrative strategies.

These influences are detectable in early Ming discourse, rhetoric, and representations of imperial power. The changing legal language on ethnicity and cultural groups, from Liao to Jin to Yuan, reflected a growing awareness of state-defined ethnicity as a means of categorizing and controlling populations. Early Ming law did the same thing, between Chinese and Mongols, an awareness that had not existed prior to the Liao, Jin, and Yuan. In early Ming spatial representations, the territorial extent of the Ming empire covers all of Eurasia, a depiction that mirrors Yuan rather than Song depictions, and which suggests limitless empire in the Mongol manner rather than limited empire in the Song. The *Da Ming Hunyi Tu's* lack of a clear divide,

either man-made or natural, between China and the steppe indicates that early Ming rulers maintained an open vision of empire and intended to reconstitute the old Yuan polity. Song maps, and later Ming maps, consistently separate China and the steppe with walls or geographic features like deserts. The existence of a Eurasian-wide map dated to 1389 demonstrates the transference of knowledge of Eurasia from the Yuan to the Ming, and points towards the fact that the Mongol legacy remained strong in early Ming legitimating efforts. Ming rhetoric on the Yuan, and the place of the Mongols and the Yuan dynasty in Chinese history, further confirm that the Ming did not denigrate its immediate Yuan past wholesale, but viewed the Mongol century of rule in complex and nuanced ways, praising the ability of the Mongols to unify the whole world, and lauding Yuan military strength while criticizing the Song for its weakness and failure to maintain internal cohesion.

In more direct fashion, early Ming military endeavors, military-administrative systems, and strategic considerations mirror Yuan precedents quite closely. The Yuan and Ming faced similar strategic problems – likely a result of the very different imperial order the Yuan had brought to China – and the Ming looked to the Yuan for solutions to those problems. The major difference was that early Ming rulers attempted to reconstruct the Yuan empire from the south to the north, rather than from the north to the south as Khubilai did. Historians before me have already observed that early Ming military organization systems copied Yuan models, but I take this pattern a step further, and argued that Ming princely enfeoffment practices were similar to Mongol appanage distributions in purpose and practice, even if the initial reasons for these enfeoffments differed (imperial decree vs. rewards to Chinggisid family members). They helped secure the frontier zone in advance of, and immediately following, military operations. In the same vein, the Yongle emperor moved the capital to Beijing for the same reasons Khubilai Khan

moved it to the same location at Dadu: to place the center of power on the frontier between two worlds (steppe and agricultural), both of which Yongle and Khubilai intended to govern. The key difference, of course, is that Yongle never managed to conquer the steppe.

The era after the Yongle emperor's death appears to signal the beginning of Ming institutional and imperial divergence from the Yuan model. However, that divergence did not become real in the rhetoric and practice of Ming rulers and statesmen until the Tumu Crisis of 1449. Between 1424 and the Crisis, the Ming relationship with Mongol groups and the Mongol past fluctuated with important nuance. Ming court rhetoric on Mongols still included Mongol groups and the legacy of the Yuan empire as parts of the Ming empire, either intellectually or physically. Ming imperial ethos did not reject Mongols outright, but differentiated between Mongol groups who were politically friendly to the Ming from those who were enemies, and did not claim that the latter were enemies simply because they were ethnically different. The Zhengtong emperor's decision to launch a campaign to counteract Esen's reunification of the Mongol steppe was a maneuver intended to replicate the Yongle emperor's campaigns to maintain a divided Mongol world amicable to Ming interests, but Zhengtong's disastrous defeat was a shocking demonstration that something had gone catastrophically wrong with Ming military efficacy. Combined with the fear that Esen would capitalize on his victory, siege the capital at Beijing, and potentially recreate some form of Mongol empire all spurred the Ming to abandon offensive operations in the steppe and eventually led to the construction of the Great Wall and the cessation of offensive operations into the steppe for the remainder of the dynasty.

The Great Wall, however, is not a uniquely Chinese phenomenon that somehow physically represents isolationism, nor is it a folly of expensive engineering that failed in its one and only purpose. Other Eurasian states, notably the Grand Duchy of Moscow (and the Russian

empire it became), also built long, strategic walls to manage steppe-based threats, which demonstrates that historians should not take wall-building alone as a marker of military weakness and failure, or as a uniquely Chinese phenomenon. The Tumu Crisis is the marker of weakness, but as the Ottoman case suggests, even militarily powerful and charismatic rulers had difficulty engaging powerful nomadic rulers in combat, and even disastrous defeats that ended with the capture of the ruler (Zhengtong in the Ming case and sultan Bayezid in the Ottoman case) did not forever end the possibility of military strength. The Ottoman realm rebounded, and the Ottomans ultimately constructed one of the largest empires in history. The Ming dynasty did not go on to extend Ming territory in a similar fashion, but later Ming military endeavors and martial innovations on the oceanic coast, in Korea, and against the Manchus tell us that the period between 1449 and the mid-sixteenth century constitutes an anomaly of Ming military weakness. While the Ming did fall to the encroaching Manchu Qing empire, in a world-historical perspective this seems to have less to do with Ming military inability to repel invaders and more to do with financial and domestic problems. It also speaks to the unique vibrancy and ambition of the Manchus, who were only one of two post-Mongol nomadic groups to establish a vast empire (the other being the Mughals), and whose empire came to be the richest state in the world until the nineteenth century, and which governed nearly one-third of the world's population in 1800.

This dissertation has attempted to resituate the Ming dynasty along a new narrative of the late imperial continuum. The Yuan was not an anomaly in Chinese history, an observation of which historians are now well-aware. The new narratives laid out in Chapter 5 are the final contributions to this study's argument: that the Yuan marked a new era, one continued in the Ming. I have also argued for new methods of incorporating the Ming dynasty into post-Mongol

Eurasian history. While the Qing is often cited as the post-Mongol imperial project in China, comparable to Russia, the Ottomans, and Mughals, the Ming should also be considered in the same light. Although not as territorially expansive, early Ming ideas of empire were profoundly influenced by those of the Mongols and its branch in China, the Yuan dynasty. The imperial visions of early Ming rulers imagined the reconquest of the old Yuan polity as the logical goal for ensuring Ming legitimacy and primacy for the foreseeable future. What the Mongols had built, the Ming would naturally recapture and improve upon. The period of declining state interest in the steppe, between 1449 and the 1550s, is the real anomaly in China's history. Steppe-based imperial traditions remained strong in fifteenth-century China, as extrapolated and deployed by Ming emperors.

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