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Finding the Tibetans in ancient history : pre-historic era to 200 C.E

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**Finding the Tibetans in Ancient History
Pre-Historic Era to 200 C.E.**

A Thesis

Presented To

The Faculty Of The Department Of History

San Jose State University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

By

Jessica C.A. Lucas Burkhouse

December 1997

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ABSTRACT

Finding the Tibetans in Ancient History Pre-Historic Era to 200 C.E.

By Jessica C.A. Lucas Burkhouse

This thesis addresses the topic of the early history of Tibet from the pre-historic period to 200 C.E. and the factors that led to the development of an early Tibetan culture. It examines the Neolithic period, the spread of the Tibetan peoples from the Tibetan Plateau into China, the development of tribal associations of the Tibetans, especially the Ch'iang and Ti tribes, the influences of the Bon shamanist religion, the development of trade routes across Tibet and the role of the Tibetans during the expansion of Eurasian trade throughout the period.

Research reveals that a culture developed on the Tibetan Plateau, as early as the fifth century B.C.E. that may be defined as Tibetan and that it played a major role in the development of Tibetan and Chinese civilization. At the same time it sustained a distinctive and separate identity.

Acknowledgments

This thesis could not have been completed without the support and encouragement of my children Rachel and James Burkhouse who allowed me to forgo motherly duties on many occasions and took pride in my accomplishments. I am in awe of their own. I would like to acknowledge Timothy D. Harris, who provided emotional and spiritual support for my family and for encouraging me to complete this thesis when at times I thought it was impossible. I would also like to thank the Lucas, Pray and the Burkhouse families for all of their support and encouragement especially my sister Nancy.

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fatherly as well as academic advice. His knowledge and comprehension of Asian history and its historiography provided a foundation for a respectful critical analysis of what has already been written in the field. His optimism, encouragement, and openness as well as his knowledge supported me in pursuing this study further than I would have taken it otherwise and gave me, a novice, the courage to question orthodox historical premises. A special thanks to Dr. Edward Bruce Reynolds for his considerable part in editing this thesis and for his patience, mentorship, encouragement and memorable lectures and conversations regarding Japan. And a special thanks to Dr. Christian Jochim for his time, advice, critical analysis and many suggestions.

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Introduction

My interest in Tibet was awakened when, in 1989, the Dalai Lama, spiritual head of the Tibetan Buddhists and temporal leader of Tibet since 1951 C.E., won the Nobel Peace Prize "for his efforts to find a nonviolent solution to the quest for independence of Tibet from China."¹ Curiosity prompted me to pursue a study of Tibetan Buddhism, from an intellectual standpoint. In the following months, I read The Tibetan Book of the Dead, edited and translated by W.Y. Evans-Wentz, with a psychological commentary by Dr. C.G. Jung, and numerous other works, including writings by the Dalai Lama and associated Tibetan monks. These writings made me aware that the Tibetan Buddhist philosophical and theological systems were ethically and metaphysically advanced, in contrast to the popular notion that Tibetan Buddhists are a superstitious lot, who believe in a pantheon of strange gods. The main objective of Tibetan Buddhists, to live a life of goodness, is defined by a sense of conscience derived through the contemplation of principles of right and wrong in the realm of abstract reasoning. The teachings have a correspondence in depth to that of western classicist philosophers.

Several years later, my interest in Tibet was sparked again when I was fortunate to attend one of the Dalai Lama's lectures in Santa Cruz, California. I

was impressed not only by his gentleness and simplicity, but also by his obvious intelligence. Concurrently, a study of Chinese history in my college courses revealed to me that prior to the takeover of Tibet by the People's Republic of China, the Tibetan peoples had lived a peaceful life under what may be the last of the world's great theocracies. More importantly the Tibetan Buddhists had contributed to the world a true example of a nonviolent society devoted to the ideal of attaining spiritual and moral purity; one that put to shame the ideals of the Communist Party and certain Christian Communities. I also learned that the process through which a Dalai Lama rises to power is extremely arduous. He must not only attend school from the time he is quite young, but he must also pass intellectual examinations, debating the best Tibetan Buddhist theologians of his time in a public forum. And, contrary to popular opinion, while he maintains sole authority as a spiritual leader, his political decisions are actually the product of a parliamentary form of government under the leadership of monks, who occupy positions and chairs in various departments of the government.

I began to read more about the Dalai Lama and the plight of the Tibetans and wrote a short term paper entitled "The Chinese Legacy: The Desecration of Tibet." It is now common knowledge that, during the occupation of Tibet in 1959 C.E. by the People's Republic of China (PRC), 1.2 million Tibetans were killed and 95 percent of the temples and religious sites were desecrated and

almost totally destroyed. The massive immigration policy practiced by the PRC during that period included the importation of military troops, used to enforce a police action, accompanied by 7.5 million Chinese immigrants who supplanted the Tibetan population. These actions transformed Tibet into a Chinese military zone dominating Central Asia. By 1989 C.E., Chinese military facilities in Tibet included a nuclear missile force of 70 medium-range missiles and 20 intermediate-range missiles aimed at India.² Today, the Dalai Lama lives in political exile in Dharamsala, India, which serves as the capital for 130,000 Tibetan refugees living mainly in India and Nepal. The Dalai Lama continues as the spiritual leader of all Tibetan Buddhists and the political leader of all Tibetans and, in spite of the atrocities committed in his country, still advocates a policy of nonviolence.

The research and writing of my short paper persuaded me, that the Chinese takeover of Tibet was an illegal action and that their justification for pursuing such a course was based upon a questionable premise. Professor Chou Keng-sheng in the PRC publication The Great Changes in Tibet asserts, that Tibet has “always” been a part of China;³ however, prior to 600 C.E., the Chinese knew very little about Tibet and, as this paper will demonstrate, they certainly did not occupy Tibet’s territory. It was not until ca.600 C.E., during the reign of King Songsten Gampo, that Tibet appeared on the scene as a political entity. In this period the Tibetans enjoyed an era of political expansion resulting

in what historians call the First Tibetan Empire. At that time, the Tibetans gained control over the entire Tsinghai-Tibetan Plateau and the Takla Makan Desert including the present day Chinese Provinces of Sinkiang and Tsinghai and asserted political dominance over neighboring states for a period of almost three hundred years.⁴

Following this era, the Tibetan Empire disintegrated into numerous independent states and kingdoms; however, theocratic control of the Buddhist hierarchy expanded. An upsurge in Tibetan Buddhism resulted in the spread of monasteries and religious orders that produced by the time of the Mongol Empire an association of states, united by a theocratic, hereditary, Buddhist bureaucracy that stretched from Tibet across the north of China and the steppes of Mongolia. Tibet was claimed by the Mongols, but they only exerted what amounted to a "loose suzerainty" over the region; Tibet continued to rule itself in the usual way.⁵ When the Mongols fell from power, Tibet again became a completely separate entity and remained so until 1720 C.E. when the Dzungars attempted an invasion of the Tsinghai-Tibetan Plateau. The Tibetans were unable to ward off the attack. China, under the Manchurian rulers of the Ch'ing dynasty, who were patrons of Tibetan Buddhism, came to the rescue. It was not until this time that Tibet came under the rule of China. The Kham region, constituting the southeastern portion of the Tibetan Plateau, was annexed to Szechuan and Tibet became a protectorate of China, a status that lasted until 1912 C.E. when the

Ch'ing dynasty ended. With the end of the dynasty Tibet again became independent and remained free until the Chinese Communists overpowered it in 1950 C.E.⁶

While China justifies its invasion of Tibet, by asserting that Tibet has always been a part of China, the assertion is simply not true. While verifiable historical records and comprehensive assessments of the history of Tibet prior to 600 C.E. simply do not exist, assessments of subsequent historical periods reveal that Tibet remained outside the realm of Chinese government during thousands of years of history except for the two periods cited above, during the liberal reign of the Mongols and as a protectorate under the Ch'ing dynasty. In both cases the dynasties were foreign, not Chinese.

The only period in question remains that of the era prior to 600 C.E. The majority of Tibetan histories gloss over this early time, designated by the Tibetans as the "Dark and Gloomy Period," the time before the spread of Tibetan Buddhism.⁷ It is probable that the lack of focus upon Tibetan ancient history is due to the fact that Chinese sources make only a few references to support the early existence of the Tibetan people; most Chinese sources refer to them as the Ch'iang or the Jung tribes. At best, archaeological finds are scant and spread over wide distances, while the history of the Tibetans that does exist was recorded in the seventh to eighth centuries and languishes uncorroborated. It is also true that the lack of historical mention of Tibetans in ancient sources

suggests that they had little impact on other civilizations of the period; however, the Tibetan people and their theocratic state did not suddenly appear on the scene during the seventh century.

Generally, historians would agree that the defining features of any empire or nation would include a common language, culture, geographical location, political unity and historical visibility. The Tibetan empire of the seventh century C.E. certainly was characterized by these features. In the prehistoric period we find the formation of a culture that may be called the root of the later civilization. Geographically, as this thesis will demonstrate, the ancient Tibetan people occupied roughly the same regions as they do today and also lived in the mountainous regions of Kansu, Ningsia, and Shensi. The larger part of the region included Tibet and Tsinghai, the Kun Lun and Himalayan mountains, the upper regions of the Hindu Kush, and the western mountainous regions of Szechaun, Yunnan and Kwiechow. This great land mass is also referred to as the Tsinghai-Tibetan Plateau region.

Prehistorically, the Tibetans have remained for the most part an enigma, while extensive histories have been written regarding the associations and movements of other peoples who were relatively visible. They are for the most part not defined as civilizations; rather, they are defined as nations or tribal peoples. Some of these nations have been recognized as establishing empires— the Hsiung-nu, the Mongols, the Hsien-pi, and the Kushana (one that

became designated as a civilization) to name but a few— enjoy such notoriety. These tribal associations gained such status because of verifiable historical evidence, mainly found within Chinese and Central Asian annals. These entries were recorded primarily because these people, who were opponents of the Chinese, notoriously provided the most extreme military opposition to Chinese expansion, while victories over these people glorified the empire's existence and the aura of the dynasty's supremacy. The Hsiung-nu, the Hsien-pi, the Yüeh-chih and other tribal groups, came to be known as either nations or civilizations because they had historical visibility; historians knew of them because what they read in the primary sources constituted at least the general outline of a story that could be built upon. Due to frequent military interaction with neighboring countries, which maintained accounts of their movements, growth, military, and political activity, we know a great deal about these peoples.

Studies indicate that ancestors of the Tibetans, named the Ch'iang, by the ancient Chinese existed in great numbers by the Former Han period in present day China.⁸ Michael Loewe numbers at least one-hundred and fifty tribes in the west and southwest living in and along the marches of the Tsinghai-Tibetan Plateau in this period.⁹ During the Han era these tribes caused a considerable amount of turmoil for the Chinese; the indications are that they did so in even more ancient times. They were noted to be living in the northwest of China as early as the Shang period (ca. 1400 B.C.E.).¹⁰ Chou period records and texts

also record that the proto-Chou frequently intermarried with at least one Ch'iang tribe in particular; the greater importance of this group may be traced through the surname Chiang, a derivative of the tribal name.¹¹ The Ch'iang were allies of the Chou in a triumph over the Shang (ca.1027 B.C.E.) and also founders of a number of Chou states. Chou historical records chronicle their presence in the vicinity of the Chou states throughout the Chou period.¹² Despite their significant participation in the establishment of the Chou and mention of them throughout the sources, they have yet to warrant a history of their own during this early period nor have they been identified as having a significant culture. For the most part the Ch'iang tribes have remained relegated to the footnotes of history as one of many tribal peoples in the vicinity of the forming Chinese states. Nevertheless, as will be shown in the following, they have had an undeniable role in the development of both the Tibetan culture and the later Tibetan civilization.

As this thesis will demonstrate, a broader culture existed, having traits that may be defined as unique. This culture lived in the northwest of China and was a product of the Tsinghai-Tibetan Plateau regions. Although they did not found a particular dynasty in this early period, they played a major role in the development of Tibetan civilization, and maintained a cultural identity that came to be identified with the Tsinghai-Tibetan Plateau as early as the former Han period. The region in which this culture was located constituted a sphere of

interaction¹³ in which the people became bound in a society distinctly different from the Chinese or any other civilization growing up around them or with whom they had contact in the prehistoric period. This society may be distinguished from the Chinese by the term Tibetan, due to the idea that these people were as much Tibetan as the Chou were Chinese; however, historians refer to them as proto-Tibetans, just as they refer to the Chou as the proto-Chou prior to the commencement of the Chou dynastic period.

There were also other people on the Tsinghai-Tibetan Plateau who may be called Tibetan by virtue of the fact that they maintained a distinct and separate culture and melded with the Ch'iang as time wore on. In concert with those named the Ch'iang by the Chinese, a proto-Tibetan culture formed across the Tsinghai-Tibetan Plateau regions that produced the later Tibetan civilization. While the proto-Tibetans periodically rebelled and made alliances with other nations such as the Yüeh-chih and the Hsiung-nu, they also apparently made agreements with the Chinese at various times and even settled down in some cases in the northwest of present day China. The Chinese politically designated these areas in Han times as *dependent* states, but it is doubtful that these tribes considered these political arrangements to be other than in their own interest, no matter what the Chinese have asserted in the past or present. It remains extremely doubtful that the Chinese exerted any suzerainty other than haphazardly; they simply did not have the manpower. It is also true that

because of a lack of manpower, the Chinese often depended upon the proto-Tibetans for defense on many occasions. The initial joining of the Chou royal line with the Ch'iang is but one example in the period in question.¹⁴

In short, the Tibetan society began as the Chinese society began. They were numerous people living over a large geographic region in subcultures, in this case the Tsinghai-Tibetan Plateau and its marches, who formed a larger society over a period of time that historians identified later as Tibetan. In the ancient period, early Tibetans, spread into the mountainous regions with a climate and conditions very different from the river valleys of the evolving Chinese civilization. The lifestyle of the proto-Tibetans was limited by high altitudes and intermittent valleys of respite, dispersed amongst the highest mountains of the world. All these regions were subject to extremes in climate that had a significant effect upon the differentiation of the Tibetan culture from that of China.

In summary, the proto-Tibetan people generally have been seen as only one of many overlapping cultures that participated in the development of Chinese civilization; rarely, have they been considered in their own light. One of the premises of this paper; however, is that ancestors of the Tibetans in the west of present day China were engaged in a twofold process of development. While establishing their own culture, they were also contributing to the formation of the Chinese culture and civilization. As a whole they were never assimilated; in fact,

they remained a distinct and separate people who had a significant part in the formation of the Chinese empire because they resisted sinicization in favor of retaining their own culture and way of life. At the same time these proto-Tibetan people were melding with other proto-Tibetans on the Plateau. The level of cultural sophistication did not reach the stage of civilization defined by the seventh century manifestation of the Tibetan empire; however, the formative years constituted a separate sphere of cultural growth.

Another part of this premise asserts, the character of this culture was such that the need of the Chinese culture and later dynasties to defend themselves from invasion, and the failure of the Han dynasties to hold onto the northwest was largely a result of the ability of the early Tibetan people to maintain their own identity and culture in spite of the attempts of the Chinese, who saw themselves as the center of the civilized world, to take over their territory. A side effect of this process was that ultimately, the interaction between the Tibetan people to the west, who adhered to an entirely different way of life than the Chinese, contributed to the need for both sides to centralize culturally and militarily in the preservation of their respective identities. And, while ancient historians report control and subjugation of the proto-Tibetan people in the northwest of China, in fact, control was nebulous at best except for the period under Wu-ti (141-87 B.C.E.).

The first chapter of this thesis expands upon the basic archaeological and

linguistic data. The evidence will establish that a proto-Tibetan culture began its formation during the Neolithic period in the Tsinghai-Tibetan Plateau Region and that a Tibetan population was present in the northwestern territory of what is now called northwest China as early as the fourth millennium. This evidence is supported by the inscriptions on Shang oracle bones, references in the Tso chuan, and historical assessments made by Chinese historians in both primary and secondary sources. The second chapter asserts that, by the time of the Ch'in, (ca. 300 B.C.E.) this identity was fairly well established. While the early Tibetan tribes continued to influence the growth of Chinese civilization, they also sustained and advanced their own culture. The third chapter discusses the emergence of proto-Tibetan kingdoms, the formation of initial tribal associations on the Tibetan-Tsinghai Plateau, and the evolution of trading activity within the greater Eurasian community. The fourth chapter discusses the expansion of the Tibetans as intermediaries of trade in the Eurasian trading community surrounding the Tibetan-Tsinghai Plateau. In the fifth chapter, the story of the early Tibetans is interwoven with the rise and fall of the Han Dynasties and the Kushana. During this period the population of the Tsinghai-Tibetan Plateau region expanded to such an extent, that the Chinese were forced to completely retreat from the northwest of China. In the face of a proto-Tibetan expansion, the Han fell from power.

Before continuing, it is important to make remarks about the designations

assigned to early Tibetan tribal groupings. While we may accept that during the historical period, since the seventh century C.E., the Ch'iang tribes and the Tibetans have grown somewhat apart due to the influx of other peoples and cultures into their territories in the last eighteen hundred years, during the ancient period we may also be assured that the Ch'iang, Ch'iang Ti, and those early Tibetans living on the Plateau were culturally and ethnically more akin to one another than today. The people of the Tsinghai-Tibetan Plateau Regions apparently maintained their independent existence in relative isolation until China invaded Tibet after World War II. The Chinese sources made no distinction ethnically between the populations of the northeastern Plateau regions and the tribes of western and northwest China; they identified them all as Ch'iang, Ch'iang Ti, or Ti, Jung, Jung Ti, and Ch'iang Jung. For example, Ssu-ma Ch'ien (147-90 B.C.E.), the Chinese historian of the Former Han Dynasty refers to "the Ch'iang barbarians of the west,"¹⁵ the Ch'iang of the southwest,¹⁶ the Ch'iang of the Nan-shan mountains,¹⁷ the territory of the Ch'iang south of the Great Wall,¹⁸ the Ch'iang along the mountain trails,¹⁹ and to the Jung and the Ti who had herds which were one of the "riches of the empire."²⁰

Since the major references concerning the early Tibetans come from the Chinese annals, and since Asian historians consistently use these designations when writing about these tribes, I have chosen to use the same terms and will

qualify them as necessary. However, during the Tso chuan period there exists some confusion over the Ti tribes; some were of the Ch'iang, but the tribal root of others are still in question.²¹ During the Ch'in and Han periods both of the designations Ch'iang and Ti were used, but apparently in these cases the Chinese perceived the Ti of those eras to be largely a subgroup of the Ch'iang; thus, ultimately, the designations Ch'iang and Ti during the Han era reflects the designation of the Tibetan people. In the ancient sources the Tibetans are also called the Jung, the Western Jung and a number of other names. Modern historians refer to them as proto-Tibetans, Tibeto-Burmans, the names listed above, or call them by particular tribal names. This confusion exists due to the fact that the ancient Chinese were also unclear. "While various names were used for groups regarded as barbarian, four came to predominate: Jung, Ti, Man, and I." Harlee Creel states that, "these were probably names of ethnic groups originally . . . but it is unlikely that all of them were."²² The peoples called the Jung and the Ti lived generally to the north and to the west of Chinese borders and also within enclaves in the borders of Chinese territory.²³

When distinguishing between the tribes therefore, distinctions must be made geographically and historically by period. In the interest of clarification, it may be remembered that generally in the northwest, the tribes of Ch'iang and Ch'iang Ti interacted with the tribes of Amdo and Koko Nor; these tribes were those who also interacted with the Chinese Shang, Chou, Ch'in and Han

dynasties and the Hsiung-nu, Yüeh-chih and Kushana in the northwest of China. The southern or southwestern Tibetans were those Ch'iang, Ti, Rong and Mon tribes who interacted with India, Southeast Asia, and the Szechuan Region. They emanated from the Kham Region in the southeast of the Plateau. The White and Red Ti are an exception from these general classifications. Their origins have not been finally determined. E. G. Pulleyblank calls them the Northern Ti, so I will use either that designation or simply White or Red Ti.²⁴

A note must be made regarding geographical terms. The term Tsinghai-Tibetan Plateau region refers to the greater area as designated by the term and includes the smaller Tibetan Plateau. The term Tibetan Plateau refers to the smaller plateau of Tibet proper and the associated mountains.

Mention must also be made regarding spellings and maps. I have used the Wade-Giles spellings since they were the most consistently found throughout my readings. The maps have been constructed using Corel Draw 4 and 6 and are original in the sense that I have traced general outlines using an Ace Cad drawing tablet, but have drawn the geographical details freehand. The place names and tribal locations have been taken from numerous atlases and books as listed in the bibliography or as noted. Dimensions may be off due to the limitations of my expertise and tracks and trails are only approximate indications of their location, but do indicate numerous pathways used from ancient times and even today.²⁵

Endnotes

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3. People's Republic of China, The Great Changes in Tibet (China: The Great Wall Press, 1972), preface. Professor Chou Keng-sheng, justifies the position of the PRC, asserting that, Tibet has "always" been a part of "Chinese territory. . . ."
4. R.A. Stein, Tibetan Civilization, trans. by J.E. Stapleton Driver (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1972), 69. In the mid-ninth century, ca.866 C.E. Tibetan power came to an end under the Turks, Uighurs, and Qarluqs.
5. Ibid., 80.
6. Ibid., 85.
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12. Cho-Yun Hsu, and Katherine M. Linduff, Western Chou Civilization. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), 58-59.

13. Kwang-chih Chang, The Archaeology of Ancient China, 3rd edition, revised and enlarged (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), 242.

14. Hsu and Lindhuff, Western Chou, 55.

15. Burton Watson, Records of the Grand Historian of China, trans. from the Shih chih of Ssu-ma Ch'ien (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961) 2:100-101.

16. Ibid.

17. Ibid., 265.

18. Ibid., 266-67.

19. Ibid., 269.

20. Ibid., 485.

21. Pulleyblank, "The Chinese and Their Neighbors," 419.

22. Herlee Glessner Creel, The Origins of Statecraft in China, vol.1 (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1970), 197-8.

23. Ibid., 199.

24. Ibid.

25. Rajendra S. Khadka, Unpublished interview notes by Jessica C.A. Burkhouse, 31 August 1996. Khadka is a native of Kathmandu, Nepal and editor of Traveler's Tales based in Berkeley, Ca. He informed me that both Nepalese and Tibetans having clan and tribal association on either side of the mountains regularly traverse the Himalayan passes from May through October along ancient pathways not located on maps that are outside the control of Communist Chinese guards. It is common knowledge among the people that these pathways have been in use since ancient times and also common knowledge among the peoples of both regions that clan and tribal associations are of ancient origins predating the seventh century.

Chapter 1

Finding the Tibetans in the Prehistoric Years

In order to find the ancient Tibetans we must consider what may be found in archeological, geological, anthropological, linguistic, primary, and secondary source materials. The information supplied by these studies when considered independently yields little, but when considered together leads to the conclusion that, in fact, a population emerged on the Tsinghai-Tibetan Plateau during the Old Stone Age (ca. 35,000 B.C.E.)¹ and continued to evolve over thousands of years, a culture distinctively different from surrounding civilizations that may be defined in the context of Tibetan. What follows in this chapter is a general overview of the prehistoric period.

Archaeological findings demonstrate that Mesopotamian, Egyptian, Indian, and Chinese civilizations were planting the roots of agricultural societies during the years between 10,000-5000 B.C.E.² To this date, no findings have indicated any community of the Tsinghai-Tibetan Plateau region approaching the magnitude of these others of Eurasia. The first indications of a regional prehistoric population in the region may be noted by the appearance of archaeological tools and other artifacts of Old Stone Age societies at Ding-ri in

south central Tibet along the Tsangpo River and at Kokoshili in southern Tsinghai, dating back 40,000 years (figs.4 and 5). In the Takla Makan Desert of Sinkiang, immediately to the north of the Plateau, at Xiaochailai lake in the center of Tsaidam, stone scrapers, knives, drills and axes, together with tools made of bone and horn have been found dated as early as 33,000 B.C.E. Fresh water shells more than 38,000 years old demonstrate that in the Tsaidam Basin, located in eastern Sinkiang and "a dry, salty desert today . . . [was in these Stone Age times] abundant [with] vegetation and animals, numerous freshwater lakes, and heavy rainfall—providing a suitable environment for human beings."³

In the regions of Kong-po and sPo-bo along the Tsangpo River, in southern Tibet, the remains of "primitive communities" of modern man include both cave dwellings and "nest dwellings."⁴ The nests were built around a central pole that supported a roof of bamboo and wood while mats of straw plastered with mud formed walls.⁵ Although these sites have not been exactly dated, correlations with other prehistoric cultures using microlithic tools associated with Middle Stone Age hunting and gathering cultures may be assumed; publications of the Academia Sinica date the tools to the beginning, middle, and end of the Old Stone Age, during the time period when modern man emerged.⁶

Archaeological findings of a later date disclose that by 3000 B.C.E., prior to the mythical Hsia (2205?-1766? B.C.E.) and the Shang (1766?-1122? B.C.E.) dynasties in China, the Tsinghai-Tibetan Plateau supported farming villages. A

representative site in Chambdo, in southeastern Tibet, dated to 3500 B.C.E., contained three dwellings of two stories each providing an example of community life. It appears that the ground floors were used to house animals, while the second stories were used as living spaces. This design is still in use by Tibetans today.⁷ Stone implements, pottery shards, bone needles, and other artifacts imply that the Tibetan Plateau societies were engaged in both hunting and farming. A site at Nying-kri revealed over one hundred pottery shards found with numerous human bones.⁸ The numbers of fragments and bones provide evidence of a well developed and sizable community of people much larger than an ordinary village. Evidence of domesticated cattle and sheep, wool products, and bronze tools have been found at Ta-li-t'a-li-ha on the Nomuhung River, at an even later site, dated to 1800 B.C.E.⁹

The existence of megalithic monuments across the Tsinghai-Tibetan Plateau region, akin to those of the peoples of Central Eurasia, suggest that at an early date, the peoples of the Plateau had developed a sophisticated and cohesive religious system. Megaliths have been found at Rwa-sgrengs and Sa-skya, in central Tibet and in the west at sPu, Shab-dge-sdings, gZhi-sde-mkhar, and at Byi'u near Ma-pham Lake. These large arrangements of stones were systematically placed in the ground in circular and square patterns. The structures are comparable in style and execution to prehistoric monuments also built in Europe, India, Southeast Asia, throughout the Mediterranean and along

the East African coast.¹⁰ An example of a Proto-Tibetan megalith at Pang-gong Lake in the northwest consists of eighteen parallel rows of standing stones, "aligned in an east-west fashion with circles of stones at the ends of each row."¹¹ A second category of megalithic structures resembles a site in western gTsang at Sa-dga where a large gray stone slab stands surrounded by pillars of white quartz. Some sites appear to be ancient tombs while others appear to have been centers for religious worship.¹² The exact significance of these monuments remains in question, but their very existence provides evidence of culturally interconnected communities, scattered extensively over the area of the Tsinghai-Tibetan Plateau region, possessing the necessary organization and manpower, skills, resources, and knowledge to lift huge weights with a communal purpose in mind. Unfortunately, none of the sites have been scientifically dated; therefore, no firm conclusions may be drawn.

The location of these sites and current studies of the style of construction used in the building of the monuments reveal that an early culture spread over an area corresponding generally to the same area occupied by the Tibetan speaking peoples of today. Giuseppe Tucci, a Central Asian historian, reports that, on the basis of the locations of the megalithic structures and the evolution of their design, it has been suggested that peoples of a megalithic proto-culture of Neolithic traditions spread from a south-central region (the Tsangpo River Valley area) on the Tibetan Plateau to the northeast and to the west sometime

before the first or second millennium B.C.E. along two routes. The first route "led to the corridor of the Euro-Asiatic Steppe in the Koko Nor region," while the other ran "into Kashmir and Spiti," but the dates have not yet been exactly determined.¹³

The style of the megalithic structures also appear to have been the inspiration for the building of tombs and sacred shrines of smaller standing stones at a later date. The proto-Tibetan tribes, those called the Ch'iang by Chinese historians, had already established themselves in the Koko Nor region by ca. 2000 B.C.E.¹⁴ The tombs are of more recent dates than the monuments and increase in complexity in terms of construction and apparent intent. The Ch'iang are known to have buried their dead in such stone tombs.¹⁵

Francke Roerich suggests that they were built just before the birth of the Buddha (ca. 500 B.C.E.), due to the fact that they contain a number of chambers suggesting a belief in the "idea of communication between different planes of existence." This type of construction suggests that a shamanistic religion, a precursor to Bon (a religion of Zoroastrian root), came into early Tibet from the Middle East circa 500 B.C.E. Grave articles include bronze vessels and jewelry, hand thrown pottery, and small pieces of iron having similarities to artifacts found in Iran, while other small articles support the idea of the early proto-Bon group.¹⁶ Skeletal remains show the population was dolichocephalic, suggesting a Dardic population of a more ancient period. These people are known to have

migrated through the Indus River Valley to Leh in the Hindu Kush.¹⁷ These sites, and those of comparably constructed sites in Central Asia, suggest that funeral rites were elaborate complex rituals that included the sacrifices of animals and humans. The similarities support the view that the peoples of the Plateau and Central Asia shared a similar set of religious beliefs, but again, absolute conclusions are subject to a great deal of debate.¹⁸

The style of these stone structures suggest they were the prototypes for castles and towers built in Tibet and the surrounding adjacent areas, later, during the first centuries of the common era. The existence of these complex fortified castles and towers, particularly at strategic locations such as at the entrance to a valley or at the height of a pass, imply a requirement for sophisticated measures of defense during the Former Han dynastic period. Early Chinese sources mention singular watchtowers set apart at distances of ten li (576 meters) along the western edges of the ancient Chinese borders, but provide no detailed account of an early civilization in the west, other than a mention of numerous tribes prior to the seventh century.¹⁹ Many of these watch towers were built in the areas occupied by the Ch'iang tribal groupings in far western Kansu, Tsinghai and Szechaun. While no exact dates have been determined about when these were erected either, their style and construction suggest the castles and towers were built after the megaliths, using similar methods, probably sometime around the first century C.E.²⁰

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Little archeological work has been done regarding the Tsinghai-Tibetan Plateau region as a whole. Thus, to gain further information regarding an early Tibetan people in the first few millenniums before the common era, and to acquire a new perspective on their developments, we must turn to the archaeological studies of ancient China. Other ancient communities of comparable size found on the far northeastern edge of the Tsinghai-Tibetan Plateau at Ma-chia-yao (3500 B.C.E.), Pan-shan (3000 B.C.E.), and Ma-ch'ang (2000 B.C.E.) establishes the emergence of millet and wheat farming, combined with the domestication of animals, in a time period commensurate with similar developments in China, India and the Middle East.²¹

Archaeologists have connected some of these sites found in western Kansu and northern Tsinghai with others that were spread across northern and western China. Kwang-chih Chang believes that a chronological overlap exists, but that the sites mentioned above emerged on the basis of an independent Shensi phase of the Yang-shao Culture.²² These sites are especially numerous in the T'ao-ho and the Huang River valleys in the region of the Wei and Ching river complex of eastern Kansu, the region, according to legend and archaeological studies, where the Ch'iang probably encountered the proto-Chou and began the process of intermarrying with the Royal Chou family.²³ The dates of these cultures and others of earlier dates, which range from 4500 to 1500 B.C.E., will be discussed in the following.²⁴

Archaeological findings indicate four regional phases of the Yang-shao cultures were in the initial process of development as early as circa 5000 B.C.E. The first phase was located in the Kansu-Tsinghai region and stretched from Koko Nor to far eastern Kansu and incorporated the upper reaches of the Ching and Wei rivers. The second phase held the Wei River Valley and the extreme south of the Fen River Valley. A third phase occupied the middle Yellow River Valley of the eastern agricultural plain. The fourth phase dominated the eastern coastal regions of the agricultural plain.²⁵

In the first phase, in the Kansu-Tsinghai region, a succession of cultures laid the foundation for Ssu-wa, Hsin-tien, and Sha-ching cultures that were contemporaneous with the Shang and Chou. The initial sites of this region, near Koko Nor, begin with the discovery of two microlithic sites in Tsinghai: the Ta-yü-t'ai and La-yi-hai (ca. 6700 B.C.E.). The sites are preceramic, yet yielded chipped pebble tools. The first farmers to occupy this region emerged at Ta-ti-wan (ca. 4500-3000 B.C.E.),²⁶ somewhat to the east of the earlier sites, in Kansu on the Wei River.²⁷ This site, located at Ch'in-an was connected to other sites reaching to the confluence of the Wei River with the middle Yellow River, stretching from Kansu to eastern Shensi. Ta-ti-wan houses were built at the ground level, and storage pits for grain were interspersed among them. Agricultural tools were of stone, mostly axes or spades and mortars and pestles. Pigs, chickens and dogs were the animals most domesticated. Among the

hunted wild animals, were sika deer, elaphure, and water deer. Their antlers indicate they were hunted year round.²⁸

In the Yang-shao period (ca. 5000-3000 B.C.E.), Ta-ti-wan is classified as a part of the Kansu-Tsinghai subdivision, but the major sites are most prolific from the east of the Koko Nor region to the area along the bend of the Yellow River near Lanchou. This is the era in which Chang classifies the Kansu-Tsinghai phases as a western extension of the Yang-shao Shensi culture, beginning with Pan-p'o.²⁹ The P'an-p'o phase occurred during "the warmest and wettest recent interval in the area," when vegetation was thick and game abundant. Animals that were commonly hunted by the peoples of Pan-p'o and the other Yang-shao communities include badgers, foxes, racoons, bears, antelope, rabbit, deer, turtles, fish, snails and mollusks, and even small horses. The discovery of seeds, such as hazelnuts, chestnuts and pine nuts indicate that gathering took place. The dominant means of existence seems to have been crops reaped from slash and burn farming. These included fox-tail and broomcorn millet.³⁰

In the next phase, the Ma-chia-yao (ca. 3500 B.C.E.), sites are distributed most extensively to the west of the Wei River Valley area along the southern side of the Kansu Corridor and somewhat to the southwest of Lanchou. These sites have yielded houses, pits, kilns, and burials. In the later stratum, a further development may be noted in that the houses were built at ground level and

walls were built on excavated foundations. Evidence of broom corn, millet and hemp accompany a copper knife, indicating that it might have been the product of a minor copper industry. Stone hoes, axes, sickles, grinders and pestles amongst bone tools indicate, however, that this was a Stone Age culture.³¹

The next sequential phase, Pan-shan (ca. 3000 B.C.E.), overlaps with the Ma-chia-yao phase, and extends even further, into northwest Tsinghai as far north as Wu-wei and Yüing-chan and into the Kuei-te basin. Most finds are from four hundred burial sites. The few houses uncovered are square and subterranean. The following Ma-ch'ang phase radiates even further north, incorporating the territory of Chiu-ch'uan and Yü-men in the Kansu Corridor. The houses are round or square and semi-subterranean with wattle and daub walls and thatched roofs. Nearby cemeteries include fifteen hundred burials: 257 from the Pan-shan phase and 872 of the Ma-ch'ang phase. The rest belong to the subsequent Ch'i-chia (366 graves) and Hsin-tien (5 graves) cultures.³²

Variations in the pottery suggest a relatively sophisticated society; some of the pottery are marked with signs, numbering a total of 139, that may be identified with specific characters of the early Chinese writing system. It has been suggested the signs had a universal meaning at the time of their use; they indicate a broad spread of an understood symbol system throughout northern China that was used cross-culturally. The Kansu-Tsinghai finds also embody, probably the earliest known art in the world relating to shamanism and ritualized

worship. This art depicting dancing, bi-sexualism, and skeletal representations may be associated with the development of ritualized worship led by a shaman.³³

Toward the end of the fourth millennium, the Yang-shao cultures, with which the Kansu-Tsinghai cultures were initially associated, technologically underwent a revolutionary regional change in southern Shansi, eastern Shensi, and western Honan. During this period the Yang-shao split into subregions. The Kansu-Tsinghai group became culturally separated from the eastern group, which adapted to a higher form of agricultural production in what is designated as the Miao-ti-kuo II phase. This transition was accompanied by other rapid changes centered even further to the east in the middle Yellow River Valley. The Lung-shan cultural phase (3000-2000 B.C.E.) emerged in the agricultural plain of eastern China. Portions of the Fen River Valley as far north as T'ai-yauh were apparently also involved. Finally, in the middle Yangtze River Valley, the Ch'ing-lung-ch'üan III culture (ca. 3000 B.C.E.) commenced.³⁴

Meanwhile, in the first region, the Kansu-Tsinghai culture was relatively left in the Stone Age, but there was a transition to what archaeologists call the Ch'i-chia culture. The Ch'i-chia culture, followed the Yang-shao strata and is dated to the third millennium B.C.E.,³⁵ contemporary with the latter half of the Lung-shan to the east. The Ch'i-chia cultural phase immediately preceded the Ssu-wa culture that was contemporaneous with the Chou period strata and several other Aeneolithic cultures to the west. Consisting of more than 300

sites, the reach of the Ch'i-chia extended to the upper Ching-Wei River Valley in the east and the Huang River Valley in Tsinghai to the west, near Koko Nor, and included parts of Ninghsia and westernmost Inner Mongolia to the north. These people were advanced farmers with domesticated dogs, pigs, cattle and sheep. Their animals apparently were very important to them, more so than they were in the eastern part of north China.³⁶

Perhaps from this region, pastoral nomads emerged in great number. During the entire period of the Ch'i-chia, it appears that the Yang-shao culture in Shensi was relatively confined to the river valleys below the steppe regions.³⁷ Yang-shao sites of any consequence in the northern regions are few. While it seems apparent that the Yang-shao culture extended as far as the Kansu-Shensi border in the Ching River Valley, north of this region there existed a very different cultural stratum, one that lived in caves and subterranean dwellings, domesticated pigs and polished stones. If the Yang-shao did extend in the north "it either underwent drastic changes or encountered a very different native cultural stratum," says Chang.³⁸ To the east Yang-shao sites are found in the lower Fen River region and at Shilou on the Yellow River. They do not seem to make their way into the mountains.³⁹ Apparently the mountains were occupied by a different culture or cultures in both east and west.

The various Ch'i-chia sites suggest that the population was engaged in copper metallurgy as well as agriculture. The sites have yielded oracle bones,

copper ornaments, rings and other small items (primarily copper tools, including awls, knives, and chisels) plus millet and the remains of hemp.⁴⁰ The Ch'i-chia cultural finds have been related to both the Yang-shao and the Lung-shan cultures. Yet, as Chang points out, any similarities are probably due to cultural contact. The Ch'i-chia culture seems to have been developed by a different people. In short the indigenous base remains to be identified.⁴¹ Thus two parallel cultures coexisted during the third millennia, the older Yang-shao in the west and the newer Lung-shan in the east, but those of the Yang-shao, had also divided into regional cultures.⁴² The Ch'i-chia in the Kansu-Tsinghai region of the west had developed distinctive characteristics that separated it from the others of Yang-shao roots.

In contrast, to the far west of the Kansu-Tsinghai region, a significant transformation took place between the Yang-shao and Lung-shan cultures of the east. Particular to the disappearance of the Yang-shao and the development of the later Lung-shan was the development of towns with gated walls, town homes, town life, and metallurgy. The beginning of Chinese civilization is evident in the appearance of special housing for the nobility, human sacrifice, scapulimancy and metal production, found inside the gated town-walls that became the norm for the Lung-shan era.⁴³

The walled towns, societal ranking, rituals, and war that were characteristic of the Lung-shan period heralded the appearance of the Three

Dynasties (the mythical Hsia, the Shang and the Chou).⁴⁴ Radiocarbon dates (ca. 1800-2100 B.C.E.) place the recently discovered Erh-li-t'ou culture in the range of the Hsia dynasty (ca. 2205-1766), but are early for the Shang (1766-1122).⁴⁵ The archaeological evidence suggests that the recently identified Er'li-t'ou culture was a distinct culture from the Shang and that it may have been the homeland of the Hsia, but there is nothing conclusive to date.⁴⁶ The distinction between the Lung-shan and the Erh-li-tou is emphasized by the sudden emergence of palaces and tombs of royal proportions on the scale of An-yang, one of the ancient Shang capitals. The tombs were furnished with scarce goods, bronze ritual vessels and weapons, and sets of special wine vessels. The tombs also yielded hints of writing and indicate the possibility that human sacrifice had become the norm by this period. Dozens of sites have been found in central and western Honan and southwestern Shansi, centering in the Fen, Su, and K'uai river valleys above the same locations that were central to the Lung-shan.⁴⁷ Estimates suggest the Erh-li-t'ou culture lasted from approximately 2000 to 1000 B.C.E., laying the foundation for the Shang and overlapping with their culture.

By the Shang period, Chinese civilization had taken form, but it does not seem that cultures peripheral to the Shang were affected to the same degree. While they shared in some of the same technology, such as the production of bronze, it was rudimentary compared to the Shang. Culturally, the peripheral peoples developed lifestyles independently, probably due to the geographical

determinants of distance, topography, climate and resources. Kwang-chih

Chang states:

The regional and local cultures within a sphere of interaction manifest similarities that result from interactions between them . . . an interaction sphere is not the interaction of cultures as behavioral units. It is in fact the interaction (contact, exchange of information and goods, and conflict) among communities in a vast hierarchy of interaction levels. We assume that communities within a phase interact more intensely or frequently than communities in separate phases, and that those within a culture do so more intensely or frequently than communities in separate cultures.⁴⁸

By the end of the Lung-shan era (ca. 3000 to 2000 B.C.E.) "there was an increasing differentiation among the populace in terms of economic wealth and power."⁴⁹ Centralization occurred regionally, because each regional culture was in the process of determining its own cultural center of gravity and identity. The peripheral cultures were engaged in a broadly defined Chinese interaction sphere; however, each culture within this sphere was in the process of independently differentiating itself from *Chinese* civilization.

Possibly one of the most important of events in determining differentiation was the appearance of writing. The signs and symbols found on pottery as early as 5000 B.C.E., later evolved into pictographs, which seem to have been confined to the developing Chinese civilization. The earliest inscriptions can only be dated to 1400 B.C.E., but graphs were probably used to keep records from at least the beginning of the second millennium and probably earlier by the Erh-li-t'ou.⁵⁰ The complexities of the inscriptions indicate that by Shang times,

archivists and scribes of the royal courts were regularly employed. The bulk of Shang records were written on bamboo, wooden tablets and silk, that disintegrated or were destroyed,⁵¹ but oracle bones, ritual vessels, musical instruments, weapons, and a few other objects have preserved the language of this ancient period.⁵² We have already discussed, the Erh-li-t'ou (or Hsia), the earliest of what may be called a Chinese civilization, that arose along the middle Yellow River and in the Lo-ho river valleys, and the Shang who were most probably a product of the agricultural plain of eastern China.

To lay a foundation for the discovery of the Tibetans we must also look at the emergence of the Chou, for it is with these people that there was a great deal of Ch'iang and proto-Tibetan interaction. The Chou civilization emerged in the Wei River Valley of Shensi in the Feng and Hao area near Sian. The succession of sites in this region began with the Yang-shao Neolithic and was followed by the Lung-shan Neolithic.⁵³ In the Shensi Lung-shan culture, K'o-hsing-chuang II is the best-known phase. Major sites are K'o-hsing-chuang (the site for which the culture is named) located near Sian, Chiang-chai in Lin-t'ung, and Heng-chen-ts'un in Hua-hsien. They are all in the Wei River Valley. Most of the implements found at these sites were for agriculture, but fishing and hunting gear was also present in numbers that suggest a large reliance on hunting for existence. These finds included axes, knives, fish hooks, arrowheads, and spatula-like objects made of bone. Bones of animals such as

pigs, dogs, cattle, water buffalo, and sheep provide evidence of the domestication of animals. Deer and rabbits were also apparently hunted. Subterranean type dwellings, less sophisticated than those of their neighbors to the east, were either single rooms or of two adjoining rooms. In contrast to designated cemeteries, abandoned storage pits were sometimes used for burials.⁵⁴ The Western Chou built upon these foundations. Feng was the site of the Chou royal temples while Sian, located on a well-drained plain of the Wei River was the center of the Western Chou until its end in 771 B.C.E. The royal capital of Feng is perhaps still buried. Thus, the settlement pattern is not known, but of 182 tombs in the Chang-chia-p'o and K'hsiang-chuang areas, there may be recognized a complete sequence of development.⁵⁵

Exemplary of the relative sophistication of the Chou in comparison to the peripheral cultures surrounding them was the construction of their buildings. Stamped earth foundations supported a complex of houses, with a central courtyard. Other houses did not form a courtyard, but the houses were larger and massive blocks of earth were used in their construction. Tiles were used for the roofs (probably a Chou invention). At the center of these houses, existed workshops and residential areas for the common people. The workshop areas disclosed bone tools, bronzes and pottery manufacturing. Also found were oracle bones, with inscriptions distinctively different from the Shang; the characters were smaller than those of the Shang; the dating was based on a

lunar calendar; the preparation pattern seemed different and the inscriptions concerned events related primarily to the Chou House. The dates of these inscriptions ranged from King Wen Wang's reign to almost the end of the Western Chou.⁵⁶

The location of the Chou sites further north of Sian and artifacts within the Wei-Ching River Valley region of Kansu and Shensi coincide with the legendary area of occupation of the region described in the early Chinese texts. These sites are grouped into two phases. Both phases contained pottery and bronze vessels, weapons and implements, but only the second phase contained waste-pits in which dogs were buried.⁵⁷ The bronze artifacts of the first phase indicate that the Chou were increasingly influenced by the Shang; however, by the second phase, characteristics in the construction of bronze artifacts changed. According to archaeologists this change is indicative of the occurrence of a cultural transformation. The construction of the second phase contained two types of tripods, that Tsou Heng equates with the fusion of the Chou Royal Chi clan and the Ch'iang clan. The tripods associate the Chi clan with the Kuang-she culture of Shansi (a little known sub-phase of the Lung-shan), and the Ch'iang clan with the Ssu-wa culture of Kansu. Chang asserts much additional research is needed to affirm such a conclusion; however, he also states that many Shensi archaeologists have taken this assertion "to heart." They generally accept that the Ch'iang were connected to the Ssu-wa and as the following will

demonstrate this is probable.⁵⁸

Between the Ch'i-chia and the Ch'in civilization, and contemporaneous with the Shang and the Chou, eastern Kansu was occupied by several overlapping cultures: the Hsin-tien, the Ssu-wa, and the Sha-ching as mentioned earlier.⁵⁹ The Hsin-tien culture was found in the region extending from Koko Nor to Lin-T'ao, primarily along the lower T'ao Ho, Huang Ho, and lower Huang river valleys. The artifacts of this culture include stone implements, both copper and bronze objects, and distinguishing this culture above all, ceramic pottery of coarse red and grey fabrics and red and white slip, over which geometric patterns were painted in black. The sites also contained chipped stone axes, stone spades, knives, stone disks, bone awls, plates, arrowheads, turquoise beads, clay spindle whorls, bronze buttons, folded buttons, links, open funnels, and some rectangular objects. Among bronze artifacts, *ko* halberds, buttons, and two-winged arrowheads resembled Chou types.⁶⁰

The Ssu-wa culture, numbering over a dozen sites, occupied the region immediately to the south of the Hsin-tien sites, around the upper T'ao Valley and the upper Wei River tributaries in eastern Kansu and westernmost Shensi. The pottery remains are plain, large, brick red in color and oval in shape suggesting they were created in this style for portability. "Every characteristic of the pottery seems to testify that the Ssu-wa culture . . . [was] not Chinese, though it may have been influenced by that culture."⁶¹ Besides the pottery, an armlet of

bronze, a perforated axe, and two goat horns were found. In 1945, Hsia Nai excavated six additional sites and these revealed three ways in which the dead were disposed of—cremation and ash urns, internment of the dorsal and stretched type, and probably secondary burials. Other sites revealed painted shards decorated with concentric circles, meanders, and other geometric designs painted in black. Stone tools were mostly chipped edge ground axes, knives with side notches, and shouldered axes. One hundred and four burials also included two horse-and chariot pits while some of the tombs held sacrificial victims. In a few tombs, bronze artifacts included mostly weapons such as halberds, spearheads and knives, bells, disks, and bracelets. Some bronzes resembled Western Chou types.⁶²

To the northwest of the two cultures described above, in the arid regions west of the Ch'i Lien Mountains, drained by the Pai-t'ing River, remains of what has been called the Sha-ching culture have been found. Typical of the Sha-ching is the site at Sha-ching-ts'un for which the culture is named. On this site was built a walled fortress of mud. Inside were found a *li* tripod, some handled high bowls, a steatite (soapstone) pan, bone needles, arrowheads and other small items, a bronze knife and arrowhead and a piece of golden string. In a cemetery, amongst a reddish type pottery, were found stone and turquoise beads, marble rings, perforated stone objects, cowrie shells, and copper and bronze objects including a spearhead, an arrowhead, a ring, and a knife tip. A

late Chou date has been suggested.⁶³

These three Kansu-Tsinghai cultures are placed at the end of the second millennium and the first half of the first millennium B.C.E., an interval long enough for the subdivisions to have been made from the Ch'i-chia culture, mentioned above, whose 300 sites roughly covered the same region, but included more territory to the north and northwest. The *li* tripods found at these sites were demonstrated to be of the Yin (Shang) and Chou types, while metal objects indicate associations with the Shang, Chou, and Ordosian cultures. The Ssu-wa culture, which adjoins the Western Chou sites of the Wei River Valley, exhibited a particular and definite Chou influence upon the style of shouldered axes, side-notched knives and bronze halberds.⁶⁴ While all of the artifacts suggest technological influences from the Shang and Chou, evidence that they had developed their own distinctive culture is clear.

In summary, by the time of the Shang and the Chou, peripheral cultures and associated tribes surrounded the developing Chinese civilization were influenced by it, but the proto-Chinese had developed a separate culture.⁶⁵ A hierarchy had developed with increasingly more emphasis placed on the importance of clans and lineages. This system governed social interactions and differentiated their members into "a hierarchical segmentation" of political and economic classes. Inscriptions, grave sites, the association of emblems on vessels buried in graves, and the layout of cemeteries suggest that "within each

clan major and minor lineages were determined by genealogical distance, and the lineage of the hierarchy was coupled with the hierarchy of the settlements.”⁶⁶

Three main centers of power developed, the Erh-li-t'ou, the Shang and the Chou. On all sides they were surrounded by peripheral cultures and nomadic and semi-nomadic tribes that the Chinese perceived as less “civilized” non-Chinese. In the Shang and early Chou period, the tribal peoples became known as the Jung, the Ti, the Yi, and the Man; the Ch'iang were included in the Jung category. The tribes lived amongst and around the Chinese civilizations, within enclaves in the border regions and on the peripheries.⁶⁷ The tribes also lived in the mountains and on the steppes as pastoralists.

In summary for both North and South China, a case can be made for the development of regional cultures by ca. 4000 B.C.E. of apparently indigenous origins and distinctive styles.⁶⁸ According to Kwang-chih Chang, this sphere of interaction could be called a “proto-Chinese sphere of interaction,” but to differentiate between geographical and linguistic categories, he asserts, the term Chinese should be used as the geographical label (it should refer to spheres of interaction, not to a culture) and Han Chinese should be used as the linguistic label.⁶⁹ By the time of the Shang, *Chineseness* came to be defined by those adopting the features of the emerging civilization. Those in the process of transition defined others as *barbarians*. These others were either peripheral cultures, tribes associated with them, or offshoot tribes of the *Chinese* clans.

While language is certainly an aspect of culture, we may not be certain what languages were spoken in this early time period, other than generally. However, one of the demarcating lines that may be drawn in determining the differences between the Tibetan and Chinese cultures in the ancient period as well as today is language. The term Tibetan identifies the linguistic category to which the present day peoples of Tibet proper are assigned, while the term Tibet defines the country (or as it is called today a province or The Tibetan Autonomous Region of China). The language of the present day Tibetans falls into the category of Tibeto-Burman, a much larger category of about 250 languages. Regarding a Tibeto-Burman relationship to the Chinese, Jerry Norman, a Chinese linguist asserts, “. . . A Chinese–Tibeto-Burman affinity is unassailable,” but the Chinese language is considered to be a distant cousin of the Tibeto-Burman group.⁷⁰

The wide differences between languages suggest a very early separation of the language base into at least two language groups, and hence, a separation in culture at an early stage (fig.1). While we may not determine an exact date or point of this separation, we may gain a general idea of the causes and ramifications of this separation. A history of the Chinese language can be traced back to “approximately the middle of the second millennium B.C.E., to . . . the Shang Dynasty.”⁷¹ The oracle bones leave “little doubt that they are written in a language closely related to . . . [the] written records of the Zhou [Chou] dynasty,”

and there is no question that the language is “ancestral to all later stages of Chinese, including the modern dialects [of Chinese].”⁷² As noted earlier, the first signs of Chinese character formation appeared on Neolithic pottery. These symbols were found on vessels at numerous locations, sometimes separated by great distances, but whether or not they should be considered as other than symbols used in common by associated cultures is still subject to dispute.⁷³

During the Shang period the Chinese language (Sinitic) was spoken in a much smaller territory than it is today and the Sino-Tibetan population had already divided into its Sinitic and Tibeto-Burman components.⁷⁴ While the Sino-Tibetan comparative work that has been done is based upon reconstructions, which are “to some degree based upon speculation . . . [this is] especially true of Old (or Archaic) Chinese . . . of the first millennium”; this work conclusively indicates that the Sino-Tibetan language is the parent group of both the Tibeto-Burman and the Sinitic languages and that they separated sometime before the proto-Chinese era. The reasonable estimates of linguists indicate that by the Shang period the Sino-Tibetan peoples had separated into two groups that may be identified as Sinitic (Chinese) and Tibeto-Burman respectively. The time necessary for separation to occur prior to this period was very lengthy.⁷⁵

We do not know exactly when proto-Sino-Tibetan peoples moved into the Yellow River Valley, but assuredly it was some time much earlier than the Shang

period. We can also surmise, the early Sino-Tibetan language was affected by the language it encountered,⁷⁶ but we do not know what that language was nor exactly who spoke it. A general theory exists suggesting that an east-west division occurred as early as the Yang-shao era. Lattimore proposes that there was a multiple language frontier of four dominant languages in northern China, "those of the loess peoples, the peoples of the China Plain, the oasis peoples, and those of the Siberian, North Mongolian, and Manchurian forests."⁷⁷ This idea seems more than plausible, when considered in the light of what we know archaeologically, of the separation between the Yang-shao and the Lung-shan, into eastern and western spheres. The meeting point of the Yang-shao and the Lung-shan coincides generally with the line between the loess peoples and the agricultural plain.⁷⁸

With the idea in mind that regional cultures by the Shang period had each achieved a relative state of self-identity, including separate languages, ethnic identities, and clan associations, we may return to the Chou period and ways in which the Chou and the Ch'iang peoples interacted. Some scholars maintain the Chou became recognizable only after absorbing certain characteristics of the previous Ch'i-chia culture known especially in Kansu. However, the Chou mark upon the region has been designated as unique, and their intrusion upon the Shensi-Lung-shan culture seems to have been abrupt. This would indicate a strong sense of self identity at the outset, though there was probably a strong

Ch'i-chia imprint due to the size and endurance of the Ch'i-chia culture in the region and its extensive survival in the area immediately to the west of the Chou.⁷⁹ The language that the Ch'i-chia people spoke is uncertain, but it is doubtful that they spoke Chinese in light of the Yang-shao and Lung-shan divisions.

Chou sites are widely distributed, but the highest density as mentioned earlier was in the Ching-Wei River region. The location in which the bronze vessels have been found, throughout the Chou and Kuang-she territories, suggests that the Chou may have been a product of the Kuang-she culture and that they were located in Shansi before a later move to Shensi.⁸⁰ If this is true, then a Chou proto-culture had a history of self-identity extending much further back in time than previously thought. It is also possible that the Chou language was of an eastern language block, and its culture that of a hunting and gathering or pastoral society. The primary sites of the Kuang-she were in Hopei near the northern steppe.⁸¹

Information about the Ch'iang, who were definitely *non-Chinese* according to the attitude of the Shang, and later the Chou characterizations, may be drawn from the history of the Chou. Beginning in the proto-Chou period, at least one portion of the Ch'iang people intermarried with the Chou at a very high level. Archaeological finds suggest that the first alliances of consequence (although there may have been some before) took place between the Ch'iang and Chou in

the Ching-Wei River regions. Many intermarriages are known to have taken place in this region, between the Chi clan and the Ch'iang, in the period just before the takeover of the Shang lands to the east (ca. 1027 B.C.E.) and throughout the Chou period. Early mythological examples include, the mother of Hou Chi (Lord Millet) who was named Ch'iang Yüan, and the wife of Tan Fu who was also a daughter of the Ch'iang (Tan Fu led the Chou to the Wei River Valley and he was grandfather to King Wu, 1027-1025 B.C.E.). Historical evidence begins with a Chi princess who was recorded as the wife of a noble with a Ch'iang surname. As late as the reigns of King Chiao (966-948 B.C.E.) and King Mu (947-928 B.C.E.) Ch'iang grave goods include bronze artifacts of both the Chou and the Ssu-wa cultures, a culture that archaeologists generally accept were related to the ancient Ch'iang. Apparently the process of fusion was still taking place in this period. Artifacts found in Kansu and Shensi include bronze human figures, jade reindeer, and non-Chou weapon decorations, all with affinities to the pastoralist culture and bearing certain indications of association with the environment. The Chinese graph for the name "Ch'iang," featuring the elements meaning men and sheep, suggests the same.⁸²

Numerous other finds identify the Ch'iang with the Kansu-Tsinghai region. The hairstyles and painted faces that appear on some Neolithic painted pots correlate to Han-date descriptions of the Ch'iang. Shang oracle inscriptions report the capture and sacrifice of Ch'iang in war, and the surrender of other

Ch'iang, such as the To-ma-ch'iang, noted to be a tribe who herded horses. Li Hsüeh-ch'in suggests two identifications of the Ch'iang may be made from Shang oracle inscriptions. First, "Ch'iang-fang" may have indicated a particular state. Second, "Ch'iang" may have indicated broadly those who occupied the wider regions as pastoralists. Both are probable, since the sources attest to their considerable military strength and the possibility of there being more than one state. The inscriptions report that the Shang were forced to mobilize large forces against the Ch'iang, suggesting they also must have been large in number.⁸³ Fu Ssu-nien attempted to identify the locations of the Ch'iang in ancient times through a study of the surname. "He proposed they were mountain tribes that originally lived in the hilly areas in western Honan and the southern Wei River Valley." Most of the unnamed tribes in the Han records, who were regarded as relatives of the Ch'iang, could be found in these locations. It is probable, however, that these tribes "represented only one branch of a once much larger and older conglomeration of old Ch'iang," since they are mentioned throughout the Shang and Chou records as located throughout the northwest of ancient China.⁸⁴

E.G. Pulleyblank states that the Ch'iang mentioned throughout the historic period beginning in 1400 B.C.E. to the end of the Han dynasties were of Tibeto-Burman stock. While Pulleyblank qualifies his assertion with a concern over the inability to find them within the range of the Shang (ca. 1400 B.C.E.) at the time

he wrote the article, Cho-yun Hsu and Katheryn M. Lindhuff provide an account of the location and relationship of the Ch'iang and the proto-Chou, during the Shang period, based on the information above, which includes the work of Kwang-chih Chang and other Chinese scholars. In summary they state,

the Ch'iang were widely distributed geographically during the Shang period, living in a zone stretching from present-day Kansu to western Honan. Those of the group called the Ch'iang-fang lived closest to the Shang clan center. Another branch of the Ch'iang that occupied part of the Wei Valley and became close allies with the Chou used the surname Ch'iang. Those groups who were never organized as a state must be those known in the *Tso-chuan* as the Ch'iang-jung. Those living at the Neolithic level were the people of the Ssu-wa culture of Kansu, who were the ancestors of the Ch'iang people, recorded as such during the Han period.⁸⁵

Now that the relative locations of the Ch'iang have been established, we may return to a discussion of the larger picture.

As we have seen, cultures of the second millennium B.C.E. gave birth to a number of civilizations: the Erh-li't'ou (Hsia), the Shang and the Chou. These were all apparently derived from the Lung-shan culture, and while the cultures surrounding them took on various aspects, these other cultures did not reach the sophisticated levels suggested by the term "*civilization*." The Erh-li-t'ou, Shang and Chou built palaces, walled cities, and royal tombs; created ritual arts of bronze and jade; defined the hierarchy of their societies; established governments, ritualized religion, economies and military control; and developed a written language. Chang's simple and realistic explanation for the phenomena

of growth in the region is that, "when population grew people pushed out."⁸⁶

Probably, each group that pushed out, was initially created through the mixing of an indigenous people with a Sino-Tibetan population that had become specialized regionally over time. Each people who pushed out, not only spread from the gravitational centers of the three dynasties, they also spread from the gravitational centers of the peripheral cultures. Over time the *Chinese* and the peripheral peoples revolved around centers of their respective heritages. As they did so, they became more distinct, and so did their languages and cultures.⁸⁷

The historical sources we have considered suggest that a proto-Tibetan population emerged on the Tsinghai-Tibetan Plateau in the Neolithic period and existed and expanded outwards from that region, from that time forward. The studies also indicate that, even prior to the Yang-shao and Shang cultures, surges in population on the greater Plateau instigated proto-Tibetan migrations into the Koko Nor regions, west into Kansu, Shensi, Shansi, western Honan, and south into western Szechuan. These were the people who became known as the Ch'iang.⁸⁸ In Shang, Chou, and Ch'in times the Ch'iang almost exclusively occupied the regions to the west of the Hanku Pass (a gap between the river and hills at the eastern end of the Great Bend of the Yellow River) and around the Chou homeland, where they lived and prospered.⁸⁹ As will be seen in the following chapters clans, tribes and relatives of the Ch'iang also founded certain

of the Chou states. In Han times, while a few tribes had settled into agricultural communities to the northwest of China, they were not always cooperative. The majority of those that remained in the foothills were unconquerable and often dominated areas of the northwest, especially the Kansu Corridor, both politically and militarily.⁹⁰ In the Chou, Ch'in, and Han periods, the Chinese made no distinction between the Ch'iang and peoples they knew were associated with them, but with whom they were not directly acquainted. Culturally, they perceived of these groups as interrelated peoples sharing a common ancestry. As new tribes were introduced, the Chinese called them by their contemporary names or included them under the umbrella of Ch'iang.⁹¹

With the identity and locations of the ancient Tibetans established, the history of these peoples may now be traced and a history of the Tsinghai-Tibetan Plateau peoples reconstructed from the beginning of the Chou period to the end of the Han dynasties. A few qualifications must be noted, however. The main historical sources documenting the existence of the Ch'iang during the Shang and Chou periods are the Shang oracle bones and the Tso chuan. While these sources are sufficient to reconstruct a basic outline of the history of the proto-Tibetan Ch'iang tribes of the north and northwest, they document little regarding the proto-Tibetan tribes of the Szechuan region and the Tsinghai-Tibetan Plateau. Thus, prior to the third century B.C.E., the story of the proto-Tibetans must be divided in two. The story of the proto-Tibetans in the northern

regions is tied to the histories of the Chou and the Ch'in dynasties. In the south the story of the proto-Tibetans is tied to the history of the southern part of the greater Eurasian trading community. These two stories will be told in chapters two and three respectively.

Endnotes

1. Ancient Tibet: Research Materials from the Yeshe De Project (Berkeley: Dharma Publishing, 1986), 91-92.

2. Chris Scarre, editor. Timelines of the Ancient World, (London: Dorling Kindersley, 1993) 70-71; Kwang-chih Chang, The Archeology of Ancient China, 4th edition, revised and enlarged (New Haven: Yale University press, 1986), 87.

3. Ancient Tibet Research Materials, (Berkeley, 1986), 93.

4. Ibid.

5. Ibid.

6. Ibid., 90.

7. Ibid., 93.

8. Ibid.

9. Ibid., 94.

10. Ibid., 97.

11. Ibid.

12. Ibid.

13. Giuseppe Tucci, Transhimalaya, trans. from the French by James Hogarth (Geneva: Nagel Publishers, 1973), 58.

14. Wolfram Eberhard, A History of China, rev. ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1948), 6.

15. Tucci, Transhimalaya, 53.

16. Ibid.

17. Ibid., 54.

18. Ibid., 52-59 passim
19. Ibid. Giuseppe Tucci provides no primary source information.
20. Ibid., 74.
21. Ibid., 93-94.
22. Chang, Archaeology, 4th ed., 141.
23. Ibid., 142.; Cho-Yun Hsu, and Katherine M. Linduff. Western Chou Civilization. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), 36.
24. Chang, Archaeology, 4th ed., 142.
25. Ibid., 114. These early people were clearly cultivators, but probably of the slash and burn variety. The indications suggest that they moved frequently and apparently re-occupied favored sites periodically. They had domesticated animals, but as well depended upon hunting and fishing.
26. Ibid., 377.
27. Ibid., 91.
28. Ibid., 90-93.
29. Ibid., 140.
30. Ibid., 112.
31. Ibid., 142-45.
32. Ibid., 147.
33. Ibid., 150.
34. Ibid., 245.
35. Ibid., 281.
36. Ibid., 281-82.
37. Ibid., 152.

38. Ibid.

39. Ibid., 151-52 passim.

40. Ibid., 280-85 passim.

41. Ibid., 285.

42. Ibid., 156.

43. Ibid., 275; In southern Shansi the T'ao-ssu Phase of seventy sites, contained houses, storage pits and a cemetery believed to consist of several thousand burials. The graves that have been excavated include numerous artifacts including in some cases hundreds of items: jade *tsung* tubes, axes, rings, ornaments, pig skeletons, elaborate headdresses, armlets, elaborate shrouds, combs, hairpins, musical instruments and copper objects, etc. The types and amounts of the artifacts found in the larger and medium size graves suggest a concentration of wealth amongst an upper class.; The *ts'ung* tubes were elongated tubes square on the outside round in the interior and decorated with animal masks, consisting of two eyes and a mouth and osme carved with bird designs and made of jade mined in the area of Lake T'ai near Nan-king. Commonalities throughout the regional sub-divisions of the Lung-shan may be seen in the appearance of copper objects, the widespread use of potter's wheels and improved kilns, the stamped earth construction of town walls, of institutionalized violence and the sacrifice of human victims. The manifestation of a cosmology is indicated by the evidence of regular rituals. Objects such as jade *ts'ung* tubes (this includes the Ch'i-chia culture if rings are included), and the universal use of scapulimancy suggest shamans were regularly employed. The findings at Ch'eng-tzu (Shantung) and T'ao-ssu (Shansi) cemeteries indicate an economic and political polarization took place within a frame work of unilinear clans and lineages that came to define the rulers and the ruled; these may be indicative of the first small states. The occurrence of all of these conditions in the Yang-shao and Lung-shan regions of northern China, are characteristic of a single Lung-shan culture, but they did not all occur at the same time; instead a series of changes took place within each regional culture over an extended period of time; approximately 2000 years (255).

44. Ibid., 303-307 passim; States or *Kuo* were walled towns. The names of the towns were called *shih*; the *shih* was the name of the town. Rulers of a *kuo* were members of a *hsing*, or agnatic (patriarchal) clan ruling over members of their own clans and members of other clans; members of other clans came under their sovereignty. There were several hundred of these states, each with

a principal town as its capital. Many of the names of the rulers of the towns were the names of ancient heroes and sages. Neighboring states often shared a common ancestor and culture. Ancient historians, according to the fragmentary descriptions of the material culture and the manners and customs of the numerous states grouped the states into cultures and ethnic groups many times under common names (Eastern Yi, I, Ti, etc.). "It goes without saying that the cultural classification of ethnic groups based upon the textual data are not consistent with the archaeological classifications of the Shantung region, the middle Yellow River region, and the middle Yangtze region. . . . At no time do the textual records tell of a single state emerging to subjugate all the other states until the Ch'in Dynasty in 221 B.C.E." (307).

45. Ibid., 312-14.

46. Ibid., 316.; While we may not obtain explicit information from the annals regarding the locations and names of the peoples of the ancient period such as the Hsia we may obtain a hint of their location from an analysis of the ancient histories.; On the basis of thirty town names found in ancient texts, archaeologists believed they might be able to find the Hsia in two regions: first, the Lo-yang Plain and central Honan and second, the lower Fen River Valley in southwestern Shansi south of the Huo-shan Mountains; using these references archaeologists located the Erh-li-t'ou culture in central Honan and ascertained that it was a specific pre-Shang culture that followed in the wake of the Lung-shan (308-309).

47. Ibid., 311-14; Implements used by the Erh-li-t'ou included agricultural tools of stone, shell knives and sickles and shell and bone hoes. These were also the primary materials used for axes, adzes, chisels and arrowheads. Several bronze knives, awls, chisels and adzes were also found as well as bronze arrowheads, a fishhook and disks, probably used for ornaments. The major finds were bronze ritual vessels (seven *chüeh* cups), weapons (halberds and knives), and musical instruments (small bells). Other valuables include jades, especially *ts'ung* tubes, and long ceremonial knives and axes, cowries, turquoise, and lacquer with wooden cores (cylinders, cups, drums and bowls). Shoulder bones of pigs, cattle and sheep used for divination and incised fish appear on the bones but as yet no oracle inscriptions.

48. Ibid., 242-43.

49. Ibid., 295.

50. Ibid., 295-96.

51. Ibid.

52. Ibid., 297, 304-305. Numerous Chou texts have survived; enough so that a number of historians have been able to piece together at least an outline of the ancient dynastic sequence; but no evidence exists to confirm or deny its reliability. Three cycles may be distinguished, San Huang, or the Three Sovereigns, Wu-ti, or the Five Emperors and the Three Dynasties—The Hsia Dynasty founded by Yü, a hero who conquered the flood; the Shang Dynasty, founded by T'ang; and the Chou Dynasty founded by Wu Wang. As discussed earlier, Chang asserts that the Hsia Dynasty (ca. 2200 to 1750 B.C.E.) may possibly be the Erh-li-t'ou culture the date of which falls within the appropriate time period. "... as far as the Erh-li-t'ou culture goes, the exact coincidence of its geographic area with the area of distribution of the traditional Hsia Dynasty capital cities cannot be purely coincidental," but the author asserts, there is no conclusive proof until writings are found that identifies it with one of the ethnic groups, but he "bets on Hsia" (316). Ku Tsu-yü (1624-1680) suggested that the Hsia Dynasty received tribute from approximately 10,000 states, at the time of the Shang only 3000 were left; at the time of the Chou there 1800 left; when the Chou moved to the east there were only 1200 states; During the Spring and Autumn period they were reduced to 100 states; clear records exist for fourteen lords, finally the descendants of the barbarians of the nine provinces, living in some eighteen states, were found in between the various lords listed (307).

53. Ibid., 277.

54. Ibid., 277-80.

55. Ibid., 342-43.

56. Ibid., 356-57.

57. Ibid., 359.

58. Ibid., 360-61.

59. Ibid., 376.

60. Ibid., 377-84 passim.

61. Ibid., 384.

62. Ibid., 385.

63. Ibid., 385-86.

64. Ibid., 387.

65. Ibid., 371.

66. Ibid., 365.

67. Ibid., 371. In Shantung and Northern Kiangsu, one such culture has been designated as the Yüeh-shih. Artifacts include beakers and urns on pedestals, steamers with lids, and most significantly bronze awls and arrowheads; after the Lung-shan, this culture may have been the next to produce bronze. The culture existed contemporaneously with the Hsia and the Shang. Other, slightly later sites in the region may be connected with the Shang. In grave sites, Shang style bronzes, jade objects, stone ornaments and cowrie shells, accompanied skeletons of both humans and dogs.; A culture of northern Hopei and the Liao River Valley (ca. 2500 B.C.E.), designated as the Lower Hsia-chia-tien gave rise to a new form of ceramics, and distinctive stone tools including cylindrical axes, flat hoes, shouldered hoes, flat perforated axes, knives and microliths. Two regional phases may be distinguished on either side the Yen shan Mountains, to the north and to the south. Bronze objects such as arrowheads, knives, rings, earrings and small implements with sockets are found amongst pottery painted in red, white, or yellow pigments with spiral designs similar to those found on Shang bronzes. Some of the dwellings were constructed of rocks or clay slabs, the clay houses were comparable to some of the houses in Honan Lung-shan. Archaeologists believe the Lower Hsia-chia-tien Culture was an outgrowth of the Lung-shan and Shang and in the following period influenced by the Western Chou (375).

68. Ibid., 241.

69. Ibid., 242.

70. Jerry Norman, Chinese, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 7.

71. Ibid., 4.

72. Ibid.

73. Hsu and Lindhuff, Western Chou, 30-31.

74. Chang, Archaeology, 4th ed., 242.

75. STEDT: Sino-Tibetan Etymological Dictionary and Thesaurus, University of California at Berkeley, URL:<http://www.linguistics.berkeley.edu/lingdept/research/stedt>, last modified 4/21/97. The Proto-Sino-Tibetan (PST) homeland seems to have been somewhere on the Himalayan Plateau, where the great rivers of East and Southeast Asia (including the Yellow, Yangzte, Mekong, Brahmaputra, Salween, and Irrawaddy) have their source. The time of hypothetical ST unity, when the Proto-Han (=Proto-Chinese) and Proto-Tibeto-Burman (PTB) peoples formed a relatively undifferentiated linguistic community, must have been at least as remote as the Proto-Indo-European period, perhaps around 4000 B.C.E.

76. Jerry Norman, Chinese, 16.

77. Owen Lattimore, Inner Asian Frontiers of China, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 457.

78. Ibid., 457-58.

79. Ibid., 38.

80. Ibid., 51-53. These people were known to have existed in Shensi, east of the T'ai-huang Mountains, and throughout central Shansi, in eastern and northern Shansi, as far north as the Yellow River, and south to the Liü-liang Mountains near the Fen River Valley. The earliest periods of the Kuang-she development pre-date the proto-Chou, mid phases correspond to the period of proto-Chou development and the final stages of the Kuang-she culture equate with the last decades of the Shang. Contact is confirmed by the presence of a bow-shaped artifact of unknown use found only in Kuang-she remains and referred to in Chou inscriptions. This emblem was found at T'ai-yun in Shansi, at Ch'i-shan in Shensi, at lo-yang and Chün-hsien in Honan, and at K'o-tso in Liaoning. Another emblem in the shape of a human figure was found on about fifty bronzes. These were found at Fu-feng, Ch'i-shan, Ch'ang-wu, Sui-te, pao-chi, Ling-shih, all in Shansi. The distribution coincides with the homeland of the Kuang-she and the proto-Chou (Ibid.).

81. Ibid., 14.

82. Hsu and Lindhuff, Western Chou, 55.

83. Ibid., 58.

84. Ibid.

85. Ibid., 58-59.
86. Chang, Archaeology, 4th ed., 410.
87. Lattimore, Frontiers of China, 351-53 passim.
88. Tucci, Transhimalaya, 58.; Eberhard, A History of China, 4-6 passim.
89. Edmund Capon and William Mcquitty, Princes of Jade, (London: Sphere Books, 1973), 38. One of the great advantages for the Ch'in as well as the Chou was the at the Wei River Valley was surrounded by mountains and only accessible through a gap between the River and hills at the great bend of the yellow River. Defense therefore was for less of a problem than it was for the Chinese living on the great plain.
90. Watson, Records, 1:100-101.
91. Ibid., 2:265-68 passim; and Beckwith, The Tibetan Empire, 7n.10. citing the Hou Han shu, 87:2884-2885, 87:2898.

Chapter 2

The Proto-Tibetans and China: Ca. 1000 B.C.E. - 200 B.C.E.

The proto-Tibetans lived on the borders of Chinese civilization by the second millennium as the Ch'iang and though the majority were never sinicized, some intermarried with the Chou, during the tenth to fifth centuries B.C.E. when they provided many of the "principal wives of the Chou rulers."¹ As a result, some of the Ch'iang were instrumental in founding a number of Chou states. The Ch'iang were also involved with the founding of the Ch'in state that eventually unified China and with keeping the northwestern frontier of China unsinicized for more than a thousand years, from the beginning of the Chou period (ca. 1000 B.C.E.) to the end of the Later Han (220 C.E.). The Ch'iang in concert with other proto-Tibetan tribes also became active traders, serving as intermediaries between the Chinese and the other non-Chinese peoples to the west. Spurred by the opportunity for wealth, an informal federation of tribes, united by culture and self-interest, effectively blocked Chinese expansion through at least the end of the Han dynastic periods.

The development of the Ch'iang people in China may be archaeologically traced through the developments that took place with the Ch'i-chia and Ssu-wa

cultures in the northwest that were discussed in the first chapter.² From the peripheral areas of these cultures in the Kansu-Tsinghai regions, Shensi and parts of Honan, we can only imagine that several herdsman cultures gradually formed a continuum, adapted to varying terrains and climatic conditions with mixed economies and "little class-formation."³ They were at this time pastoral shepherds who generally wandered with their flocks, herding sheep and goats in the high mountain regions and were probably present before the existence of these cultures, during the Yang-shao period. On the steppes to the north of the Chinese agricultural basin lived the forerunners of the Hsiung-nu, ancestors of the Turkish peoples. Originally hunters, these tribes also evolved into a pastoral culture with an agriculture based on millet and wheat, then shifted to a nomadic way of life that included the raising of sheep, goats and cattle, and the domestication of the horse by ca. 2500 B.C.E. Simultaneously, to the east and the south, in addition to the proto-Tibetans and these Turkish tribes, lived six other specific groups, a mixture of pastoralists and agriculturalists with lifestyles adapted to their specific microclimates and terrains.⁴

The Ch'iang apparently maintained a strong sense of identity in terrain that yielded little impetus for change. Their consistent presence is confirmed through the archaeological data relating to the cultures of the region in which they lived, and through the primary source materials that mention them beginning in the fourteenth century B.C.E. during the time of the Shang,

throughout the Chou, Ch'in and Han dynasties and even to the present day. The Tibetans of today have been shown to be derivatives of a Tibetic speaking subgroup of the larger Tibeto-Burman category. In other words, the Tibeto-Burmans are the ancestors of the present day Tibetans and also the ancestors of other peoples of Tibeto-Burman background found in present day China.⁵

The combined evidence suggests that the Ch'iang, the Tibetans of today, and of the seventh century are the product of several migrations that took place within a Tibetan sphere of interaction centered in the Tsinghai-Tibetan Plateau region. The Sino-Tibetan Etymological Dictionary and Thesaurus Research Committee (STEDT) asserts that the proto-Sino-Tibetan linguistic group originated in the southern regions of the Tsinghai-Tibetan Plateau where the Yellow, Yangtze, Mekong, Salween and the Brahmaputra rivers have their source. These rivers circumscribed fertile valleys that for all their topographical and climactic limitations, also teemed with natural wildlife and foods fit for hunter-gatherer populations and farming.

Estimates by linguists based on studies of how long it takes a language to develop, assert that by ca. 6000 B.C.E. a proto-Sino-Tibetan population existed on the Plateau and that by ca. 4000 B.C.E. this population had expanded and migrated down through the river valleys, into the regions surrounding the Tsinghai-Tibetan Plateau and very extensively into the regions of ancient northwest China.⁶ Though archaeological finds in the northern regions of China

are limited to the discovery of widespread localized cultures they intimate that these people further developed into the nomadic and pastoral societies that we are more familiarly acquainted with who are known as the Ch'iang.⁷

Lattimore asserts that during the Shang and Chou era an outgrowth in the Kansu-Tsinghai region resulted in a migration that spread in two directions: back up into the Tsinghai-Tibetan Plateau and further into the west and northwest of present day China.⁸ In the following years, while some Ch'iang tribes were interacting with the Shang and Chou, other members of their group no doubt were interacting with the Tsinghai-Tibetan Plateau people.⁹ Lattimore describes the Tibetan Plateau "as a meeting ground for many cultural influences drawn from a number of remote geographical regions and differing societies,"¹⁰ namely, from India, Central Asia, Burma, and Yunnan. He affirms his hypothesis by noting the "survival of old social forms" such as "Polyandry, . . . traces of matriarchy," archaic political structure and unsophisticated agricultural methods dating from a more ancient period.¹¹ The "universally robust control of the local rulers of Tibetan communities,"¹² and the underdeveloped methods of Tibetan agriculture, he states, cannot be considered "original"; rather, the methods are clearly derivatives "of practices that were once more developed" that came from regions outside of Tibet.¹³

In other words, the Tibetans of the seventh century were a product of Neolithic communities on the Plateau, combined with peoples who came from

other regions, and the Ch'iang. As a result, a new people formed on the Tibetan Plateau from a mix, including others from civilizations that grew up around its base. The initial formation of the Tibetan population probably took place around 1000 B.C.E., when Chou Chinese civilization was developing.¹⁴ S.K. Chatterjee supports this assertion. Studies suggest that the Tibetan culture was already involved in major developments such as the establishment of larger agricultural communities by this time. The largest concentration of people seems to have been in the south, to the east, and to the north of Burma.¹⁵ The Tsangpo River Valley appears to have been the most probable location for the development of this core culture. It contains today, as it did in the past, the most agricultural land and it is within this valley that some of the Neolithic cultures evolved. The area is also known to have been the cradle of Tibetan civilization in the seventh century.¹⁶

Today, the linguistic similarities and differences among Tibetans, reflects the survival of the ancient language and provides further evidence for the assertion that people migrated from the south northwards. Widely separated regions on the periphery share archaic linguistic tendencies suggesting that at some point the south-central regions of Tibet were at the core of an earlier culture.¹⁷ The existence of archaic languages of such close affinity in such widely separated areas suggests that the present day outer populations are descendants of some more ancient people whose culture was centered

somewhere between these regions. It is notable that, despite differences in dialects, there exists a basic congruency of language across the broad expanse of the Tsinghai-Tibetan Plateau region that was surrounded, but apparently unaffected by speakers of very different Indo-European and Chinese languages.¹⁸

Historians have noted that language is to a great deal determined by the need of the people to communicate. As Jacques Gernet concludes, "It is geography that forms this or that mode of life and defines its limits."¹⁹ Lattimore cites the unique evolutionary experience of the Tibetans and the persistence of their people and their language over such a long period as due to their adaptation to life in harsh and unforgiving terrain. The proto-Tibetans [and thus the Ch'iang], he asserts, developed a fierceness and an individuality that sharply differentiated them from either the Chinese or the nomadic tribes of the northern steppes. Consequently, geographical terrain and climatic harshness produced an unconquerable individuality in the people and a strong sense of otherness, enabling them to persist with their identity intact in the face of other expanding groups.²⁰ Lattimore concludes that the environment of the Tsinghai-Tibetan Plateau region led to the development of a semi-nomadic people, different from the nomad of the steppes, in that they were "a type of guerilla fighter, difficult to subdue."²¹ He asserts that these guerilla types had a "mixed economy of herding, hunting, farming and the gathering of wild plants" and that, unlike the

nomads of the north, they returned to centers of agriculture in times of severe weather.²² The Ch'i-chia and Ssu-wa cultures of the Kansu-Tsinghai region may be examples of such bases. It is to this region and the north of China that we now return.

As we have seen, the ancient Chinese cultures of the Yellow River agricultural basin (ca. 3000 B.C.E.),²³ the Yang-shao (west) and the Lung-shan (east), were culminations of the mixing of cultures over a period of time. This process, no doubt, included the conquest of various subgroups by others and the mutual interchange of ideas and technologies.²⁴ The resultant culture was "a stratified society made up of at least one privileged [class] and one-ruled stratum."²⁵ These cultures later gave birth to others, including those of the Shang (ca. 1500 B.C.E.) and the Chou (ca. 1025 B.C.E.), containing elements of their predecessors.²⁶

Historical records attest to the formation in 2000 B.C.E. of small statelets in southern Shensi corresponding to the beginning of the Bronze Age.²⁷ There is no evidence of proto-Tibetan city-states in this period, which marks the initial formative period of the Shang, but the presence of the proto-Tibetan Ch'iang tribal society is well documented by the Shang records beginning in circa 1400 B.C.E. They are identified as a people with whom the Shang fought frequently and from whom they took many captives.²⁸ As noted in chapter one, the data, beginning with the Shang, tells of a Chinese civilization that evolved rapidly from

Neolithic communities into a complex society. While we may know little of how the Ch'iang lived, the historical records provide enough evidence for us to imagine a nomadic society akin in lifestyle to those tribes of people living in the region today. This society also would have had to have been large enough in population to withstand the expansion of the Shang into their ancient territories, since we know the Shang were required to raise large armies against them.²⁹

The dominance of the Shang in the east is apparent by the size and magnificence of their cities. The construction of a Shang settlement enclosed by walls near An-Yang required the movement of almost three million cubic meters of soil and 10,000 workers over 18 years.³⁰ Bronze vessels, implements, and weapons bore the "trade marks" of their makers, while artistic designs on artifacts had already incorporated the animal style of Central Asia. These suggest that avenues for the transmission of the arts and other technologies were already open during the second millennium B.C.E. It is likely that the Ch'iang, living midway between the Shang and the tribes to the west and north, were also actively engaged in this transfer of technology, and thus had become a part of the economy through trade even in this early period. No doubt, they also traded with a variety of tribes living in the vicinity, including those tribes living at higher altitudes, and perhaps even ventured into the higher Plateau regions during summer.

Metals were in use as a means of exchange in this period and studies

show that fluctuations in the economy due to their availability or scarcity was already a problem during the Shang era.³¹ Gifts made of metal were also common. Historical notations indicate that copper was measured by the double handful, an amount approximately equaling six ounces by today's standards.³² Since northern peoples controlled the regions of Siberia and the Ch'iang occupied the Kun Lun Mountain regions from which a large portion of these metals came, the nomadic tribes shared a unique position in the Chinese economic community. The nomadic tribal peoples to the north and west could affect to varying degrees, negatively or positively, fluctuations in prices by controlling the supply.³³

Archaeological sites in the Szechuan area demonstrate that the proto-Tibetans and the proto-Chinese also coexisted with other evolving communities at various stages of development. Findings of pottery and huts built upon posts at ancient sites at Ch'eng-tu and neighboring hamlets show a pre-Shang culture (San-hsing-tui) that had its earliest beginnings in the fourth millennium B.C.E. (4170-2875). In historical terms the culture in its late stages spanned the pre-Shang, Shang, and early Western Chou periods.³⁴ Three hundred artifacts of the late stage period consist of items made of gold, bronze, jade, stone, bone, ceramics, and ivory.³⁵ Another cache of 439 bronze artifacts includes statuary of robed figures with crowns, ceremonial masks, scepters, halberds, and many smaller statues posed in various positions.³⁶ While the buildings of the Ch'eng-

tu area are much less impressive than those of the Shang communities, a continuity of culture between the two civilizations is well noted.³⁷

There is also no evidence of any ancient Ch'iang site here that may be connected with either the Ch'eng-tu peoples or the Shang, but several theories regarding the development of this region suggest that the people of the Szechuan area were a product of proto-Tibetan peoples who had migrated from the Min Mountain region.³⁸ While this may be so, the important point to note at this juncture is that the artifacts of the two civilizations indicate that there were consistent relations between the Shang and Ch'eng-tu cultures and the Ch'iang groups who lived between them. Their location gave them plenty of opportunity to act as mediators of trade items.³⁹

The Shang oracle bones indicate that both politically and militarily the early peoples of north China were already fairly sophisticated and that wars were frequent. Of the 100,000 bones and tortoise shells bearing inscriptions from the Shang period, 50,000 have been studied and the reports published. Of 5000 characters only 1500 have been reliably interpreted, but they provide a picture of an ancient Shang society with a graded hierarchy that included slaves. A complete list of kings dates "back even beyond the founding of the dynasty."⁴⁰ The oracle bones also testify to the appearance of a religious system of officials invested with the power to confirm the aristocracy and validate the king's right to rule. They also reveal extensive animal and human sacrifice made on a frequent

basis to honor the royalty. It appears from the records that the Shang specifically sought out the Ch'iang for the majority of these sacrifices. Many of these inscriptions express concern about whether or not enough Ch'iang would be found for the sacrificial ceremonies, while several other records attest to the sacrifice of as many as 300 Ch'iang at a time.⁴¹

This does not mean, however, that the Ch'iang were an easy target. The records indicate that the Shang and the Ch'iang fought along a common boundary and that both had significant forces at their disposal. The Shang controlled the core of the lower Yellow River region including the present day provinces of "Honan, western Shantung, southern Hopei, central and south Shansi, east Shansi, and parts of Kwangsi and Anwei."⁴² The Ch'iang occupied most of the territory immediately west and northwest of the Shang. Late notations of the era report Shang population figures of "3.1 million free men and 1.1 million serfs."⁴³ These numbers suggest that the population within the Shang state alone fell between 4-5 million.⁴⁴ Undoubtedly, the size and organization of Shang armies presented a considerable threat to the developing nations of peoples around it. While we are unable to ascertain population figures for the Ch'iang they were numerous enough to send a considerable force against the Shang. The frequency with which they are mentioned in the sources indicates that they were both a primary adversary and target during the entire Shang dynastic period. Their consistent presence suggests that they were indeed a

fecund people because their losses in war appear to have made little dent in their ability to wage it. Their numbers must have been reinforced regularly, for mention of them as warriors persist in the annals from the time of the Shang through the Han dynastic periods.

Toward the end of the Shang era (ca. 1000 B.C.E.) we find the Ch'iang established to the west and north of the Chou. The political center of the Ch'iang then seems to have been in eastern Kansu.⁴⁵ The organization of the tribes in this location were sufficient enough to earn them mention in the Shang shu as one of the eight nations or peoples who fought with the Chou against the Shang at the battle of Muye (ca. 1025 B.C.E.), which ended Shang rule in the eleventh century B.C.E. Notations portray the Chou and its allies as conquering peoples and as celebrants of their respective heritages, with pride in their independence and identity. In celebration the "allied peoples" brought forth "resplendent birds" such as "peacocks and the like," identifying and testifying to their individualities as separate peoples. The Ch'iang exhibited "a game fowl" of some kind, while the Shu people exhibited a "type of pheasant" as totems of honor.⁴⁶ As noted earlier, records also indicate that intermarriage was practiced as a means of cementing alliances. The grandmother of the Chou leader was from the Ch'iang tribes and held an important position on the council of the confederacy. Her presence on the council and the fact that the Chou leader was her grandson suggests that the Ch'iang tribes enjoyed a great deal of

importance especially during this period of Chou beginnings.⁴⁷

While little is known from Shang sources about the political organization of the Ch'iang at this time, the Chou records and the descriptions in the Tso chuan suggest, that the Ch'iang were an organized association based on a clan and tribal system.⁴⁸ In the later period, the Tso chuan refers to the Ch'iang as barbarians, "loosely organized tribes . . . who fought in small groups on foot."⁴⁹ This does not indicate, however, that the Ch'iang were any more backward militarily than their neighbors, as some historians assert.

During the early part of the first millennium, we know that infantry men were used almost exclusively in large battles, while in the Shang, Western Chou, and Spring and Autumn (722-256 B.C.E.) periods, the use of chariots and horses were restricted to the nobility and suitable only for gentlemanly warfare. The chariots were unusable in the rough terrain of the hills and steppes. The Tso chuan point of view that the Ch'iang were a backward people, based on the fact that they fought on foot, reflects the perspective of a chariot riding aristocratic society looking backwards, describing a people who did not hold the same values as themselves. The Chou lived in agricultural communities on the plains and in the river valleys. The aristocrats of this later era measured a man's stature according to the number of chariots he owned, coupled with the number of his infantrymen.⁵⁰ The majority of the Ch'iang, however, lived in mountainous terrain in which chariots were entirely unusable. It seems, they remained

throughout the period essentially a nomadic people and only semi-attached to agricultural villages. Their simple life, in contrast to that of the *civilized* Chou, made them appear backwards. Still, the Tso chuan describes them as a powerful opponent.⁵¹

Significant battles of the Shang and Tso chuan periods were marked by the use of bronze weapons. The Shang and Ch'eng-tu artifacts suggest that bronze weaponry, including spears, swords and halberds, were by this time, common.⁵² While some may doubt that the Ch'iang had access to these weapons prior to the Battle of Muye, artifacts indicate that it is certain that they had them during and immediately after, therefore, we may assume that equitable weaponry most likely became the norm as early as circa 1000 B.C.E. at least among the Ch'iang and among those who were involved in the conquest of the Shang.⁵³

By the time of the Chou (ca. 1027 B.C.E.), population increases in northern China had fostered substantial political organization. States had large armies that required not only the materials for bronze weapons, but also increased food production and a means of distribution, especially in wartime. As a result, land management evolved to include large agricultural concerns, overseen by Chou officials, and the building of roads for the transportation of agricultural products and military access.⁵⁴ Modeling their system upon that of the Shang, the Chou expanded their own government and territory.⁵⁵ A larger

ruling hierarchy developed, including a hereditary and titled landowning class. They were taxed and, in turn, taxed those subservient to them. A diversified society came into existence in which principalities, divided into sections containing *kuo* (cities surrounded by walls), came to be administered by individuals holding titles arranged in a descending grade of five degrees of nobility. The power of this nobility was based on the worship of a corresponding ancestral hierarchy under the authority of the king.⁵⁶

During the period of the Western Chou (1025? - 771 B.C.E.) the Chou religious and cultural center was located at Chou-tsung in the valley of the Wei River, immediately adjacent to Ch'iang territory.⁵⁷ A number of tribes, including the Ch'iang, as noted earlier, allied themselves with the Chou state, and as they did so, obtained titles and sometimes added their lands to those of the Chinese. As a result, *kuos* continued to enlarge, both in size and number, but the limits of the incorporated territory were comparatively small when measured against the lands still controlled by the remaining Ch'iang and other tribes of the north and west.⁵⁸

Often these new fiefs were controlled by Ch'iang clansmen who had intermarried with the Chou, but their main loyalty assuredly was to the clans and the tribes in the west with whom they shared ancestry, culture, and location. Thus, the early Western Chou existed rather precariously on the edge of a vast territory occupied in the north, south, and west by many independent tribes.⁵⁹

Their occupation of the lands was partly the result of an agreement between allies after the demise of the Shang that seems to have had consequences in later years. Most of the territory beyond the Hanku Pass surrounding the Chou capital region still belonged to the tribes, and they dominated the region, plaguing following administrations with uprisings, rebellions and raids.⁶⁰

Approximately 170 states were created during this early period of the Western Chou, from the former territories of the Shang in the east and the proto-Chou territories in the Wei River Valley. At this time the designation Ch'in was applied to the vast lands extending west from the Chou borders into the foothills of the Kansu-Tsinghai region, the Shensi steppes and western Honan. In the early Chou period, this home of the Ch'iang remained an almost unknown land to the west. The beginning of the formation of the Ch'in state began when the name of Ch'in was applied to a small principality in the Ching River Valley; it was only an appanage that according to legend was granted to Fei-tzu, a petty chieftain, so that he might raise horses for the Chou.⁶¹ Only at the end of the Warring States Period (897 B.C.E.) did the state of Ch'in come into existence and compared to the lands to the west, Ch'in was small.⁶² Even then the size of the lands occupied by the Ch'iang equaled, if not exceeded, the total of those lands occupied by the Chou states combined. It is probable the nomadic lifestyle of the Ch'iang fostered the division of the region according to clan and tribe.

In this period, as the territories of particular houses increased, so did the power and status of those families, which included the Ch'iang who had married into the Chou houses.⁶³ A new term, *hsien* (conquered townships or *kuo*, including surrounding lands, that became administrative districts and hereditary fiefs) was coined to define these even larger fiefs. "What distinguished the *hsien* in principle from villages of the older type . . . [was] namely that it was conquered territory,"⁶⁴ states Jacques Gernet. But while orthodox historians may consider much of the Ch'in state to be conquered territory, in reality the majority of the territory in the west and northwest remained within the domain of the tribes.⁶⁵ This *hsien* type of organization fostered increased food production, leading to expansion not only of the Ch'in and Chou populations, but also of the nomadic tribesmen associated with royal houses who traded and intermarried in order to share in the fruits of the infant states. As populations increased, Ch'in needs for more land led to frequent incursions into nomadic territory further to the west. Military conflict escalated toward the end of the Western Chou, not only among the Chou households, but also between the Chou, the Ch'in, the Ch'iang, and the other tribes.⁶⁶ By the end of the Western Chou period, according to the Tso chuan three tribal groups dominated in the north and northwest of the Chou states: the Red Ti, who were later absorbed into the Chou states; the White Ti, who lived in northeastern Shensi, and the Ch'iang or the Western Jung as they were sometimes called who lived primarily to the west of the Ch'in.⁶⁷

As mentioned above, royal Chou lands were enlarged through the process of granting hereditary fiefs to loyal vassals, and intermarriages were a common means of sealing these arrangements. Cross-marriages between the Chi clan (the royal house of the Chou)⁶⁸ with the Ch'iang tribes were especially numerous throughout recorded Chou history.⁶⁹ Many fiefs were awarded to members of the Ch'iang, and subsequently, many of the daughters of these clans also married Chou princes. Since in Chou families the right of hereditary rule was granted to the "firstborn son of the principal wife"⁷⁰ and many of the principal wives came from the Ch'iang tribes, a dominant number of households increasingly came under the dominion of princes of *non-Chinese* heritage. Their loyalties to Chou ancestors and their traditions were aberrant, especially in the west beyond the pass.⁷¹ These interactions produced an interesting effect; since there were increasingly larger numbers of people of *non-Chinese* ancestry, through intermarriage in the Wei River Valley, and a preponderance of nomadic tribes living immediately to the west and north, these regions beyond the pass were primarily populated by peoples of questionable Chou ancestry and only minimal cultural ties to the Royal Chou clan. The true *Chinese* cultural center was Chin in the east.⁷²

In the later years of the Western Chou period, the dominance of the Western Jung population, especially in the region of Ch'in, and their persistent attacks, led the Chou to abandon their western frontier for the sinicized east

beyond the pass. The end result of this move was that the Chou essentially lost all power west of the pass and while the dynasty name continued to identify the period, the Ch'in state actually controlled the Wei River Valley. The surrounding territory and most of the land to the west were in the hands of nomadic tribes of mostly Ch'iang background.⁷³ Ch'in was cut off socially from the other Chou states and left to develop a culture influenced by the tribes that eventually led to their reputation in later years as a barbarian state.⁷⁴

As time wore on, during the Eastern Chou period, the people of the small state of Ch'in, for the most part unsinicized, were not considered culturally a part of the Chou states by the other Royal Chou families, but neither were they truly proto-Tibetan any longer. Throughout this period, however, while Ch'in identity and loyalties fluctuated, it appears that the state of Ch'in expanded to its greatest extent. Since the Ch'iang were lodged in the region around the newly forming state of Ch'in through which the trade routes from the west flowed, we may safely assume at least a semi-state of alliance with some of the tribes existed, for trade continued, even while battles with some of the other Ch'iang tribes were frequent. It seems most likely that the Ch'in had greater cultural ties to the Ch'iang tribes of their own region, rather than to the other Chou period states at this time,⁷⁵ and that it is through their relationship with the tribes that they built a strong military machine. Their warriors certainly did not come from the other Chou states.

The Shih chi, describes the later state of Ch'in as filled with "barbarians . . . [having] the same customs as the Jung and the Ti. . . . They have the heart of a tiger and a wolf" and know nothing about the "traditional mores (*li*), proper relationships (*li*), and virtuous conduct (*te hsing*)."⁷⁶ This statement leads scholars to believe that the founders of Ch'in royalty were most probably of the Ch'iang tribes.⁷⁷ The information thus far seems to support such an idea since, first of all, the whole of the region outside of Ch'in was primarily Ch'iang territory,⁷⁸ and secondly, at the conclusion of the Battle of Muye, when the territory was divided and portions awarded to the eight allies, the Chou occupied the Wei River Valley and the Ch'iang lived to their west.⁷⁹

Third, as noted earlier, it appears that the first Ch'in ruler was also Ch'iang. Before the establishment of Ch'in as a state, the name was applied to a the small principality mentioned earlier. It was located within the larger vast territory called Ch'in.⁸⁰ Fei-tzu's "appanage (*fu-yung*)" was granted in 897 B.C.E. by the Chou, that he might raise horses for them." It was also named Ch'in and located in T'ien-shui in Kansu province" about 190 miles west of the modern Sian in Shensi, within the known range of the Ch'iang and the later Ch'in state. "Shortly afterwards his [Fei-tzu's] descendants . . . [took] the title of duke (*kung*)."⁸¹ This fits with the period during which *hsien* became the norm. After the Battle of Muye the Chou had two capitals: Chou-tsung, near present day Sian, and a second at Ch'eng-chou, near present day Loyang in Honan.⁸² In

770 B.C.E., when the state of Chou was attacked by the Jung, the period of the Eastern Chou ended and the Chou were forced to move their capital beyond the Hanku Pass east to Loyang.⁸³ It was at this time, only 47 years after Fei-tzu's land grant (750 B.C.E.), that Ch'in was "elevated to the level of a principality"⁸⁴ and its ruler was named the protector of the Chou western flank. In 677 B.C.E., the principality, now in control of the former Chou territory, established its own capital at Yung (modern Feng-hsiang, Shensi) further west of the Chou capital.⁸⁵ From that point on the former territory of the Chou to the west of the pass became recognized as one of the Chou states, albeit barbarian, and small compared to the former territory of the same name. Ch'in came to control the entire Wei River Valley region below the Ordos, all the while fighting off the Jung tribes to the north, but did not control the regions to the west.

It is notable that throughout this early Chou period until 623 B.C.E. wars against the Jung were fought principally by this new Ch'in state. Ch'in military struggles after this period are recorded to have been predominantly against the other Chou states. While the last attack against Ch'in by the Jung is recorded in 430 B.C. E., it is not until 315 B.C.E. that the Ch'in are reported to have captured twenty-five walled towns from the Jung, suggesting not only that the Jung invaded the area in a prior period, but that they had established cities and military power in the region. Apparently their power had escalated for a time and did not really diminish until the third century. The presence of the Jung in the

walled towns between the Ch'in state and the Ch'iang tribes living along the edges of the Tsinghai-Tibetan Plateau indicates that during this period, the Ch'in became separated culturally from the Ch'iang living further to the west and from the peoples living on the Plateau. This would have afforded the Ch'in a period during which they developed a high degree of independence from their ancestral ties and when the opportunity arose for them to begin to assume an identity more in keeping with Chinese culture, however still barbarian. This period also afforded the Ch'iang tribes the opportunity to develop a closer relationship to ancestral tribes in the vicinity of the Plateau in response to the apparently rising power of the Ch'in in the region.⁸⁶ It is also notable that relationships between Shu (Szechuan) and the Chou ceased in this period. There is no written record of events relating to Shu from the eighth century B.C.E. forward, almost to the end of the Spring and Autumn Period (722-256 B.C.E.).⁸⁷ The Ch'in government apparently took advantage of their new political status and strategic location and dominated the region and the trade passing through it. The Chou never again regained power in the west, while Ch'in power continued to expand and develop over the centuries, in spite of periodic setbacks, until they conquered the Chou states in the third century B.C.E.

By the end of the Warring States Period (403-221 B.C.E.) Ch'in power and independence were evident, as only seven Chou states remained. Ch'in and other Chou period states had incorporated the other smaller states of the

original 120-170 and had clearly defined their boundaries. Between the fifth and fourth centuries B.C.E. these seven states evolved into militarily governed administrative units under the central government of royal families. The independent lords of small walled-towns governing nebulously defined outer territories had disappeared. Cities of this period had become large commercial and industrial centers surrounded by higher walls and protected by larger armies, controlled by the "representatives of a central power" within the states.⁸⁸ The Ch'iang tribes of the vast western region, however, still maintained their semi-nomad and nomadic lifestyles and were never incorporated into the Ch'in state. Yung was the furthest most Ch'in capital of note.⁸⁹

In the following period, continuing wars reduced these seven Chou states to a competing four: Ch'in in the far west, encompassing the Wei River Valley west of the Hanku Pass; Chin, centrally located on the northern edge of the Yellow River; Ch'u, to the south of Chin; and Ch'i, stretching from the eastern border of Chin to the Yellow Sea. According to Jacques Gernet, Ch'in, occupying the former domains of the Chou princes, was rich in horses, rugged, and martial. It and Ch'i, a maritime trading center for salt, silk and metals became comrades in protecting Chinese lands from invaders from the west and the north. Chin retaining the ancient traditions and homeland of the Shang, became the most advanced economically and a center of trade and agriculture. Ch'u in the south was still made up of "semi-barbarians" and only partly

sinicized.⁹⁰

During these centuries, the distinction between the *barbarian* and the *civilized* became especially observable as *Chinese civilization* continued to develop. Surrounding these Chinese states, the Chou still counted four comparatively wild barbarian tribes, including the Jung and the Ti in the northwest and north respectively, the Yi peoples of Shangtung and the Man tribes of the southwest.⁹¹ Among the Ti, the White Ti tribes and the remnants of the Red Ti tribes were well defined according to their color of dress. As noted above, the White Ti lived in Shensi to the north of the state of Ch'in. The Red Ti lived even further to the east in Shansi, on the other side of the Yellow River, primarily on the northern border of Chin in the Fen River region. Many of them had already intermarried with the Chou by this time or had been eliminated in wars.⁹² Some of the Jung were also subdivided into two groups: the Greater Jung and the Lesser Jung. The Lesser Jung were subordinate to the Greater, who claimed descent from T'ang-shu, the founding ruler of Chin. Some of them used the surname Chi.⁹³

A group of Jung and the Northern Ti apparently vied for the same territory and alternately allied themselves with the strongest Chou ruling house of the time. While intermarriages were used frequently as a means to cement these alliances, it does not appear that the White Ti intermarried to any great extent, however, there were marriages between the Chin ducal family and the Red Ti

and between the Jung and the Chin. None apparently occurred between the Chin and the White Ti. It appears that the White Ti kept their independence and their distance and that alliances and loyalties between the Chou states and the tribes were in a continual state of flux.⁹⁴ We may also conclude that the White Ti maintained associations with the tribes to the west and the north, for to survive against such politically and militarily astute adversaries as the Chou states they would have had to have had very strong alliances. They were also, as mentioned above, in a position to facilitate trade between the Ch'iang to the west and south of Ch'in, the northern tribes, and the Chou states, and no doubt did so.

But the Northern Ti tribes soon disappeared in the face of a new age. The designations Jung and Ti vanished from the historical accounts as strong adversaries at about the same time that horse riding nomads appeared and Ch'in began its rise to power. From that point on invading nomads were horsemen, known as the Hu and, shortly thereafter, primarily as the Ch'iang and the Hsiung-nu. It may be that some of these horse riding peoples were related to the Northern Ti and the Jung since successive studies have shown that they were respectively of the same cultural backgrounds and seem to have emanated from the same territories as the previously identified peoples.⁹⁵

Horse breeding is known to have been practiced extensively by the age of the Warring States (403-221 B.C.E.) in the northwestern regions, in the upper

valley of the Ching River in Kansu to the north of the White Ti lands, and on the steppes of Shensi, in areas known to have been territories of the Ch'iang. The ancient legends also report, as we have seen, that the founder of the Ch'in dynasty was a horse breeder, indicating that at least some of the Ch'iang had a reputation associated with horses at a very early date.⁹⁶ Evidently the Ch'iang to the north and northwest of the Chou states had been breeding horses for some time. It may have been that the Ch'iang adopted horse riding soon after, or even at the same time, as the northern nomads of the region, from others of Central Asia. "The Chinese states along the northern frontier" were the first to employ "cavalry troops into their armies" in combat. King Wu-ling of Chao (325-299 B.C.E.) "changed the customs of his people, ordering them to adopt the barbarian mode of dress and the practice of riding and shooting [from horseback]."⁹⁷

While the Northern Ti apparently declined in power and essentially disappeared in the face of the new Ch'in state, the horse riding Ch'iang and Hsiung-nu grew as a threat. They continued to be a block to solidification of the northwest, first siding with one tribe or state and then with another.⁹⁸ Initially, it is recorded that both the Ti and the Jung were driven out of the Empire to the territories of their origins when Ch'in erected the Great Wall. The Shih chi reports,

After Ch'in had unified the world [in 221 B.C.E.], Meng T'ien was

sent to command a host of three hundred thousand to drive out the Jung and the Ti along the north. He took from them the territory south of the [Yellow] River, and built a Great Wall, constructing its defiles and passes in accordance with the configurations of the terrain. It started at Lin-t'ao, reaching a distance of more than ten thousand li.⁹⁹

We may assume that the sources are referring primarily to the White Ti since by this time the Red Ti had been well absorbed. In his efforts to control the tribes Meng T'ien also constructed "forty-four walled district cities overlooking the [Yellow] river . . . constructing ramparts and building installations where needed."¹⁰⁰ The Ch'in wall cut across the loop of the Yellow River from the east and continued west to enclose Lanchou, while the fortresses lined the southern edge of the loop of the Yellow River and isolated the Ordos, where the tribes of the Jung and Ti had lived.¹⁰¹ From Lanchou the wall abruptly turned south and continued to Min-hsien.¹⁰²

The Great Wall and the fortresses were built at great expense. While the wall was not totally original (many parts of it were remnants of the Warring States Period) it is estimated that it took ten years and 400,000 men to complete. Speculations indicate that construction required the "moving of over 1.3 billion cubic meters of stone and earthwork," and that it was in many ways "more complex even than building a pyramid, dam, or other stationary monumental structure, for one had to reckon with long stretches of mountains and semidesert."¹⁰³ The wall is a testimony to the large numbers of nomadic peoples

and the threat they must have presented at the time. Since it is reported that the White Ti territories in Shensi were taken over by the Ch'in Empire, we can only imagine that initially many a captured White Ti tribesmen and perhaps Jung tribesmen as well were used for labor.

It is not clear, how much of the Ti and Jung lands were taken over, how many of the White Ti were forced out, how many were used as slaves, or whether some were simply settled in the northwest, but immediately after the fall of the Ch'in and during the Han periods we again find tribes living in the region. This time they are identified by the Chinese as belonging to the Ch'iang and Ch'iang Ti tribes. The situation suggests that the Ch'iang and the Ch'in had some form of conciliatory arrangement that conceded at least parts of ancient Ch'iang territory as a neutral zone, and also suggests a continuance in trading by at least some of the tribes, probably the more affluent and powerful.¹⁰⁴ Another indication that an alliance may have existed at this time and that the northwestern regions of ancient China belonged to Ch'iang tribes may be noted by the fact that Meng T'ien also built great Imperial Highways known as speedways "radiating from Hsien-yang toward the north, northeast, east and southeast" totaling approximately 4,250 miles and exceeding in combined length those of Ancient Rome as estimated by Gibbon. However, none were built extending into the west, while a northern route penetrated deep into the Ordos and into Hsiung-nu territory. In this period, Hsien constituted the western edge

of the empire.¹⁰⁵

Locations and a general idea of the numbers of the Ch'iang tribes further to the west of Ch'in may be discovered through the eyes of Ssu-ma Ch'ien (ca. 125 B.C.E.), although a hundred years later. Prior to the advances of Wu-ti, he described a number of groups under the subheading of Ch'iang in the Hou Han shu living to the west of China. The Ti (Ch'iang) of the southwestern mountain regions, he states, blocked any trade route into India (in conjunction with other tribes).¹⁰⁶ He identifies "the most important" of these tribal leaders as "the ruler of Po-ma," suggesting that perhaps the other tribes were either smaller in number than or subject to this important group, whose members he indicates were traders.¹⁰⁷ He also describes the Ch'iang living in the northwestern mountain territories as traders, among whom, there were "profits . . . to be gained," while to the north the Ti (Ch'iang) are mentioned in conjunction with the Jung as holding herds that were "one of the riches of the empire."¹⁰⁸ While the Han shu reports that Meng T'ien may have initially driven out the Jung and Northern Ti tribes, the region was soon, at least partially, occupied by Hsiung-nu tribes at the commencement of the Former Han dynasty in 198 B.C.E.¹⁰⁹ And though both the Ch'in and the Han made advances at various times into the northwest, they were not able to hold on to the territories they acquired, except for a brief span during the reign of Wu-ti.

In spite of their inability to hold onto the northwest, the Chinese of the

Chou and Han periods regarded China as the Central Country, even as they do today. This ethno-centric point of view is difficult to put aside when reading the Chinese annals, thus the Ch'iang proto-Tibetans, during the Chou, Ch'in, and Han eras seem to be a part of the background. Imagining that these tribes held a similar view is, however, difficult, or that Ch'in perceived of itself as less than an equal to the other Chou period states even while being rejected by them as barbarian.¹¹⁰

The Chou states, other than Ch'in, shared in varying degrees a common culture, style of government, military innovations and language, but were divided into kingdoms wherein each royal family held specific lands as their domains. In the Ch'in state one ruler controlled all. This difference allowed the Ch'iang tribes to flourish in the outer regions, since land was owned by no one. Ch'in, at the founding of the empire, rejected the idea of separate kingdoms or *kuo*.¹¹¹ Instead Ch'in divided its new empire into thirty-six commanderies or territories.¹¹² The idea reflects the division of the land as it would have occurred had the peoples been a federation of tribes; territories in this case would have been divided in such a manner to provide pasture lands for individual tribes and allotted to the most powerful chieftains by the head of the federation. Ch'in also subdivided these lands into over 1000 counties, administered by governors who could be dismissed at any time by the central command.¹¹³ The governors were a part of a ruling body in which land ownership was not considered a part of the

bargain, but they were responsible for ruling the region. In the end lands were dominated by Ch'in as a whole, reflecting the idea held by nomadic societies that land was held in common by the tribal federation, another possible indication that Ch'in held onto an ancient form of organization. To insure loyalty, 120,000 families of the former ruling bodies were transported to Hsien-yang and kept under the watchful eye of the central authorities. The movement of the royal families of the conquered Chou states to the capital also reflected the idea of a central headquarters and did not follow the pattern of subsequent dynasties.¹¹⁴

In any case, the control of the territories to the northwest of the new Ch'in state remained unconquered, even after the Ch'in military commanderies were in place. The commanderies on the frontier, in spite of being divided into counties with garrisons occupied by troops, were continually raided by some of the frontier tribes, notably Ch'iang. Obviously these particular tribes did not support the Ch'in Empire, nor do their continual raids indicate that the commanderies were in control. Under such conditions, the commanderies failed to function as planned. They remained essentially military outposts, able at times to stave off invasions, but were never really capable of controlling the frontier or dominating the tribes. To the west of Hsien-yang, most of the garrisons soon fell under the sway of the nomadic peoples. It appears that while Ch'in government soldiers could hold their forts, they were unable to control the territories around them, so the northwest remained under the dominion of the Ch'iang and Ch'iang Ti.¹¹⁵

Generally, it seems obvious that the Ch'iang tribes were a product of the Tsinghai-Tibetan Plateau regions and that they were connected to the proto-Tibetans living in the west, culturally, if not under one political umbrella, throughout the period prior to the Ch'in Empire. Some time before the advent of the Shang, the proto-Tibetan peoples expanded outwards from the Tsinghai-Tibetan Plateau from a core group that lived in the regions of Koko Nor and the Kansu Corridor to the mountains of Shensi and western Szechuan area as far south as Ch'eng-tu and then finally located themselves in parts of western Honan by the Former Han period.¹¹⁶ The Ch'iang of the west maintained a specific territory even as the political boundary of the Chinese western frontier vacillated to some degree during the Shang and Chou period.¹¹⁷ While we cannot be sure which of the Ch'iang tribes founded the Ch'in principality, that later became the founding dynastic house, we can most confidently presume that they were Ch'iang due to the predominance of Ch'iang ancestry within the Ch'in dynastic lines and the western location in the Ching River region from which the Ch'in state arose, known to have been Ch'iang territory.¹¹⁸

At the time of Ch'in unification (221 B.C.E.), the blood of the peoples of the Chou states was a mixture of both of what historians call *barbarian* and Chou. Ostensibly, we may assert that the Ch'iang made a distinctive contribution to the gene pool of ancient China, but it seems that they did not take Chinese blood home. They maintained their own culture and language and we

may presume their ancestral relationship to the Ch'iang of the former Shang era, since they are continually identified as Ch'iang throughout the sources. The independence of the Ch'iang tribes clearly contributed to the failure of the Ch'in to take over the northwest completely. Had the Ch'iang been sinicized no doubt history would have taken another course. With the knowledge that the Ch'in dynasty was of Ch'iang extraction we may expand the Tibetan sphere of interaction to include the northwest of China, but in this case the Ch'in became one more invading force of non-Chinese peoples, who were intent on taking over China.

With the knowledge that an ancient Tibetan heritage was essentially perpetuated in the northwest, it is important to determine to what extent a proto-Tibetan culture could maintain itself in the face of a unified China. While Owen Lattimore's astute observations may negate the relevancy of defining a culture in terms of bloodlines, in the case of the proto-Tibetans, it is historically important to do so, since their history during the ancient period for the most part has remained in obscurity. Tracing bloodlines allows for the historical establishment of the proto-Tibetan peoples as an independent people and culture, who did not fully adopt the Chinese culture, and therefore, were not truly Chinese. This unorthodox perspective allows for a revision of Chinese and Tibetan history that would support the Tibetans in their assertion that they have always been a people separate from the Chinese.¹¹⁹

Other evidence for the assertion that they were not culturally Chinese is apparent through a number of observations. For centuries before the establishment of the Ch'in Empire, Ch'in was treated as a state apart from the other states of the Chou period. In 361 B.C.E., Ch'in did not attend the conferences of the other feudal states. A century later, in 266 B.C.E., Ch'in is still referred to as a state having the same customs as the Jung and the Ti¹²⁰ and not until 237 B.C.E. does the first indication appear that tribal customs were open to change. A court memorial records that ". . . today the people of Ch'in have done away with beating on earthen jugs and knocking on jars and have introduced (the music) of Cheng and Wei."¹²¹ The fact that Chinese music was only being introduced at this late date is only one of many other signs that Ch'in had not adopted Chou culture to any great degree by the time of the first empire. The famous execution of the scholars and the book burning episode is but another indication of Ch'in's disdain especially for the Chou Confucian philosophy that was the underpinning of government in the other states. Reportedly, Shun-yü Yüeh, a Confucian scholar from Ch'i, criticized the emperor at a banquet (213 B.C.E.) because the emperor had not enfeoffed his sons and younger brothers.¹²² Li Ssu, a Chou scholar, but a legalist, who came to Ch'in in 247 B.C.E. and became chancellor, argued with Shun-yü Yüeh that the past should not influence the present which was decidedly different in comparison to the former government of the Chou and then recommended the burning of

Confucian books in 211 B.C.E. on those grounds. Rejection of the philosophy of the Confucian Chou ideology is further substantiated by the execution in the following year of 460 literati who apparently were unwilling to divest themselves of Confucian ideas.¹²³ The Ch'in ruler seemingly rejected the ordered society of the former Chou states completely in favor of his own autocratic rule.

By the second century B.C.E., Han annals report that some of the Ch'iang and Ch'iang Ti were living to the northwest of China, engaged in both herding and agriculture. This passage does not distinguish between Ti or Ch'iang tribes, but it is another reference to their presence in the region since more ancient times. The Chinese explanation in the Hou Han shu legend tells us that in the fifth century B.C.E., Yüan-chien, "a cultural hero" of the Ch'iang, "taught his people the art of farming after his escape from the state of Ch'in."¹²⁴ Constant references to the Ch'iang in the context of other is indicative of their cultural separateness. The records also testify to Ch'iang settlements incorporating both farming and herding in Yü-ku in Hsi-hai (Ningsia) and in Ch'ing-shan in Pei-ti (Kansu). The staple crop seems to have been wheat. "Animals captured from the Ch'iang by Han forces, often included oxen, horses, sheep, donkeys and camels."¹²⁵ The Ch'iang of the agricultural settlements led their own way of life according to tribal customs; their settlements are also referred to in the context of *non-Chinese*. We can only assume that other Ch'iang living to the west maintained their independence and their relationship

to other Ch'iang tribes due to their proximity to the Plateau. For the most part they were unconquerable and maintained a nomadic lifestyle in these regions. While agricultural settlements are noted, their primary economy seems to have been based in pastoralism and as we will learn later, combined with trade.

The number of Ch'iang tribes is a testimony to their domination of the region. By circa 150 B.C.E., the Hou Han shu notes the existence of one-hundred and fifty Ch'iang tribes in the northwest of China. The largest "single concentration" appears to have been in the areas of present day Tibet and Tsinghai, states Michael Loewe. Again the context is that these people were of a different culture than the Chinese. The sources suggest they also believed that those Ch'iang living throughout the "Western Regions, Kansu, Szechuan, and Yunnan," were a part of another secondary migration of a parent group from the Kansu-Tsinghai region.¹²⁶ One major tribe designated as the Great Tsang-I living to the west of Shu (Szechuan) was recorded to have a population of over half a million. Another group, the Chung living in Kansu, "could reportedly field a military force of over 100,000 men, indicating a population as large as that of the Great Tsang-I." We should also note that, contrary to popular opinion, estimates of Ch'iang populations during the Later Han exceed those of the Hsiung-nu.¹²⁷ And while the Hsiung-nu have received the greatest historical attention as adversaries for control of the northwest, the Ch'iang apparently dominated the Kansu Corridor, the main entrance for trade from Central Asia.

Prior to the settlement of the Takla Makan (the Western Regions), the Hsiung-nu, who controlled the northern trade route, and the Ch'o-Ch'iang, who controlled the Jade Route, had used the Kansu Corridor as a meeting ground from which they launched joint attacks against the Chinese. Wu-ti established the Tun-huang, Chiu-chüan, and Chang-I commanderies (circa 110 B.C.E.) for the express purpose of separating these two peoples.¹²⁸ By the first century B.C.E. the Ch'o-Ch'iang tribes had "dwindled in number," but in the early years of the Han they had been the main tribe controlling the area stretching along the Kun Lun Mountains from Tun-huang in the east to the Pamirs in the west, a length of approximately 1200 miles.¹²⁹ The extent of the land mass they occupied suggests not only large numbers, but also that these tribes were divided into smaller units, melded together in some kind of cooperative federation. They were described in the Hou Han shu as the "right arm" of the Hsiung-nu,¹³⁰ indicating that they were allied with the nomadic empire of the north, at least during that period. Later, the Ch'o-Ch'iang apparently changed sides. While other Ch'iang tribes later migrated into the region, at this juncture the home base of the Ch'o-Ch'iang seems to have been in the "first state southwest of the Yang barrier" on the Silk Route to the west (in the mountains southeast of Lop Nor near Miran).¹³¹ The king of the Ch'o-Ch'iang, at this time, even bore the title *Ch'ü-Hu-lai*, "the king who had abandoned the Hsiung-nu and made over to the Han empire."¹³² These Ch'iang not only fought against the

Hsiung-nu, but also “took part in punitive campaigns against other Ch’iang tribes” in the northwest as an ally of the Former Han.¹³³

While the earlier sources do not bear witness to the presence of these larger Ch’iang tribes, apparently the historian Pan Ku could discern a prehistoric presence. The context of the Shih chi assumes a precedent population of large numbers of Ch’iang living over a broad expanse and is the source for our factual knowledge of the Ch’iang during Han times.¹³⁴ According to The Cambridge History of China, an analysis of the Shih chi suggests that, the Ch’iang “did not become a serious threat to the Han imperial order until late in the second century [B.C.E.].”¹³⁵ That it was always necessary to pacify and control them and that the Ch’iang resented any incursion of the Han into their territory, however, is evident.

A rebellion of the late second century B.C.E. was preceded by the enactment of an imperial religious observance in Ch’iang territory. In 113 B.C.E., the Emperor “sacrificed to the Five [Lords on High]” on top of a feng altar in the heights of the Kansu region to show that he “had increased in greatness.” This ceremony was customarily performed by emperors for the express purpose of establishing publicly and politically, the boundaries of their Empire.¹³⁶ In 112 B.C.E. the Ch’iang revolted. “A group of 100,000 Western Ch’iang” joined with the Hsiung-nu against the Chinese. With their “combined forces, they attacked An-ku [a former city of the Western Ch’iang during the Contending (Warring)

States Period] and besieged Fu-han¹³⁷ and Ling-chü.¹³⁸ In the following year, the office of "The Colonel Protecting the Ch'iang" was created.¹³⁹ But after a second incursion by the Han into their ancient homelands, the Ch'iang resumed their attacks against the Chinese.¹⁴⁰ In an attempt to gain greater control in the following year (111 B.C.E.), the Emperor redivided the territory of Wu-wei and Chiu-chüan into smaller commanderies and used parts of them to make two others, establishing "the commanderies of Chang-yi and Tun-huang and moved common people [into these places] to fill them."¹⁴¹ An infusion of new troops and Chinese settlers held the region for a time, but soon after the death of Wu-ti, the lands reverted once again to the control of the Ch'iang.

In spite of Ch'iang attacks, Chinese annals occasionally boast that Chinese troops readily subdued the Ch'iang people. The Hou Han shu blusters that it was "relatively easy to bring the Ch'iang under control because they . . . [were] divided into many warlike tribes and always attack[ed] each other. It . . . [was] not their nature to become unified."¹⁴² While the ancient Chinese perspective encourages the idea that the Ch'iang were a divided people, constantly at war with each other, and asserts that individual tribes were easily conquered, it must be remembered that this passage was written during a period when the Chinese were feeling quite confident. They had established themselves within the Kansu Corridor and no doubt General Chao Ch'ung-kuo, who made the statement, wanted to impress his superiors. But, in order to fight

off the Ch'iang and the Hsiung-nu, who had allied to take back the region, the Chinese in 112 B.C.E. had to draw troops not only from the northern commanderies, but also from those east of the Hanku Pass. The Chinese also enlisted Ch'iang troops loyal to the empire.¹⁴³

Later annals describe uprisings amongst the Ch'iang Ti of Wu-tu commandery in 80 B.C.E. and again in 77 B.C.E. In both cases Ch'iang troops were called in to help settle the disputes, implying that they were present not only for their military might, but also for their ability to arbitrate. These incidents suggest that the Ch'iang were in league with the Chinese to keep peace in the region. Assuredly they had with their own interests at heart and that they also had a good deal of political clout.¹⁴⁴ In spite of these Early Han measures to gain control of the tribes, however, some of the Ch'iang consistently rose up against the government when they became dissatisfied. These uprisings were politically organized and comprised of many troops; they were not easily put down.

Ssu-ma Ch'ien's report provides another idea of the political organization of the Ch'iang tribes. In the Shih-chi, he describes them as "scattered about in their own valleys, each with their own tribal chieftains."¹⁴⁵ It is obvious that the Ch'iang were never a united people with a tribal structure like that of the Hsiung-nu. In the Hsiung-nu organization the *shanyu* was tribal head and held sole authority over a territory covering thousands of square miles. But, the large

numbers of the Ch'iang tribes (including the Ch'o-Ch'iang, the Great Tsang-I and the Chung) indicates that some kind of tribal organization existed; these tribes controlled extensive amounts of territory.¹⁴⁶ As for the later years, it appears that the establishment of the commanderies under Wu-ti had become only a semi-effective means of controlling those Ch'iang and Ti tribes who had taken to a semi-settled way of life in the northwestern regions. These people remained unsinicized and rebelled periodically against the assertion of Chinese authority.

Now in Liang-chou [Kansu] there are surrendered Ch'iang peoples who still lead a barbarian way of life. Nevertheless, they are living together with the Chinese. Since the two peoples are different in social customs and cannot communicate in language, very often the Chinese petty officials and crafty people take advantage to rob the Ch'iang of their belongings. Extremely helpless, they thus rise in revolt. We can almost say that this is the cause of almost all barbarian rebellions.¹⁴⁷

Generally the tribes are described as a people without a "developed . . . system of solidarity and control,"¹⁴⁸ so the impression left by most historians regarding the Ch'iang and Ti is that they were a disorganized and weak people. While it is true that many smaller tribes were absorbed into agricultural communities, others of greater number and resources were never pacified. And while Pan Ku asserts that "only when they felt an urgent need to unite to resist a common enemy such as the Han were they able to put aside their own disputes to take concerted action," when seen from the standpoint of the Ch'iang the situation appears somewhat differently.¹⁴⁹ The Hou Han shu states,

As a people they neither established a lord-vassal relationship nor developed a system of control and solidarity among themselves. When a group grew in population and strength to a certain point they would split into several tribes, each under the leadership of a powerful chieftain, but when a group declined, they would attach themselves to a powerful tribe as followers.¹⁵⁰

This passage suggests to some historians that there existed "a tendency towards fission."¹⁵¹ However, this is just another example of an ethno-centric viewpoint. It was not uncommon for tribes who had reached a maximum limit to split into smaller units and to do so for the sake of order and efficiency.

The examination of another statement also supports the view that the Ch'iang were organized. Ssu-ma relates that from "time to time they [the Ch'iang] would have gatherings of over a hundred men, but no one tribe was capable of unifying the others under a single rule."¹⁵² This passage indicates that on occasion numerous tribes sent representatives to meet with others for some communal purpose. There apparently was no supreme ruler, but it does not exclude the idea that the Ch'iang tribes shared some type of democratic federalism for the maintenance of territory and peaceful coexistence against the expanding Chinese. Throughout the historical period they are designated consistently as a distinct group and references to one tribe joining another against the Chinese abound.¹⁵³ This would indicate that, contrary to the perspective of Ssu-ma Ch'ien and Pan Ku, the Ch'iang and the Ch'iang Ti unified themselves en masse to protect their territory when necessary, but

greatly valued tribal freedom and independence.

It must also be noted that it was only during the period of the Former Han, approximately two hundred years (out of a thousand years of recorded existence) that there is reported a decline of Ch'iang strength, while the passages concerning the Ch'iang during that period relate primarily to those in the vicinity of the northwest of China, during the time of Wu-ti. Wu-ti's era was a highly competitive time when generals and historians needed to look good under the emperor's eagle eye. It appears that the military dominance and territorial control of the northwest by both the Ch'in and the Han Chinese dynasties have been generally somewhat overstated by ancient and modern historians in awe of Chinese civilization.

In summary, it is certain that the organizational body of the Ch'iang was less rigidly structured than that of the Shang, Chou, Ch'in, Han or even the Hsiung-nu, who of necessity needed a strong central government to arbitrate territorial disputes in order to maintain political unity between tribes and clans in a land where few natural territorial boundaries existed. It is understandable that tribes of the Hsiung-nu warred with one another during the migratory periods when grass became scarce and that a ruling *shanyu* (the reigning chief of the Hsiung-nu) was necessary to arbitrate disputes. A social hierarchy with a ruling body and a head was no doubt needed.

The Ch'iang on the other hand, lived in numerous valleys, separated by

mountains. The lay of the land encouraged greater autonomy among tribal leaders and provided a natural safety. Passes were relatively easily guarded due to the difficulty of the terrain. Mountains dividing valley from valley provided natural barriers and boundaries between the territories of one tribe and another, preventing not only easy invasions, but also the autocratic rule by one chieftain over many tribes. The kind of organization used by the proto-Tibetans allowed for a large degree of autonomy and independence amongst the tribes. This difference in organization from the perspective of the rigidly ordered Chinese defined the proto-Tibetans as a backward people. In reality, the proto-Tibetans demonstrated an adaptability to their living conditions dictated by their environment; when population expanded, they divided; when populations were endangered they bound themselves together.

This unique ability to adapt to an ever changing world allowed them to survive over time and keep their own identity and culture intact in spite of periods of famine, war and drought. This adaptability also allowed the Ch'iang as proto-Tibetans to maintain their culture in the face of the creation of an ostensibly more ordered neighboring state. Within the parameters of the questionable arrival of Chinese civilization into the northwest of China, comprehensive conclusions may be drawn regarding the "adaptations" made by the proto-Tibetan peoples living in the west and northwest. Despite interactions with the Chou, Ch'in and other neighboring tribes, the Ch'iang people evidently

maintained their own culture and customs throughout these early periods. And, contrary to the popular notions that the Ch'in dynasty controlled the northwest of China, their control appears to have been nebulous. While forts were established by the Ch'in in the northwest of what is now China, the proto-Tibetans for the most part held their lands, language and customs intact.

The basic principles for defining ancient empires, nomadic or sedentary, are rooted in the assumption that the peoples shared a common culture, language and central government and that, as a group in cooperation, they were able to control and maintain certain territories for long periods of time. The early Chinese Chou states fit this definition; they absorbed tribes and nations of smaller size who lost their original identity as they adapted to the social conditions of the larger group. Ethnic and racial differences of incorporated peoples gave way to the prevailing norm of the primary group through intermarriage and the assimilation of the dominant group's language and customs and adoption of their centrally organized political structure. The Ch'in state was the last to adapt to Chou culture, but ultimately this adoption appears to have been superficial. While this rough barbarian state separated itself to some degree from its proto-Tibetan ancestry and succumbed to some of the extravagances and luxurious lifestyles promised by the assumption of the Chinese court life, it never fully embraced *Chinese civilization*. Finally, this was to be the cause of its demise. Because of its isolation, Ch'in became separated

culturally and politically from the Chou, but they were also separated from the Ch'iang tribes from whom they most assuredly originated. In spite of the Ch'in, however, the region remained essentially populated by proto-Tibetans, especially the Ch'iang who were not truly subject to anyone.

As we have seen, the Ch'in made an attempt to occupy and control their frontiers through the building of The Great Wall and many fortresses at a time when the trading community was beginning to expand eastwards from Central Asia at a fast pace. No doubt their intentions included the desire to wrest control of the trade routes from the nomadic tribes. As will be seen, in the following chapters, eventually the Han abandoned their efforts to control the Ch'iang and instead opted to take control of the northern routes from the Hsiung-nu. And while the Takla Makan Desert communities expanded commensurately with the entrance of the newly unified Chinese states into the wider Eurasian trading community, the proto-Tibetan peoples, including the Ch'iang, Ti and their southwestern counterparts, had already been involved for sometime by virtue of their relationship with Shu in the southwest of China.

By the time the Ch'in founded their new dynasty the proto-Tibetan tribes had already established trading communities and a network of trade routes connecting them across the Plateau. This network allowed them to circumvent Ch'in and later Han attempts to control trade into and out of the whole of the west of China. The tribes became intermediaries not only between Central Asia,

India and China, but also between northern China and Shu. While the Ch'in Empire was in the process of implementing its plan to become master of the region, the proto-Tibetan tribes had already done so within their own sphere. We will see that, the initial Ch'in attempt to take over the northwest was really an attempt to get control of the trade routes, while the resistance of the proto-Tibetan tribes was really about keeping control of these routes for themselves. Chapter three discusses the evolution of the Tsinghai-Tibetan Plateau region and the emergence of the proto-Tibetans as intermediaries of trade.

Endnotes

1. E.G. Pulleyblank, "The Chinese and Their Neighbors in Prehistoric and Early Historic Times," in The Origins of Chinese Civilization, ed. David N. Keightley (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 420.

2. Jettmar, Karl, "The Origins of Chinese Civilization: Soviet Views," in The Origins of Chinese Civilization, ed. David N. Keightley (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 222.

3. Wolfram Eberhard, A History of China, rev. ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1948), 4-6 passim.

4. Ibid.

5. Wolfram Eberhard, A History of China, rev. ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1948), 4-6.; Owen Lattimore, Inner Asian Frontiers of China (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 354-55; The present day Tibetan language, is generally accepted as having "genetic" relationships to the Tibeto-Burman language of the Ch'iang tribes and Sinitic is seen as a related language with "unquestionable affiliations" to the members of the larger Tibeto-Burman group, as well, but there appears to be no direct relationship to Tibetans. Thus, the Tibetan language is an independent language developed out of the Tibeto-Burman language, after it became separated from the Sinitic. Jerry Norman, Chinese, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 6.

6. Eberhard, A History of China, 23; Giuseppe Tucci, Transhimalaya, trans. from the French by James Hogarth (Geneva: Nagel Publishers, 1973), 58; Jerry Norman, Chinese, (Great Britain: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 4-17.

7. Cho-Yun Hsu, and Katherine M. Linduff, Western Chou Civilization, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), 55.

8. Lattimore, Frontiers of China, 208-10 passim.

9. R.A. Stein, Tibetan Civilization, trans. J.E. Stapleton Driver (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1972), 28-29. R.A. Stein relates that the ancient Ch'iang incorporated many peoples over time that resulted in the Tibetan

population that exists today. While, the Tibetans consider the Ch'iang their ancestors, "they always describe them as 'wild' people, or non- Tibetan aboriginals. Here the opinion of ancient Chinese historians comes in," he states, "According to them, the Tibetans proper, the T'u-fan, whose kings united the country at the beginning of its history, are a branch of the Ch'iang." . . . The Ch'iang are mentioned in Chinese sources from about 1400 B.C. to modern times. To start with they were the neighbors of Shang and Chou dynasty China at her northwest extremity. From the beginning of the Christian era they lived in the Sino-Tibetan marches from Koko Nor to Szechuan. By the time the Tibetan (T'u-fan) royal line appeared in Yarlung, two important nations with Ch'iang populations occupied the region that is now Kham, eastern Tibet. These were the eastern 'Land of Women' (there was another in the west), and the land of Fu (originally something like Biu). The Ch'iang were in contact with another people of north-eastern Tibet, the Sumpa (Tibetan) or Sup-pi (Chinese); while further north, in what is now Amdo, they mingled with a Turco-Mongol race from Manchuria, the Asha (Tibetan) or T'u-yü-hun (Chinese), who had established a kingdom there. This mixed population, whose country the Tibetans call Minyak, lived in the regions of Koko Nor and north-west China, and set themselves up as the state of Hsia from 1032 to 1226 [C.E.]. In the same region earlier on before the arrival of these Turco-Mongol tribes, the Ch'iang had absorbed the remnants of an Indo-European people, the Yüeh-chih, who had been driven west at the beginning of our era [c.165 B.C.E.]. These Tokharians or Indo-Scythians founded important states on the western boundaries of Tibet. Ch'iang groups still live today in the mountains of the Sino-Tibetan borderland. And their language, beliefs and customs are akin to those of Tibet. . . . Chinese historians associate these people with monumental stone structures, like towers or fortresses, which are still found among them, but are also seen in Kongpo and Lhotrak (in south-eastern Tibet, and are apparently proto-types of Tibetan architecture in general" (Ibid.).

10. Lattimore, Frontiers of China, 208.

11. Ibid., 210.

12. Ibid.

13. Ibid., 211.

14. Ibid.

15. Ancient Tibet: Research Materials from the Yeshe De Project (Berkeley: Dharma Publishing, 1986), 122.

16. Lattimore, Frontiers of China, 212.

17. Pulleyblank, "The Chinese and Their Neighbors," 417.

18. D.P. Singhal, India and World Civilization, vol.1 (Michigan: Michigan State University Press, 1969), 1:295-96; The language of the interior in the Tsangpo River Valley region is "highly stylized, with an honorific and an ordinary word for most terms of reference. . ."; an honorific expression "is used when speaking to equals and superiors," another set of terms is used when speaking to one who is conceived to be of lesser stature. An additional set of words exists for "addressing the highest lamas and nobles." The New Encyclopedia Britannica, 1985 ed., s.v. "Tibetan Peoples."; Today the dialects of the South Central Region especially differ from those dialects spoken on the periphery such as Ladakh, Gilgit and Balistan at the far eastern end of the Plateau and Amdo in the far northwest. Pronunciation in these outer regions comes closer to that of archaic classical script and lacks the more formal forms of address that may be attributed to the Buddhist influence. The influx of Buddhism from the seventh century B.C.E. did not extend completely over the Plateau, therefore the language spoken in a few areas at the periphery, particularly in the extreme east and west retained their ancient language and its archaic peculiarities. Stein, Tibetan Civilization, 249.

19. Jacques Gernet, A History of Chinese Civilization, trans. by J.R. Foster (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 13.

20. Lattimore, Frontiers of China, 209, 215-16 passim.; The theory that the Ch'iang were of Tibeto-Burman origin is also supported by a Chinese reference in the Hou Han shu. A song of the Kansu area Ch'iang, who are designated as a tribe called the "White Wolf People," recorded in their native tongue, is accompanied by a Chinese translation that leaves "no doubt that the language was of Tibeto-Burman origin." In other words the passages indicate that the Ch'iang people of the Wolf tribe were a product of previous generations who had come from the Plateau (417-18); Other pieces of written evidence for such an assertion also exist in the form of documents written in the language of Zhang-zhung and found at Tun-huang. The language of the documents has clear "affinities with Tibeto-Burman languages of the western Himalayas such as Kanuri," a language known to have ancient ties rooted prior to the time when these documents were written. The language similarities demonstrate that peoples having a common language and a common culture lived across a wide expanse stretching from western Tibet to the borders of China in a period pre-dating at least the first century B.C.E. Many extremely different dialects exist

today, but the evolution of the Tibetan dialects and their incongruities can be accounted for in part by the inclusion or exclusion of words associated with lifestyles dictated by diverse geographical determinants. For example, the Bodic dialect remains strongest on the Plateau and in the adjoining Chinese provinces of Tsinghai, Kansu and Szechwan, where the people combine agriculture and livestock breeding with nomadism, and where adequate amounts of land accommodate both farming and grazing. Words necessary to communication amongst peoples involved in both farming and the herding of animals are more numerous and of greater variety in these dialects than in areas where sedentary agriculture is practiced. In contrast, the Kaerntich and the Mirish dialects may be associated primarily with rather sedentary agriculturalists who live in areas where limited amounts of good land are best put to use for farming. Their vocabulary regarding agriculture reflects the specialization of their mode of existence. Pulleyblank, "The Chinese and Their Neighbors," 422.

21. Ibid.

22. Ibid. Lattimore writes, ". . . [M]ost of the valley settlements of Tibet are easier to defend against nomad attack. . . . they have therefore been centers of power and of wealth, and the southern and eastern nomad groups have not been able to break away from them but have remained herders of livestock belonging to the settlements instead of becoming independent steppe lords."

23. Rhoads Murphey, A History of Asia, (New York: Harper Collins, 1992), xxvi.

24. Eberhard, A History of China, 4-6 passim.

25. Ibid.

26. Ibid., 8-10 passim.

27. Ibid.; Gernet, Chinese Civilization, 41.

28. Stephen F. Sage, Ancient Sichuan and the Unification of China, ed. Harry Hamlin (New York: State of New University of New York Press, 1992), 35.

29. Hsu and Lindhuff, Western Chou, 55.

30. Eberhard, A History of China, 15.

31. Ibid.

32. Herlee Glessner Creel, The Birth of China: A Survey of the Formative Period (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1961), 317.

33. Pan Ku, The History of the Former Han Dynasty, A Critical Translation with Annotations by Homer H. Dubs (U.S.A.: The American Council of Learned Societies, 1944), 2:513-14.

34. Sage, Ancient Sichuan, 16.

35. Ibid.

36. Ibid., 23.

37. Ibid., 28.

38. Ibid., 30.

39. Hsu and Lindhuff, Western Chou, 55-59 passim.

40. Gernet, Chinese Civilization, 45.

41. Ibid., 47-49. Gernet reports sacrifices were consistently used as a means to "worship the dead kings, a cult in which the queens were sometimes associated".; The Shang claimed they were descended from Gods, (a claim used also by the ancient Chou to assert their power). Massive slaughters of stockyard animals such as oxen, pigs, sheep and dogs are recorded as occurring in lots of ten, sometimes numbering as many as a hundred at a time. Royal tombs reveal that at the death of a king, his royal court was also slaughtered and placed within his tomb with his regalia and possessions including his chariot and horses. Creel writes regarding the artifacts found accompanying the victims: "The objects found with the skeletons are interesting. They include such things as bronze axe-heads, and grinding stones,... each victim was given an outfit including specified objects, and possibly clothed in ceremonial garb . . . these were buried with him after he was slain." Creel, The Birth of China, 215; In times of war, the victor took the defeated ruler and their warriors away from their lands, and either relegated them to slave status or sacrificed them at the temple after a mandatory presentation ceremony, a practice which seems to have continued well into the sixth century B.C.E. The Tso chuan records the sacrifice of the Duke of Sung in 641 B.C.E. and "the immolation of the crown prince of Ts'ai by the ruler of Ch'u in 553 B.C.E." Cho-Yun Hsu, Ancient China in Transition: An Analysis of Social Mobility, 722-222 BC (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1965), 59-62 passim.;

In any case, the taking and presentation of captives, apparently was a regular practice. The oracle bones, existing in abundance concerning the Ch'iang, record that they harbored "grievances against the Shang," because they had taken and enslaved or slain many of their people. The records also mention other groups, both friendly and combative with whom the Shang had relations, but references to the Ch'iang far out number others in frequency. Sage, Ancient Sichuan, 34.

42. Eberhard, A History of China, 16.

43. Ibid.

44. Ibid.

45. Ibid.

46. Sage, Ancient Sichuan, 35-36 .

47. Creel, The Birth of China, 215.

48. Thomas J. Barfield, The Perilous Frontier: Nomadic Empires and China, 221 BC to AD 1757, (Cambridge: Blackwell Publishers, 1989), 29.

49. Ibid.

50. Creel, The Birth of China, 149.

51. Watson, The Tso Chuan, 124n.11, 125, 125 n.13.

52. Sage, Ancient Sichuan, 36.; Gernet, Chinese Civilization, 65.

53. Creel, The Birth of China, 317.

54. Hsu and Lindhuff, Western Chou, 25-27 passim.

55. Ibid., 147.

56. Gernet, Chinese Civilization, 54.

57. Ibid.

58. Ibid., 64.

59. Watson, The Tso Chuan, 124n.11, 125, 125 n.13.

60. Hsu and Lindhuff, Western Chou, 55-59.
61. Michael Loewe, The Cambridge History of China, vol. 1, The Ch'in and Han Empires, 221 B.C. to A.D. 220, ed. Denis Twitchett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 31.
62. Ibid., 20.
63. Gernet, Chinese Civilization, 56-57.
64. Ibid., 64.
65. Ibid., 54.
66. Ibid., 58.
67. Burton Watson, Records of the Grand Historian of China, trans. from the Shih chih of Ssu-ma Ch'ien (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961), 1:56.
68. Pulleyblank, "The Chinese and Their Neighbors," 420.
69. Hsu and Lindhuff, Western Chou, 158-163 passim. The authors list twenty surnames and provide a chart delineating the relationships between the Ch'iang clans and the royal household of the Chou. The Ch'iang surnames clearly dominate.
70. Gernet, Chinese Civilization, 54.
71. Hsu and Lindhuff, Western Chou, 55.
72. Gernet, Chinese History, 63.
73. J.I. Crump, Chan-Kuo Ts'e, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), 14.
74. Ibid.
75. Gernet, Chinese History, 79.
76. Derk Bodde, China's First Unifier: A Study of the Ch'in Dynasty As Seen in the Life of Li Ssu, (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1967), citing Chavannes, *Les Mémoires historiques de Se-ma Ts'ien*, V, 179.

77. Eberhard, A History of China, 16.
78. Sage, Ancient Sichuan, 35 n.85, citing the Shang Shu (*Qu Wanli*, ed. *Shang shu jin zhu jin yi*) Mu shi, 71.
79. Watson, The Tso Chuan, passim.
80. Atlas of China, 1974 ed., s.v. "Administrative Divisions."
81. Loewe, History of China, 31.
82. Gernet, Chinese Civilization, 52.
83. Ibid.
84. Ibid., 55.
85. Loewe, History of China, 31.
86. Ibid.
87. Sage, Ancient Sichuan, 44.
88. Gernet, Chinese Civilization, 64-65.
89. Ibid., 59.
90. Ibid., 63.
91. Watson, The Tso chuan, xxvi.
92. Ibid., 36 n.17. Watson states, "Some interpretations of the Tso chuan suggest that the words Jung and Ti are a derogatory reference to the state of Ch'in which was regarded by the Chinese as a barbarian state."
93. Ibid., 21 n.1.
94. Ibid., 125 n.13, 41-42, 46, 70 n.3.
95. Barfield, The Perilous Frontier, 29.
96. Gernet, Chinese Civilization, 51.
97. Barfield, The Perilous Frontier, 30.

98. Ibid., xxxi.

99. Arthur Waldron, The Great Wall of China: From History to Myth (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1990), 17, citing the Shih chi Chapter 138; See also, Michael Loewe, History of China, "Han Weights and Measures," xxxviii. Loewe calculates one li equals approximately one-third of a mile or .415 km.

100. Ibid., 17. Waldron quotes the Shih-chi Chapter 110.

101. Ibid., 16.

102. Ibid., 20.

103. Ibid.

104. Loewe, History of China, 61-62.

105. Ibid.

106. Watson, Records, 2:270.

107. Ibid., 291.

108. Ibid., 485.

109. Waldron, The Great Wall, 23. Waldron states the Hsiung-nu re-occupied their lost territories in a treaty with the Han in 198 B.C.E.

110. Ibid., 20.

111. Loewe, History of China, 54-55.

112. Ibid., 96.

113. Ibid., 123.

114. Ibid., 96.

115. Ibid., 424.

116. Hsu and Lindhuff, Western Chou, 55.

117. Ibid., 25-26.

118. Hsu and Lindhuff, Western Chou, 158-63 passim.; Barfield, The Perilous Frontier, 98.

119. Owen Lattimore, Inner Asian Frontiers of China (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 32. Lattimore declares regarding China for example: "It would be interesting to know whether two or more races, or a mixture of peoples, took part in the founding of China; but the matter is not of decisive importance, because the major interest at this level of history is not the blood that ran in people's veins but rather the question of the way of life— its capacity for elaboration within the original landscape and its adaptation to a wider range of territory."

120. Bodde, China's First Unifier, 2-3.

121. Ibid.

122. Loewe, History of China, 69.

123. Ibid.

124. Ibid., 423. Michael Loewe's notes concerning Ch'iang agriculturalists cite the Hou Han shu, 87:2875.

125. Ibid., 424 n.141. Loewe cites the Han shu, 69:2883.

126. Ibid., 422.

127. Ibid.

128. Watson, Records, 2:185.

129. Loewe, History of China, 425.

130. Ibid., 424.

131. Ibid.

132. Ibid., 425.

133. Ibid.

134. Watson, Records, 2:266-68 passim.

135. Loewe, History of China, 425.
136. Pan Ku, The Former Han Dynasty, 2:76, 76 n.20.3, 86 n.25.1.
137. Ibid., 81.
138. Ibid., 81 n.22.6, citing the Hou Han shu, 77:5b.
139. Watson, Records, 2:185.
140. Pan Ku, The Former Han Dynasty, 2:83.
141. Ibid., 84.
142. Loewe, History of China, 423 n.136.
143. William Montgomery, The Early Empires of Central Asia (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1939), 184.; and Pan Ku, The Former Han Dynasty, 2:241-42.
144. Pan Ku, The Former Han Dynasty, 2:163, 171.
145. Barfield, The Perilous Frontier, 29.
146. Loewe, History of China, 423.
147. Ibid., 423. Loewe's quotation is from the Hou Han shu, 87:2878.
148. Ibid.
149. Ibid.
150. Ibid., 422, 422 n.135.
151. Ibid.
152. Barfield, The Perilous Frontier, 29.
153. Examples of one tribe joining another against the Chinese: Burton Watson, Records, 2:100-102 passim, 265, 291; See also Sage, Ancient Sichuan, 35n.85. Sage cites the Shang Shu (Qu Wanli, ed. *Shang shu jin zhu jin yi*) Mu shi, 71.

Chapter 3

The Early Tibetans of the Plateau:

Prehistoric to 100 B.C.E.

Early Tibetan civilization was stimulated by the evolution of the civilizations of Central Asia and India during the third and fourth centuries B.C.E. and the growth of a trading community across Eurasia. By the second century the proto-Tibetan Ch'ang were allied with the Yüeh-chih. Together they controlled the Jade Route stretching from Kashgar to Lanchou and the mountain routes leading south from Lanchou to the Ch'eng-tu Plain. They successfully monopolized most of the trade entering and leaving China and managed to bar the way to Chinese expansion along the entire eastern edge of the Tsinghai-Tibetan Plateau. To discover how they came to dominate this region, a consideration of the evolvement of Eurasian civilizations and the trading community and the expansion of the trade routes from the sixth to the first centuries B.C.E. is necessary. The story begins in the second millennium B.C.E.

Advances in technology and the arts, coupled with population growth and the expansion of the merchant community in the Middle East, Central Asia, India, and China in the second and first millenniums resulted in an interconnected

trading community stretching over all of Eurasia from the Mediterranean to the Pacific Ocean and into the South Seas. A trading network evolved, including both land and water routes, that had its earliest beginnings in the Harrappan period (ca. 2300-1500 B.C.E.).¹

The Harrappan civilization covered approximately 840,000 square miles, an area stretching from present day Delhi to Bombay. Two major cities, Mohenjo-daro and Lothal, were separated by 350 miles but connected by means of trading caravans that stopped in various townships and villages between them. The Indus Valley civilization was widespread. Remains have emerged as far away as Southern Turkmenia and Soviet Central Asia (ca. 2000 -1000 B.C.E.), while figures with Mongolian features have been found in Indus cities. Other findings suggest associations with Egypt and Mesopotamia as well (approximately 2500 miles from the Indus to Egypt). The Indus Valley civilization also extended into the valleys and foothills of the Hindu Kush Mountains. Two centers, Morasi and Mindigak, along the eastern side of the Indus near Gandahar, appear to have been part of a group of agricultural communities that supported the Indus Valley. The artifacts found in more accessible regions and historical surveys show that Afghanistan played a large role as a transfer point for cultural exchange, especially in its northern regions, around Tokharestan, the crossroads of Central Asia.²

It appears that by 2000 B.C.E. a loose confederation of Indo-European or

Aryan tribes lived in the south of Russia and Turkestan. They migrated in successive waves into Europe and by 1500 B.C.E. reached India through the passes of the Hindu Kush.³ It was in this era and region that the Indo-Europeans divided into the Iranian and Indian branches.⁴ After this invasion Aryan nomads migrated throughout Afghanistan, India and the surrounding regions. Extensive finds of bronze and trilobate arrow heads, bracelets, rings, earrings, and pottery decorated with stylized motifs of animals and plants show that the nomads roamed over a wide area. Skull Cave, a find of later date, included ten bodies, grave furniture, bronze mirrors (possibly of Siberian origin), bracelets, rings, pottery and lamps, a lapis lazuli ring and carnelian beads. These findings suggest that by the 1500's B.C.E. Afghanistan was already inhabited by a people with knowledge of a more extensive world. The various objects came from sites in the immediate area, and possibly from as far away as Siberia.⁵

Trade routes throughout Afghanistan and Iran were well developed by 1000 B.C.E. Neighboring Iran was from earliest times a bridge for commerce over land between east and west by the early first millennium. Solomon (973-933 B.C.E.) ruled the Ezion-Gaber on the Gulf of Akabah connecting Arabia with India. "He who possessed it [Ezion-Gaber] and Palestine commanded the bridge that joined the three continents."⁶ After the death of Solomon, the Persian Gulf became the main means of transporting trade between Asia Minor and India

until the period of the Persians although the intermediate land routes were still used (fig. 2).⁷

The main route, linking east and west through the Hindu Kush increased in importance by the time of Darius (522-486 B.C.E.). It ran through the Khyber Pass of northwestern India into Balkh.⁸ Other minor routes crossed over the Hindu Kush and directly passed through the Korakorum and the Kun Lun Mountains to the southern route of the Takla Maken Desert, which later became known as the Jade Route. While, India and Southeast Asia utilized their many rivers and waterways, Central Asia used the caravan trails. The two-humped Bactrian camel was well-suited for "colder temperatures and climbed mountains with ease." The Dromedary, or one-humped camel, was used in the desert.⁹ By 500 B.C.E. the routes of travel and the means were generally well fixed. On the sea and along the waterways of Eurasia merchant craft were numerous. On land, key centers of the Mediterranean, Central Asia, India, and Southeast Asia were linked by bridges, ferries, road-signs, way-stations, and guard-posts. The paving of roads was already in its beginning stages although they were few. "Travelers had their choice of wagons, donkeys, horses, or camels." Along major routes inns, and in towns, inns and taverns served travelers and over time increasing numbers of caravans.¹⁰

Although the proto-Tibetans in this early period were probably involved to only a very limited degree in the greater trading community, if at all, it is certain

that tracks and trails were already in use among the Neolithic communities across the Tsinghai-Tibetan Plateau before the Aryans migrated into India.¹¹ Most of these routes followed the banks of river beds where farming settlements are known to have arisen. They made their way to the edges of the Plateau into the four directions and downward to the burgeoning civilizations below. Due to the difficult mountainous terrain, access to various parts of the Plateau was extremely limited to particular thoroughfares, however. Once found, these routes probably changed little, since alternate passages through the mountain passes at these high elevations were and are rare.

Eventually, through repeated use, especially during Eurasian trade expansion in the third to second centuries B.C.E., these pathways became major thoroughfares across the Tsinghai-Tibetan Plateau to which other less accessible regions and communities were connected by subsidiary paths. The early use and existence of some of these routes have been questioned, especially many of those crossing the Plateau into China, but this is due primarily to the inability of westerners to believe that such terrain could regularly be traversed, and secondarily due to a lack of historical documentation. Nevertheless, the rapid growth of trade and civilization in the regions surrounding the Plateau and the Sino-Tibetan borderlands, coupled with the knowledge that the Hindu Kush was used frequently as a thoroughfare suggests otherwise.¹²

The evidence for the initial development of the routes across the Tsinghai-Tibetan Plateau may be found in the Chinese annals of both the Ch'in and Han times. They record heavy trading in key areas where the Plateau routes intersected with Chinese roadways in certain locations on the eastern borders of the Plateau (fig. 3). Even in the present day Tibetans regularly traverse these regions carrying trade goods.¹³ During the Ch'in and throughout the Han eras these locations became zones of contention between the Chinese and the proto-Tibetans, including the Ch'iang and Ch'iang Ti tribes. By the Later Han period these territories were identified as *shu kuo* (the Chinese term for *dependent states*). As matter of record, these *shu kuo* were named Chang-I (Kansu), An-ting (Kansu), Kuang-han (Szechaun), Shu-Chün (Szechaun), and Chien-wei (Szechaun). The location of the proto-Tibetans and their tenacity in holding onto these territories played a central part in the obstacles experienced by the Ch'in and Han dynasties in expanding Chinese territories. Throughout their respective dynastic periods they had a great deal of difficulty in attempting to gain control of trade and the trade routes from the west due to the presence of these tribes.¹⁴ The question remains, exactly when did these trade routes come into existence and when did the proto-Tibetans initiate their use?

By the third century B.C.E., and more than likely much earlier, three main trade routes entered the north of China from Central Asia from the Takla Makan Desert and the Tarim Basin. From Ferghana, around the Aral Sea, routes from

Central Asia and the Mediterranean Sea emptied into three others, emanating from Kokand in Ferghana to the east. They circled the Takla Makan Desert: two routes followed either side of the Tien Shan Mountains along the northern perimeter of the desert, while a third traced the southern edge along the Kun Lun Mountains. The route furthest to the north passed through the northern steppes of nomad territory to Lake Issy Kul and Urumchi, with only one city-state stopover at Kuldja (to the west of the Dzungarian Basin). From there this route traversed the Dzungarian Basin to Turfan, Hami and finally to Anshi and the Jade Gate, which guarded the doorway to the Kansu Corridor and ancient China. In its entirety, this route ultimately reached across Eurasia from the Caspian Sea to the eastern end of the Takla Makan Desert and wound along the southern line of the Great Steppes. Indo-European tribes ruled its western portion while the Mongol tribes controlled the east until the third century B.C.E.¹⁵

The second route, following the northern rim of the Takla Makan Desert on the southern side of the Tien Shan, is the thoroughfare that later became known as the Imperial Silk Route in the second century B.C.E. It made its way east from Kokand to Kashgar, thence to Karasharh where it forked. A northern branch continued to Turfan, where it joined its sister route from the northern side of the Tien Shan. A subsidiary route broke away from the Imperial Silk Route just east of Karasharh, turned south and crossed the desert to the ancient city of Lou Lan at Lob Nor. From Lob Nor, centrally located in the desert, another road

made its way east to Anshi. In the third century, control of these routes in the northern part of the desert was also divided between the Indo-Europeans and the Mongol tribes, while a third group, the Tocharian Yüeh-chih, controlled the cities and territories from Kucha east to Tun-huang.¹⁶

The third route, south of the desert, traversed the proto-Tibetan Ch'iang territories. This route was that known as the Jade Route and had been in operation since at least Chou times (ca. 1025-256 B.C.E.).¹⁷ It began at Kashgar and followed the southern edge of the Takla Makan Desert through Yarkand, Khotan, Keriya, Niya and Miran. Subsidiary routes made their way downwards to these cities from the heights of the Kun Lun Mountains and the Hindu Kush. From Miran routes connected to other cities in three directions. The major trunk road continued to follow the southern edge of the Salt Desert in the east of the Takla Makan Desert, passed through Yüeh-chih territory to Tunhuang and connected with the Chinese route at The Jade Gate at Yümen, near Anhsi.¹⁸ A secondary route, and the most important in terms of the proto-Tibetans, branched southwest behind the Ch'i Lien Mountains through the Tsaidam Basin to Koko Nor and Hsi-ning and finally to Lanchou at the southern end of Kansu, bypassing the whole of the Kansu Corridor. An additional branch made its way northeast to Lou-lan and Lob Nor from Miran.¹⁹

Yü, meaning jade, from the area of Khotan, gave both this southern route and the city of Yümen their names. From ancient times jade from the Ch'iang

territories had been a “major import” into China.²⁰ By the third century B.C.E., the Jade Route comprised the primary route over which this and other precious stones²¹—along with jewels and pearls from India and later gold from the ancient Greek city-states of Central Asia and Rome—were carried to the courts of the Chinese.²² Until the time of Wu-ti (140-87 B.C.E.), travelers, merchants and their caravans were often “obliged to use the more difficult southern route” controlled by the Ch’iang because “the Turfan and Hami regions were usually a Hsiung-nu center.”²³ Caravans passing through these regions were often raided for their goods. The southern route passed through an expanse of desert east of Lob Nor, but was inherently safer than the northern route. It seems that the Ch’iang were invested in the safe and expedient flow of trade in contrast to the Hsiung-nu tribes who seem to have been more interested in raiding and tribute. The entire length of the southern route and the Tsaidam Basin lay within Ch’iang territory. That it was heavily used is evident, especially during the rise to power of the Hsiung-nu in the north in the early second century B.C.E. During this period, the southern trade route is noted to have been the most active.²⁴ The northern route was not used frequently until the time of Wu-ti, and then only during the short periods he could take control away from the Hsiung-nu.²⁵

Meanwhile, substantial evidence indicates that the inaugural expansion of trading activity along these routes occurred during the time of the Chou states. Trade had increased to such a degree that by the third century B.C.E. noble

houses regularly retained merchants to deal with the large volume. It also became necessary for the aristocrats to build many roadways to facilitate the expanding transport of goods and travel. Increasingly larger state domains and the rise in demand across China for trade goods from other regions had given "the merchant more territory into which he could travel."²⁶

Examples of the commodities that were actively traded in China and necessary to the health of the economy are evident by a survey of the kinds of tribute given by vassals to their rulers. These items were produced by different states and by different cultural groups and comprise an extensive list. On this list are many items that were attractive to the nomads of the steppes and the Ch'iang, which lent themselves easily to long distance transport by horse, pack or caravan. Many items, such as jade, hides, metals, feathers, timbers, linens, and wild animals were either partially or wholly provided by the tribal peoples from the territories in which they lived. A list in the Yü Kung, written in the late Chou period (463-221 B.C.E.), includes:

lacquer, silk, silk from wild silk worms, hemp, linen, dyed fabric, salt, sea food, pine timbers, lead and odd looking rocks [from Ch'i and Lu (Yen and Ch'ing)] . . . pearls, fish, musical stones, colored feathers, and fine dark silk [from Hsü (parts of Sung, Ch'i and Wu)] . . . gold, silver, copper, jade, tin, bamboo, ivory, raw hides, feathers, grass cloth [from Yang (Wu, Yüeh, and part of Ch'u)] . . . gold, silver, copper, timbers of various hardwoods, hard stone, flint, cinnabar, bamboo, two kinds of grass, dark red silk, and silk strips decorated with small pearl beads [from Ching (Ch'u)] . . . lacquer, hemp, and various grades of linen [from Yü (the Central Plain)] . . . iron, steel, flint, hard stone, silver and wild animals such as bears

and foxes [from Liang (Pa and Shu)] . . . [and] many kinds of jade [from Yang (a part of Ch'in)].²⁷

By the time of the Former Han an economic network had developed between the Chinese and the proto-Tibetan tribes of Ch'iang and the Hsiung-nu that may be defined as interdependent; no party could prosper economically or even survive well without the others. All had come to depend upon what the others produced or could obtain.

The annals of the Chou period report that trade interactions between the barbarian tribes and the Chou states had reached such proportions that the Chinese were unable to remove the barbarians from the economic circle without considerable damage to their economy. First, many goods listed in the Chinese annals were natural resources and were available in quantity only through trade with the nomadic tribes. Second, specialization resulted in monopolies of particular goods. Certain goods could only be obtained from specific regions. The Chou Li states that there were ". . . no spear shaft makers in Ch'in, and no bow makers or chariot builders among the nomadic peoples because every man in these states or tribes knew how to make these items himself," but items such as "sabers from Cheng, axes from Sung, blades from Lu, and swords from Wu and Yüeh [Yang: Ch'iang country to the west of Ch'in] were considered far superior to similar weapons from other regions" and thus were in high demand.²⁸

In the third century B.C.E. the Chou states had also come into greater

contact with Shu [western Szechuan]. Until that time, Shu had remained separated from the rest of China by the state of Ch'in in the Wei River Valley and the Ch'iang tribes, who were lodged in the Tsingling Mountains between Ch'in and Shu. That Shu had become an economic entity worthy of attention and that the Ch'iang were involved in trade in this region may be seen by the descriptions of them recorded in the Shih chi. Chang Ch'ien, the famous adventurer and explorer of the court of Wu-ti, reported that during his time an extensive trading community already existed between Shu, Central Asia and India; he also noted the involvement of the Ch'iang, the "profits to be made among them" and the block they represented either north or south to Chinese expansion.²⁹ It is apparent from the sources that by the second century B.C.E., the proto-Tibetans not only controlled the Jade Route, but also the mountain routes into Shu from the south and the west. Since the Chou in the previous centuries were fairly confined by Ch'in and the nomadic tribes to their west and south, we may assume that the proto-Tibetans in the previous century were also the main suppliers of trade goods from these regions. Chang Ch'ien's further adventures backup this assertion.

During his travels, Chang Ch'ien discovered that the routes to India ran through the Karakoram passes of the Hindu Kush and through the southern regions of Shu and noted that these routes traversed Ch'iang territory.³⁰ In the southwest an expedition sent by Wu-ti was barred by tribal peoples, including a

large number of Ch'iang, Ch'iang Ti, P'o and Tso tribes. The Shih chi reports:

The party broke up into four groups proceeding out of the regions of Mang, Jan, Hsi, and Ch'iang and P'o. All the groups managed to advance one or two thousand *li*, but they were blocked on the north by the Ti [Ch'iang] and Tso tribes and on the south by the Sui and K'un-ming tribes.³¹

During another journey to Bactria Chang Ch'ien was captured and held by the Hsiung-nu for ten years. The proto-Tibetans clearly occupied the territories along the Kun Lun Mountains in this period. It is evident that they held some affinity for China, for when Chang Ch'ien attempted to return, he chose to travel through Ch'iang territory.³² When later asked by the Chinese court if the route he traveled could be used to reach Bactria and thus India, he was certain that if "envoys" attempted to use the "mountain trails . . . [leading] through the territories of the Ch'iang to Ta-hsia [Bactria]" they would be "molested."³³ Apparently the Ch'iang allowed merchants and travelers through their regions, but would not tolerate losing their position in the trading chain as intermediaries. The proto-Tibetan Ch'iang were numerous enough, albeit mentioned with other tribes, to stop the Chinese from proceeding through the western or southern routes.

In the northeast of Tibet and the northwest of China, from the time of the Shang to the Ch'in period, we have seen that the Ch'iang lived in southern Kansu, Ningsia, Shensi including some parts of the Wei River Valley.³⁴ During Chou, Ch'in and Han times they also lived in enclaves throughout the present

day territories of western Tsinghai, Szechaun, Shansi and Honan as well as Ladakh and adjacent parts of Kashmir, Gilgit, Nepal, Sikkim and Bhutan (using the Himalayas as a general regional boundary), and the northern regions of Assam, Burma and Yunnan.³⁵ Determining exactly when the Ch'iang moved into the eastern marches of the Plateau regions west of Shu is difficult, but archaeological studies and linguistic analysis, as we have seen in previous chapters, suggest that they occupied some parts of the area from the Shang period forward and as population expanded they migrated even further into associated regions.³⁶ The strength of the proto-Tibetans was rooted in the development of tribal associations on the Tsinghai-Tibetan Plateau and its periphery. Most likely bonds were forming in the northeast of the Plateau by 1400 B.C.E., when the Ch'iang were first noticed by the Shang. In the west formal tribal associations appear to have formed much later (ca.500 B.C.E.).³⁷

However, before any intelligent discussion of the formation of clan and tribal associations can occur, it is necessary to consider the basic geography of the Tsinghai-Tibetan Plateau, for the topography affected the growth and expansion of the proto-Tibetan tribes and cultures. The Tsinghai-Tibetan Plateau may be divided historically into five regions: (1) the Central Valley including the Tsangpo River Valley; (2) the west containing Ladakh; (3) the north bordering the Takla Makan Desert, including the Changthang Plateau; (4) the northeast containing the Tsaidim Basin, the Ch'i Lien Mountains and Koko Nor;

and (5) the southeastern mountainous region adjacent to Szechaun, Yunnan and Burma, including the upper courses of the Yangtze, Salween and Mekong rivers. Each of the locales may be considered a smaller cultural region within the larger sphere and will be discussed in the next few chapters.

The Tibetan Plateau region encompasses one and a half million square miles of territory, an area fifteen times the size of Great Britain. The idea that it is covered with snow and untraversable is a wholly inaccurate assessment gleaned from the "accounts of [modern day] explorers who had to follow routes far removed from the inhabited areas in order to make survey maps of unknown territory."³⁸ In truth, the mountains on the peripheries rise to heights of 25,000 feet and more, but the interior smaller plateau is a basin by comparison, while on the slopes of the whole of the Tsinghai-Tibetan Plateau, valleys alternate with mountains that gradually descend to lower elevations of 3,000 feet. Though the upper regions of the Tibetan homeland are mountainous, many passes pierce ranges at altitudes of 15,000 feet in some locations. Most of the population at the highest elevations reside in habitable valleys at levels of 10,000 feet. Contrary to popular opinion, the communities are interconnected to one and another by roads and pathways easily traversed most of the year.³⁹

One of these regions, the Changthang, to the north is a desolate land by modern day standards. However, in ancient times this area held a larger population and was called Greater Yang-tung in the north and Lesser Yang-tung

in the south.⁴⁰ In the past, when it had an even warmer climate, the area served as a "bridge" between eastern and western Tibet or Amdo and Zhung zhang (western Tibet) respectively.⁴¹ It is really another smaller plateau, "elevated above the rest of Tibet . . . , crisscrossed with mountains and liberally scattered with salt lakes."⁴² While today it contains the harshest of terrains and only sparse grazing lands of generally poor quality, a northern caravan route passes through it, running in an east-west direction, roughly paralleling the Jade Route, at the base of the northern edge of the Plateau.⁴³ This route was probably one of those "mountain trails"⁴⁴ referred to by Chang Ch'ien, and used by hardy travelers and traders in good favor with the proto-Tibetans who wished to travel on the east-west axis without traveling through the cities along the Jade Route. The caravan route originates in Ladakh in western Tibet and connects to others across the Plateau in the far west, middle and east; these lead south to the Tsangpo River Valley.⁴⁵

The Central Valley region is that called Bod (pronounced Pö), lying on either side of the Tsangpo River against the Himalayas.⁴⁶ In ancient times, this southern region of Bod and its peoples were connected culturally to small kingdoms in Nepal, Sikkim, Bhutan and Assam, and other intermediate areas in proximity with ancient India and Southeast Asia.⁴⁷ Bod may be thought of as the cradle of Tibetan civilization. From within this area the proto-Tibetans expanded outwards across the Plateau, and the kings who united the empire in the seventh

century C.E. built their castles. In the west of the Central Valley are found the districts of Tsang, containing the towns of Shigatse and Gyantse, while in the north Ü is home to the present day capital of Lhasa.⁴⁸ South of the Tsangpo are the districts of Lhotrak and Yarlung. Yarlung is the area where, legend has it, the Tibetan kings first emerged.⁴⁹ The Tsangpo River Valley holds the crossroads of the Plateau at its center and along the riverbanks contains the major connecting trunk road of the southern portion of the Plateau stretching from east to west. It follows generally the course of the Tsangpo River, extending along the same line of latitude to Ch'eng-tu and from there to the land of ancient Shu. Other routes that intersect this one at various points along its length, reach north and northwest to Central Asia, the Tsaidam Basin, and the Kansu Corridor.⁵⁰ It is along this route that ancient farming communities probably first transformed into small kingdoms.

While the small kingdoms of Bod, described in Tibetan literature, “probably date from the sixth century [C.E.],” the Tibetan histories, the Kangyur and the Tengyur, assert that the first kingdoms were established in an earlier age when the first legendary king was needed “because the four great countries . . . [of] China, India, Iran and Hor or Gesar (Trohm, spelt Phrom)—dominated the four points of the compass.”⁵¹ While archaeologists have determined that the castle ruins existing today are probably of the sixth to seventh centuries C.E., and it is doubtful that one king ruled over all in prehistoric periods, this

does not exclude, as Tucci asserts, the development of a number of kingdoms in the earlier age.⁵² To understand the sequence of events that would have made this possible, we must return to the history of Central Asia and India and consider the impact of the Aryan invasions that took place a thousand years before the fifth to third centuries B.C.E.

The analysis of Indian legends has revealed a good deal about the history of ancient northern India, including the Hindu Kush, Kashmir and Nepal, during the periods between the sixth and third centuries and the development of the first tribal republics and monarchies.⁵³ The early Indo-Aryans of the Rig Veda period (originally composed prior ca.1000 B.C.E.), invaded through the Hindu Kush ca.1500 B.C.E. Initially pastoralists, some of them settled in the Punjab and Delhi regions by the tenth century B.C.E. in small farming communities, while others maintained their nomadic lifestyle.⁵⁴ By ca.1000 B.C.E. the discovery of iron in the hills around Patna triggered an Indo-Aryan takeover of the Gangetic Plain. The development of iron tools and weapons assisted in the conversion of the new plains society into larger agricultural societies and kingdoms.⁵⁵ Yet, in the north of India and in the foothills of the Himalayas, the smaller kingdoms and nomadic tribes remained the norm, and continued to proliferate.⁵⁶

By circa 600 B.C.E. the process of forming agricultural-pastoral settlements fostered land ownership and created disputes that initiated the

breakdown of the older nomadic tribal organization in the valleys and hills to the north of the Gangetic Plain. Tribal republics formed in the foothill regions of the Himalayas where terrain was less fertile and people were required to maintain at least a semi-nomadic lifestyle. These nomads also, no doubt, were engaged in trade as they traveled across the region and between developing agricultural settlements. Contemporaneously, tribal chiefs established kingdoms in the valleys of the foothills where small agricultural settlements were possible. As a result villages became towns and centers of trade, as industries and specialized crafts materialized. Larger markets came into existence in these regions, and hence the ancient trading network expanded. In the northern regions, the routes were dominated by the pastoral tribes wandering between them. They were later followed by merchants and vendors. The territories through which they traveled were controlled by territorial nomadic tribes some of which were attached to the smaller settlements. In later periods, as trade burgeoned, military troops organized by larger kingdoms of the Gangetic Plain controlled the flow of trade along major routes.⁵⁷

Meanwhile, the tribal republics of the north consisted of two types: a single tribe such as the Shakyas, Koliyas or Mallas, or a confederacy of tribes such as the Vrijiis and Yadavas. In the transition from an independent, tribally governed, nomadic society to that of a tribal republican form of government, under the guidance of chieftains, the tribes lost some of their egalitarian

independence, however they gained a closer association with each other and equal representation through assemblies. This system of government ultimately provided a degree of protection, security and strength in numbers. The governmental system of these tribal republics required that representatives discuss issues of importance among themselves. If a unanimous decision could not be reached, the issue was put to a vote.⁵⁸ This kind of government was probably a means to inhibit senseless wars and encourage cooperation, mutual growth, security and thus prosperity for all. Legends relating to the origin of these republics report they were frequently founded by a person of royal lineage.⁵⁹

With Tibet, we are unable to determine exactly when tribal republics and kingdoms first formed, but they were in existence at the time of Tibetan unification, and had been for some lengthy time before the introduction of Buddhist elements. Indian and Central Asian historical analyses, lend support to the Tibetan idea that tribal republics had spread into the mountains and into Ladakh and the Tsangpo River Valley and possibly into other regions across the Plateau during the fifth to the second centuries B.C.E. Very important in the establishment of this assertion is the knowledge that tribal republics and monarchies developing in the north of India included the Upper Indus Five Rivers Region, and hence Kashmir. They were spread out across the foothills of the Himalayas by circa 600-500 B.C.E. and included the area of Nepal. The

proximity of the region to Tibet, especially in regard to Kashmir and Ladakh that held the Indo-Aryan kingdom of Kamboja (ca.600 B.C.E.) may not be discounted. Numerous trails make their way through the many passes of the Hindu Kush while primary sources support the fact that traffic flowed through these upper regions. The presence of the Bon (to be discussed below) and the knowledge that Mt. Kailāśa on the Tibetan Plateau to the north of Nepal was an area of pilgrimage, suggests that, while Tibetan dates vary, the development of Indo-Aryan tribal republics and kingdoms in the region were a probability in this early period.⁶⁰ The Himalayan regions were “areas in which Buddhism found considerable support, and where foreign invaders such as the Greeks, Shakas, Kushanas, and Huns—were successfully assimilated” in later years. However, before we accept the assertion that such early kingdoms and tribal republics developed in prehistoric Tibet, the idea must also be considered in conjunction with other historical events.⁶¹

Just before this period, under Cyrus (558-528 B.C.E.) Gandhara in northwest India was added to the Persian Empire. It was a prized satrapy, important in its time as a source of gold. In the following period Darius (522-486 B.C.E.) extended his power across the Indus and incorporated Taxila. Taxila soon became a crossroads for trade and an intellectual center.⁶² Above Gandahar, the state of Kamboja and other small states at the peak of the Upper Indus Five Rivers Region as well as Gandahar paid tribute to Darius as he

crossed over the Hindu Kush into Bactria.⁶³ This Persian invasion transformed the north of India. During the reign of Cyrus (550-530 B.C.E.) the northwest became a center where Vedic and Iranian cultures mixed, but the more orthodox Brahmins treated the region with disdain, while Persian elements who had adopted a dogmatic Zoroastrianism, chastised those not adopting a religious zeal for their teachings with enthusiasm.⁶⁴ The expansion of the Persian Empire, fueled by a fundamentalist brand of Zoroastrianism, tolerated few deviancies from their rule. Indo-Aryan princes who had established kingdoms in the north of India, especially in the Trans-Indus River region were dislodged. We can only imagine that they escaped with priests who had fallen from favor further into the upper regions of the Himalayas, passing through the Hindu Kush and associated communities into western Tibet. By this period the region is noted to have developed into an Indo-Aryan religious center. The large organized military forces generated by massive empires such as the Mauryans, and soon after, Alexander's generals (ca.323 B.C.E.), no doubt increased the flow of the disenthroned with their entourages into the upper regions where expelling them was difficult due to the mountainous terrain. Here, powerful individuals could command a certain amount of control over trade as it passed directly from the northwest of India over the Hindu Kush into the Takla Makan.

In the following Mauryan period, the upper regions of the Hindu Kush were influenced by both Indian and Buddhist currents. Chandragupta (ca.323

B.C.E.) conquered the Upper Indus region and its tributaries.⁶⁵ Ashoka, the Mauryan emperor from 273-232 B.C.E., furthered the boundaries of the empire to include Kashmir bordering the Karakoram Mountains and the pass of the same name leading into the western end of the Takla Makan and the southern Jade route.⁶⁶ During this period (ca.558- ca.323 B.C.E.), the shamanists priests of the former era were in the process of gaining power themselves in Zhang zhung (along the western Tsangpo) including the areas of Lake Manasarowar and Mt. Kialāśa.⁶⁷ A number of priests, whom scholars have determined were Zoroastrian, entered Tibet from the Middle East probably by circa 500 B.C.E. and apparently established themselves in the southwest of the Tibetan Plateau, especially in the Kashmir and Ladakh areas. There appears to be no argument concerning their religious background; evidence of older Iranian elements, and Shaivite and Zurvanism influences appear to have been strong. It also seems clear that an incorporation of indigenous beliefs of proto-Tibetan origin into their system of teachings predates the entrance of either Bon or Buddhism into the region. Their power structure indicates a strong Aryan root indicating that tribal societies of Aryan descent were most likely also present.⁶⁸

The reports of Alexander the Great's adventures into the upper course of the Beas River, while not indicative of tribal organizations in Tibet, confirms that numerous tribes were settled in the higher regions of the Himalayas by circa 300 B.C.E., only fifty to one hundred miles from the Tibetan border.⁶⁹ The presence

of the Bon coupled with the knowledge that they were intimately connected with tribal organizations suggests that the organization of tribal republics and kingdoms, under the influence of the Bon is thus not out of order during this entire period, considering the increase in the flow of traffic over the Hindu Kush. Notably, a thousand years had elapsed between the Aryan invasion of India (ca.1500 B.C.E.) and the proposed introduction of Indo-Aryan royalty into the Himalayan regions (ca.500 B.C.E.).⁷⁰ Evidence of this colorful past may be found among present day tribes in the Zhang zhung region of Mt. Kailāśa and Manasarowar who linguists have determined still speak a language seeming to be of ancient Indo-European root.⁷¹

The ritual elements of Bon ceremonies provide further evidence for the establishment of early tribal republics and kingdoms. The rites the Bonpos used to validate the rulers reflect distinctly Aryan influences of Stone Age steppe dwelling pastoralists who are known to have "tenaciously upheld their hereditary priesthood."⁷² Training for the priesthood began between the ages of five and seven and maturity was reached between the ages of thirteen and fifteen. At this time all males were invested with a sacred cord that connected them to the sky as an act of initiation into the adult community.⁷³ The Aryan ideas of sacred cords connected to the sky and associations with the sky gods are traditionally a major factor also identified with the kings of Tibet in the Tibetan histories.⁷⁴

Giuseppe Tucci concludes "the genealogy of the Tibetan kings has an

explicitly fragmentary character” and yet, while its compilers were probably motivated politically to confirm the validity of the founder of the First Tibetan Empire *Srong btsan sgam* (d.649 or 650 C.E.), we may glean an idea of the lineages of the early peoples and their places of origin. Generally Tucci has ascertained that Tibetan genealogies were associated with several traditions of important centers that had their own personalized practices; these existed side by side with as many family trees as powerful families.⁷⁵ Tucci concludes while “We are concerned without a doubt with a list devised to incorporate other dynastic and clan genealogies,” it may be determined that they originate from “various centers. . . . Three different tribal chiefs or ancestral lords were involved in this account from different regions and periods: *gNya'khri*, *sPu rgyal*, and ‘*O de gung rgyal* [these are kings]” may be discerned.” In this way *Srong btsan sgam po* was able to unite a sundry of traditions or cults from several regions.⁷⁶ It appears that the roots of at least some of the lines stretch back to 500-300 B.C.E. when the Bon first entered Tibet. Though the names of the kings and their exploits may be legendary, the emergence of small kingdoms in the early period is probable, since the locations with which the origins of the three groups are associated include Zhang chung in western Tibet, Lake Manasarowar and Mt. Kailāśa along the Tsangpo River. These were religious centers with a history dating between ca.500-300 B.C.E..⁷⁷

According to the Tibetan histories, around the time of the Buddha (ca.500

B.C.E.), Tibet was occupied by little kingdoms, surrounded by associated tribes of various clans, constantly at war with one another until circa the second century B.C.E.⁷⁸ The Tibetan records assert that the kings entered Tibet and imposed their rule over an already established number of tribes. They also suggest the takeover of an indigenous population by Indo-Aryans. The genealogical lines are dual. They trace the ancestry of the royalty separately from the tribes and clans. At that time they report, during the Pandava wars, an Indo-Aryan Rūpati prince fled India, crossed the Himalayas and founded the first Tibetan dynasty, bringing peace between the tribes and kingdoms.⁷⁹ Romila Thapar suggests the historical dates of the Pandava wars actually range between 1000-700 B.C.E., yet scholars suggest the first kings may have been of Indo-Aryan origins.⁸⁰ While the dates may be inaccurate, they do not preclude the arrival of an Indian prince in later centuries. The tribes of the Great Sākyas and the Sākya Licchavis have been named as possible lineages. In the time of the Buddha (ca.500 B.C.E.), these clans were a part of the Vriji confederacy, in the north of India. Their lineages are well-known and survived through the fourth century A.D.⁸¹ Under the influence of the Licchavis, Pataliputra was founded during the reign of Ajātasatru in Magadha. He conquered Tirhut, occupying the region from the Ganges up into the Himalayas and its capital Vaisali. Ajātasatru married one of the Licchavi daughters and his son followed suit. It is probable that the Licchavi clan, which occupied this region, was of

Tibetan origins. The Licchavi clan remained a powerful royal family throughout these early centuries well into the Gupta period.⁸²

The sources reveal that the Indo-Aryans were relatively sophisticated and educated. The sources indicate they had a wide geographic knowledge of the region in which they lived. An analysis of the sources also reveals that they had a body of knowledge that was passed from generation to generation. Taxila in this era had become a well-known center of both intellectual and religious learning as mentioned earlier. It describes the wars between the Kauravas and the Pandavas over land-rights and the “fertile and strategic region north of Delhi.” According to one account, the Pandavas won and ruled “long and peacefully.” Later they renounced their kingdom and reportedly “went to the City of the Gods in the Himalayas.”⁸³ The literature regards the Himalayas as the home of the gods and of the Vidyādhara (*rig-d’zin*), or supermen, who were “gifted with a special knowledge, particularly the understanding of magic.”⁸⁴ While the sources mention the two seas, the Himalayan and Vindhya Mountains, and generally the whole of the Gangetic Plain,⁸⁵ the Mahabharata is concerned with historical events that happened between circa 1000 and 700 B.C.E. The legends of the Vedic literature intimate that the roots of the Bon religion coupled with an Indo-Aryan kingship were established at a very early date in this western region of the Plateau area.⁸⁶ While we may not rely upon these writings for total historical accuracy, since the renditions of these texts date from the first half of

the first millennium C.E., the texts may be relied upon for a general idea of political developments in the region and the areas in which the Indo-Aryans were located. The texts of northern India indicate a reverence for the Himalayas and the probability that the Indo-Aryans were well acquainted with Zhang zhung.⁸⁷

Evidence of people other than the Indo-Aryans is also supplied by the Indian histories. These texts also speak of an indigenous population living in the central foothills of the Himalayas. They were a people "of whom the Aryans were contemptuous" with darker skin and flat features.⁸⁸ According to the sources, the Panis were nomadic "cattle thieves" who worshiped "strange gods," while the Dasas were agriculturalists. These may have been a group of proto-Tibetan peoples, either a result of an overflow population emanating from Himalayan regions into Nepal, or an indigenous people.⁸⁹ The Aryans called them Dasas and Panis, and they spoke an entirely different language than the surrounding populace.⁹⁰

The Panis and Dasas may be examples of the kinds of peoples the Indo-Aryans subjugated. The division of the social classes suggests that a less sophisticated people occupied the bottom rung of the ladder. The Aryans were divided into two main groups, priests and warrior herdsman,⁹¹ but the Tibetans had "three social classes: the warriors or aristocracy, the priests, and the common people. Romilar Thapar states, apparently, "[they had] no consciousness of caste; the three divisions merely facilitated social and

economic organization;"⁹² however, a graded hierarchy can hardly be denied. The Tibetan histories, also report, the first king, *gNya-khri* descended from a lineage of heavenly mountain Gods "via a *dMu* sky rope," also a distinctly Aryan idea.⁹³ Reportedly, this king settled at Yarlung, not in Zhang zhung, and instituted measures to "set society running smoothly because he could set proper relationships between people."⁹⁴

Though evidence of the development of early Tibetan kingdoms and tribal republics may never be established, the proximity of the Indo-Aryan tribes in the region seems to be assured, while in China a similar type of organization is apparent in the same time. We may look to Alexander the Great and the Shih chi for secondary evidence of early tribal republics among the Tibetan peoples. When Alexander reached the mountain passes of the Upper Indus Five Rivers Region, (the Beas River Valley bordering Tibetan lands),⁹⁵ he was a witness to hill tribes living in the area and to the satrapy system of the Achaemenids below, who, in spite of their comprehensive military and political machine, were never able to conquer the people living at these higher altitudes. In northern Gedrosia (Baluchistan) Alexander fought against the Ariaspans (Pushtan or Baluch), nomads. They were governed by their own chiefs. A tribal confederation meeting so "resembled the open council of the Greeks," and impressed Alexander that reportedly he allowed them to continue their own way of life. It is more probable however, that he was unable to conquer these tribes. It is

doubtful that he had either the manpower or the time and will to engage in what only could have amounted to pointless guerilla warfare. In this region, independent tribes as a part of a confederacy would have joined together against a common enemy. The organization of these hill tribes is reminiscent of the Indo-Aryan confederacies of the Vrijis and the Mallas described earlier.⁹⁶

Our second source, the Shih chi, describes the proto-Tibetan Ch'iang tribes at the far west of the Plateau living in similar terrain only 200 years later. The annals describe them as "scattered about in their own valleys, each with their own tribal chieftains." The annal continues, "From time to time they [the Ch'iang] would have gatherings of a hundred or more men, but no one tribe was capable of unifying the others under a single rule."⁹⁷ But, while Alexander admired the tribal government so similar to his own, the Chinese abhorred it. The differences in the points of view between Alexander and the Shih chi may be satisfied by the recognition that a rigid Confucianist perception of an ordered, and thus ideal government, influenced the viewpoint of the Chinese. They were unable to appreciate the independence and self-government the tribes retained through membership in a tribal confederacy. The idea of a chieftain independently controlling his own territory was to the educated Chinese historian a barbaric form of government. Though these two passages span a period of several hundred years, they indicate the development of a similar type of government among the tribes living at the extremes of the Plateau.⁹⁸ In the

northwest of China, tribal republics may have developed as early as the proto-Chou period. As we have seen, a number of Ch'iang tribes existed, some of which later established Chou period states. Throughout the era covered by the Tso chuan, other entries record that tribal representatives were regularly sent to the Chou courts as arbitrators.⁹⁹

Region to region, the area of the Plateau spans approximately 2000 miles from east to west. Apparently the tribes were connected by clan affiliations, intermarriages and progressively by the Bon shamanist brotherhood from its inception. The original Bon power center seems to have been located in Zhang chung, probably by 500 B.C.E.¹⁰⁰ The knowledge we have concerning the evolvement of the Bon traditions, coupled with the length of time from conception to a point of development in which the tribal and clan associations on the Plateau could be distinguished, suggests that the clan and tribal associations evolved on the region prior to the entrance of Buddhism.¹⁰¹ A time span correlating to the fifth to the third centuries is supported by the conclusions of Tucci, who points out that the story of the conversion of *Srong btsan sgam po* to Buddhism, cannot be taken literally as true. At the time of the first empire the Bon were already a political force across the Tsinghai-Tibetan Plateau, whereas concurrently, two competing Buddhist traditions, the Indian and Chinese, were also in competition for power. The political climate of the unification period was a result of the conflicts between particular families (or clans) and religious

centers for political control. These would have developed over a period of time prior to the seventh century C.E., after or commensurate with the entrance of Bon into the area. Due to the fact that Indian Buddhism was already well established by the seventh century B.C.E. we must allow a time for that development as well. As Tucci states, "Certainly one cannot deny the possibility of an earlier, sporadic penetration of Buddhist teachings into Tibet by various routes from Central Asia, from China, and from Nepal, before the reign of *Srong btsan sgam po*."¹⁰² Since we may assert the same concerning the Bon, and since the Bon were spread out over several thousand miles by the time that Buddhism entered Tibet, we must also assign a much earlier date. Clan and tribal associations commensurate with the entrance of the Bon into the region circa 500-300 B.C.E. or shortly after that seems logical. The development in India of small kingdoms and tribal associations in the foothills of the Himalayas,¹⁰³ in the Hindu Kush, and especially in Nepal seems to have occurred circa 600-300 B.C.E. The idea of early Tibetan kingdoms and tribal confederacies developing in the early third century B.C.E. in Zhang zhung or in the Yarlung Valley is conceivable and its spread into the northwest probable in light of the proximity of Indian advancements.¹⁰⁴ It is also possible that Buddhism made an initial entrance into the west of Tibet during the time of Ashoka instead of 900 years later, as asserted by conservative historians, as we shall see in a following chapter.¹⁰⁵

In summary, the early Tibetan tribes apparently were dominated, as we have seen, by the shamanistic Bon hierarchy, at an early date. The legitimization of a king's rule required the confirmation of a presiding Bon priest-official and the performance of appropriate ceremonies.¹⁰⁶ These institutions were the norm by the seventh century and probably began a thousand years earlier when the Bon first entered the region and Indo-Aryans formed small kingdoms and republics in the north of India. In the case of the first king *gNya-khri*, the legends tell of magical stories including trials and tests, battles with demons, and subjugation of the local shaman. As a result, reportedly, the first king conquered the local tribal chieftains of twelve little kingdoms in the area of the Yarlung Valley. The Tibetan legends may be fiction, however the possibility of early kingdoms may not be ruled out. This region was, in later times, an agricultural area when the first kings emerged. No doubt, in earlier times it was also implanted by a number of valley settlements suitable for the establishment of kingdoms.¹⁰⁷ The early literature also describes many rival chiefs, in the company of "nobles served by bondsmen and subjects," living in "fortified strongholds within the valleys of the central and eastern tributaries of the Tsangpo."¹⁰⁸ These communities were involved in agricultural production as well as pastoral activities including the herding of both sheep and cattle. Imagining the existence of such communities before the common era is not difficult, since kingdoms were plentiful by this period on the plains of India, in Central Asia and

in other surrounding communities. We know that in later times such was the mode of Tibetan existence. The first king of Yarlung, whoever he truly was, became designated as *sPu-rgal bTsan-po* (*bTsan-po* meaning mighty one). From that time forward all kings of record held that title.¹⁰⁹

Some Tibetan legends which assert that the Tibetan peoples are descended from monkeys, (a story by the way that they share with the present day Ch'iang), suggests other points of origin.¹¹⁰ The Ma-ni bka-bum, a Tibetan text of the ninth century C.E., discovered in the twelfth,¹¹¹ is the historical source for this story. It states, that "the Tibetan people descended" from the union of a "very intelligent monkey, blessed by Avalokitesvara,"¹¹² with a rock demoness (who eagerly sought union after her tribe had disappeared). The children of this union, the story says, developed gradually into human beings over time. At first they lived in caves on the mountain of Gong-po-rai. Generations later they moved out onto the Tibetan Plateau during the period when agricultural communities formed. During this period of population growth, the record states, they formed the first larger tribal units.¹¹³ The *dMu* line is distinguished as the royal line from which the kings descended.

The *dMu* line listed in the Tibetan literature tells of legendary associations with peoples of Aryan traditions of the southern regions of Tibet. Here a group influenced by the Aryans from Zhang zhung in the west and a group from the south, which included monkeys as a part of its mythology, appears to have

united. Wolfram Eberhard discusses the origins of Ch'iang tribes in China associated with both monkeys and horses and asserts they are of Tibetan origins, since tribes of the northern regions were too far north to have had monkeys within their confines.¹¹⁴ The Tibetan sources record an evolutionary period that encapsulated a very short period, beginning about 500 B.C.E., when "Tibet was drying up."¹¹⁵ Tarthung Tulku carries forth this idea and suggests that in light of the fact that tribes used totems to identify themselves, that the monkey and demoness ideas may actually be the means of identifying two different tribes that later intermarried during a wetter period after bronze weapons had been introduced.¹¹⁶

Other stories tell of god like heroes, the *Ma-songs* who were the first to use armor and shields in warfare. The story includes a flood and in that sense is reminiscent of the biblical accounts of our own civilization. Tulku points out that in 1000 B.C.E. a warming trend occurred. Due to the melting of the snow, the Tibetan Plateau was covered with lakes much more numerous and larger than today, making it much wetter.¹¹⁷ We also know that iron and bronze weapons were introduced to West Asia about 1800 B.C.E. The idea remains that these legends, though fantastic in their legendary format, may contain some factual elements even if we may not deduce the time frame exactly.¹¹⁸

The *dMu* tribe is one of the tribes that seems to have evolved from Indo-Aryan origins. The *dMu* tribe is also associated with a type of non-human sky

divinity as well as with the sky rope. The *dMu* sky rope, which the first king used to descend to earth is in keeping with both Bon and Aryan traditions and their preoccupation with sky-gods, especially the Aryan as noted earlier. Some legends place the origins of the dynasty in the north and to the west, but this assertion is in regard to the seventh century establishment of the Tibetan Empire. The studies of the histories suggest the Tibetan populace originated within the confines of the southern portion of the Plateau. It is probable that Zhang zhung as asserted earlier is the home of the *dMu*.¹¹⁹ The Indian history of the Aryans suggests the same.¹²⁰

An examination of the trading activity across Eurasia indicates that the cultures of the Tsinghai-Tibetan Plateau were already involved in a trading network across the Plateau. These routes connected to others with India, China, the Middle East and the Takla Makan by at least the third century B.C.E.¹²¹ They presented a formidable block to the Chinese in gaining control of the trade routes coming over the Plateau, to the Jade Route and Shu. In China, Chou cities of the fourth and third centuries B.C.E. had become large centers of trade and industrial manufacture.¹²² It was also during this period that silks from China first reached northern India ("hence the name 'Cina' to indicate the land of silks").¹²³ Shu [western Szechuan: the Ch'eng-tu Plain] was one of the "first regions in China to develop the skill . . . [of] silk production"¹²⁴ and the only region of China known to have had trading contacts with India in this period.

India did not have direct trading relationships with the northern Chou states. In fact, it is even doubtful that the Chou period nobility of that time had any accurate idea of the extensiveness of the Eurasian trading community to the west or to the south of China. These regions were far beyond the scope of the Chou domains, much less India, although they were aware of the economic value of Shu.¹²⁵

Tribal associations, including the proto-Tibetan tribes, are known to have been active trading agents in northern India along the length of the Himalayas and in Assam, Burma and Yunnan during the Mauryan period.¹²⁶ It is probable, since silk became a medium of exchange in the Chou states in the third century, that the Shu region was brought into economic relations with the Chou states within a short time through the proto-Tibetan tribes and Ch'in. Until this period Shu and the regions to the southwest of the Chou states had been generally isolated from the rest of ancient China due to the inaccessibility of Shu from the north and the east and the location of the Ch'iang tribes between Shu and the northern Chinese states.¹²⁷

Even prior to the formation of the Ch'in Empire, Ch'in had attempted to incorporate and occupy the Ch'eng-tu Plain (central Szechuan) in 311 B.C.E., but due to the difficulty of gaining control of the mountain ranges lying between them and Shu and the tribes living within them, who barred their way, they were unable to do so. No natural mountain passages or waterways led into the area.

From Ch'in only a few narrow footpaths "followed a trail through hills too steep to accommodate a conventional roadbed" and these for the most part were controlled by the Ch'iang tribes.¹²⁸ In the south, the rough waters of the steeply descending Upper Yangtze River courses barred access from the east. Whoever controlled the Yellow River at its western end controlled the entrance to Shu, therefore, whoever controlled Shu, controlled the Ch'eng-tu Plain and the passages in and out.¹²⁹

The extreme measure taken by Ch'in, in their attempt to gain control, demonstrates the strength of the tribes and the value of Shu. The Ch'in took on the monumental project of building a roadway from Hsien-yang over the Tsingling Mountains. Builders bored holes into rocky cliffs into which supporting beams were set, and over these, placed planks. "Vertical columns were driven into the slope below" for added support wherever possible. They built supply depots and holdovers for road crews and travelers, and established their military presence at strategic points along the route. They also built massive fortifications at Ch'eng-tu that took nine years to complete and imported tens of thousands of colonists for the construction work and farming. When they were finished Ch'eng-tu almost equaled the size of Alexandria in Egypt and outsized Jerusalem, the crossroads of the western world in ancient days. The interior of the walled city enclosed about half the amount of land that lay inside the walls of Republican Rome.¹³⁰ In spite of all this, Ch'in was never able to dominate the

region.¹³¹ The Chinese protected and controlled the constructed route, but the hill tribes remained in control of surrounding territories, and the routes into Shu over which trade passed.¹³²

The building of such massive fortifications and the monumental project of building a road leading to the Ch'eng-tu Plain was hardly justified by the promise of grain alone. The northwest held large, accessible, underutilized tracts of arable land in the beginning stages of transformation near Hsien-yang. What is more important, Shu's lucrative trading community had established routes extending into Southeast Asia, over the Tibetan Plateau regions into Central Asia and the Takla Makan, and into Southern China and India. Both the Ch'in and the Former Han dynasties knew that Shu was a rich economic center and appropriated Shu's grain and its metals for weapons and armor in their rise to power, yet neither could maintain firm control after the initial establishment of their dynasties.¹³³ In spite of the massive fortifications and building projects designed to assure control at the unification, the Shih chi reports:

Ch'in officials were set up to administer most of the numerous native states in the area. Some ten years later, however, the Ch'in dynasty was overthrown. When the Han came to power, it abandoned all relations with these states and reestablished the old frontier defenses along the border of Shu. The people of Pa and Shu often crossed the frontier on unofficial trading expeditions, however, bringing back horses from Tso and slaves and long-haired oxen from P'o. These expeditions brought great wealth to the provinces of Pa and Shu.¹³⁴

In fact, during the civil wars occurring before the beginnings of both the

dynasties, many nobles of the courts escaped into the Ch'eng-tu Plain for protection from these new regimes. Shu had become self-sufficient and was a naturally protected haven of safety.¹³⁵ Although both the Ch'in and Han divided the Szechuan region into commanderies and counties, those placed in charge essentially ruled a small kingdom and enjoyed considerable autonomy. In several cases, within a short time, the designated official opted to join Shu society in the pursuit of personal wealth and power.

The geographical aspects of the region were a major block to control, but these would have been less of a problem had the tribes occupying the surrounding area been willing to cooperate. The real fortifications lay in the military strength of such powerful tribes as the P'o, a Ch'iang tribe living in the Kham region of Tibet to the southwest of Shu, who were no doubt interested in preserving their trading prerogatives.¹³⁶ During the period in which Ch'in was attempting to control the economy by controlling the nobles at Hsien-yang, Shu merchants, outside the control of the court, were trading a variety of goods. Besides the trade of horses and slaves with P'o, they also traded with several other tribes, including other Ch'iang groups in the regions surrounding Shu and Shu itself.¹³⁷ Artifacts prove that a sophisticated technology had developed for the mining and smelting of copper and the production of bronze that included the use of natural gas deposits in the manufacturing process. Shu also, independently of the other Chou period states, produced silk, brocades and

other textiles; manufactured jewelry studded with various precious stones; and exported bamboo, lacquer, woods, tea, herbs, ginger, at least sixteen different drugs, salt, and other handicrafts particular to the region.¹³⁸ Economically, the relatively advanced Shu was rich due to its trading associations.¹³⁹ Bronze works of art accompanied bronze weapons and jade treasures in households of a “markedly stratified society” of rich nobles and “successively less prosperous underlings, from merchants down to the lowest peasant farmer. . . . [I]ron plowshares aided the increase of food production to feed these people.”¹⁴⁰

While Shu had developed during the same period as the Chou states and was apparently very wealthy and advanced technologically, its isolated location within the mountains kept it out of contact with and separated from northern China. As a result Shu was not sinicized. Her associations and identity were culturally akin to those of the people living in her vicinity, including the southwestern barbarians and the Ch’iang who lived in the surrounding mountains.¹⁴¹ The Chinese described the Shu people as following “the customs” of the Ch’iang, Rong [Jyarung] and Di [Ti] tribes.¹⁴² The Shin pen pa chung records that the Shu people wore “their hair in a knotted style,” fastened “their garments on the left [in the fashion of the barbarians], and [remained] ignorant of proper ritual.”¹⁴³ Within its cultural sphere, Shu held not only its own peoples who were distinct from the Chinese, but other various tribes as well as the Ch’iang.¹⁴⁴ It also shared territory with the neighboring state of Pa, another

unscinicized and independent entity. Throughout the Ch'in and Han dynasties, the Shu region remained ethnically fragmented and independent politically, primarily due to its isolated position.¹⁴⁵ As a result Shu maintained a distinctly separate identity and culture from the other Chinese states even centuries later.¹⁴⁶

The Han Chinese descriptions of Shu and the Ch'iang present no reason to assume that things were much different one or even two hundred years earlier (ca. 500-300 B.C.E.). Shu's closest economic ties were with the tribes and states living in its immediate neighborhood. These included the ancient kingdoms of Tien and Yeh-lang to the south in present day Yunnan.¹⁴⁷ By the third century, the Ch'iang were already acting as liaisons between Shu and the greater trading community.¹⁴⁸ In the early fourth century B.C.E., the formation of the Mauryan Empire had wrought astounding changes across the whole of southern Eurasia and was effecting the ancient civilizations of both the western and eastern worlds.¹⁴⁹ While the northwest of India and the Hindu Kush were developing overland trade routes with the Middle East and the Takla Makan, the northern plains of India were expanding water routes linking the Persian Gulf, the Red Sea and Southeast Asia.¹⁵⁰

During the era of the Mauryans, sea trade became more profitable than land trade with the Middle East and Greece. In the northwest of India and Central Asia a major portion of land trade suitable for shipping shifted away from

the overland routes of northwest India and went south to the sea and river networks extending to the ports of the Indus and Ganges rivers. These in turn served the well-watered regions of Assam, Burma and Southeast Asia, and the Persian Gulf. Trade continued along the land routes to some degree, but most of the trade flowed between the regions with the most wealth—India, Southeast Asia, the Middle East and the Mediterranean—along the sea routes.¹⁵¹ The mountain routes into Tien, Yeh-lang and Shu were the only means of transporting trade into these regions and the tribal peoples dominated them.

Ruling the Indian Empire was the first Mauryan King, Chandragupta. He usurped the Nanda throne in 321 B.C.E. and continued to build the empire that the Nandas had initiated and expanded eastward. Commensurate with the expansion of the empire, trade volume grew to such proportions that the south of China and Shu increasingly became more involved.¹⁵² As a result, of expansion under the Mauryans the economic center of trade also shifted, from Taxila in the northwest of India to approximately the middle of the eastern plains. Pataliputra (Patna) on the Ganges, became the capital and cultural center of the Mauryans. This shift brings us back to the discussion of the Tsinghai-Tibetan Plateau tribes and the Tsangpo River Valley. The kingdom of Yarlung along the Tsangpo was located at the intersection of ancient routes that came through the passes in the central Himalayas above Nepal, Sikkim and Bhutan to the north of Pataliputra. A movement of Bon and Indo- Aryan power to the Yarlung Valley, north of the

Ganges Plain and close to the new locus of trade in the north of India, thus had merit and seems historically plausible.¹⁵³ The dynastic wars of northern India (461-321 B.C.E.) prior to the Mauryans resulted in the survival of four rival states: Kosala, Kashi, Magadha, and the republic of the Vrijis (Janakpur in Nepal and the Muzaffarpur district of Bihar). The Nepal area, containing the Indo-Aryan Vriji tribes, was already heavily populated. A hundred years of war between these states no doubt resulted in at least some chiefs and their tribes relocating to even higher ground in the Himalayas, and even farther north into Tibet. The central location of a kingdom at Yarlung allowed traders to use the Tsangpo River Valley as a safe refuge and as a means to transport trade goods between Shu and Central Asia safely. The use of this overland route allowed traders to bypass entirely the warring states of northern India in the fourth century B.C.E. and later the Mauryan Empire during the third century B.C.E.¹⁵⁴

During the Mauryan period, sea trade expanded to astounding proportions between southeast Asia and the Middle Eastern ports on the Red Sea. An interesting note is that the Arthashastra comments that water travel was cheaper and that coastal routes were safer than the mid-ocean route where there was a great danger of pirates. However, Shu could only be reached by land. Contrary to popular opinion, overland routes from Pataliputra across the Himalayas or via the Burma-Yunnan road through arduous country, were difficult only in the winter months. During the remainder of the year these Tsinghai-

Tibetan Plateau routes provided a faster route for traders attempting to reach Central Asia, northwest India and China or Shu, than the circuitous route to the west around the Plateau by camel, which could take years.¹⁵⁵

This era of growth had a significant impact. The expansion of trade within India affected trade in all regions. As cottage industries increased, the number of artisans and crafts guilds multiplied, thus production reached unprecedented levels. The burgeoning trade must have impacted intermediate tribal groups living between the wealthy trading centers of the civilizations along the trade routes as opportunities opened for greater prosperity. Some ancient trails were probably rededicated while new routes opened. These pathways became protected and dominated by the tribal groupings through whose territory they passed.¹⁵⁶

In summation, while absolute proof of “contacts with Tibet and China are difficult to determine with any precision at this date,”¹⁵⁷ the evidence of silk exchanges across Eurasia abounds and, as we have seen, trading activity in Eastern Asia extended over south China and Southeast Asia during the Mauryan period.¹⁵⁸ The Mauryans also had close connections with the area of modern Nepal, since the foothills were within the empire.¹⁵⁹ Ships heading for the Burma coast and south India began their voyage at Tamralipiti, in Bengal. They were connected to ports in these regions by a network of water and land routes all across Southeast Asia.¹⁶⁰ In ancient Shu, they connected the key areas of trade

in the Ch'eng-tu region to proto-Tibetan routes, routes that also intersected the Burma-Yunnan Road.¹⁶¹

The part the Mauryans played in shaping the civilizations of Eurasia cannot be underestimated. Pataliputra during the reign of Chandragupta (d.297 B.C.E.) warranted unprecedented fame across Eurasia. Pataliputra was "probably the largest and most sophisticated city and center of culture in the world" of its time.¹⁶² Murphey writes,

It was the seat of a famous university and library, to which scholars came, reputedly from all over the civilized world, a city of magnificent palaces, temples, gardens, and parks. Megasthenes [Greek] describes a highly organized bureaucratic system which controlled the economic and social as well as political life of Mauryan India, complete with a secret service to spy on potential dissidents, suspected criminals, and corrupt ineffective officials. . . . The emperor presided personally over regular sessions of the court . . . his enormous palace was a splendid complex. . . . It was surrounded by a huge wall with 570 towers and 64 gates. All mines and forests were owned and managed by the state, and there were large state farms and state granaries, shipyards and factories for spinning and weaving cotton cloth.¹⁶³

It is hard to believe that the wealth and magnitude of this civilization escaped the notice of the many merchants operating along the routes within this expansive trading community or that they did not spread stories concerning the majesty of the Mauryan Empire and its capital, Pataliputra. It was during the reign of Chandragupta (324-304 B.C.E.?) that the Ch'in attempted a takeover of the Ch'eng-tu Plain of Shu and built a fortified city rivaling that of Rome and Alexandria (ca. 311 B.C.E.). It is altogether reasonable to assume that the Ch'in

invaded this region because they had become aware in the third century of the reputation of the Mauryan Empire and of its trading associations with Shu. It is also probable that the Ch'in move of the location of the capital to Hsien-yang was an event triggered by the desire to obtain a location from which the emperor could attempt to gain control of the trade routes into its empire.¹⁶⁴ Hsien-yang was at the tri-corners of the eastern trade routes of Shu, north China and the Takla Makan.

Within the context of the larger trading community, we may now look to the Plateau of Tibet and more definitively discern the buildup of a network of routes across the region connecting the early kingdoms and many tribes. But at what points did these routes emerge? While we still can make no archeological connection with Tibet, yet we have established that even in the second to first millenniums B.C.E., during the Harrapan period, peoples of Central Asia, including the peoples in the foothills of the Hindu Kush, were already interconnected via the nomads along infant trade routes. No archaeological evidence has been found to date that the Neolithic communities of the upper regions of the Hindu Kush were involved; however, the proximity of archeological finds in adjacent regions of Afghanistan suggests that the area was already in contact to some degree with Tibet's people by circa 500 B.C.E. during the Persian Empire. It is certain that the people of the Ladakh Plateau in western Tibet, through which some of the overland routes passed, were influenced by

those using them.

We have also seen that the western portion of Tibet was most likely occupied by Indo-Aryans at a date before the Mauryan period, and that they may have aimed a later move to central Tibet in the interest of taking advantage of increased trading opportunities. The area was directly north of the great city of Pataliputra, and could be accessed through the many passes of the Himalayas. Tibetan histories agree that the western and central regions of Tibet remained distinctly separate politically; this segregation would indicate separate spheres of growth and supports the emergence of separate, independent kingdoms in earlier times. In fact, it is likely that cultures on the Plateau remained separate from one another until the period of unification in the seventh century, although they apparently were bound loosely by Bon, clan and tribal associations. Each of the tribes was probably associated with centers of trade. The suggestion earlier that Indo-Aryan invaders of Tibet superimposed themselves over an already existing proto-Tibetan population seems to have been the case at least in the south and the west. The preservation of a number of proto-Tibetan cultures was enhanced by the fact that the terrain is characterized by multiple valleys and partitioned by mountains. The topography lent itself well to the existence of numerous tribal kingdoms associated with the centers of trade on the periphery.

While we may not assert that the proto-Tibetans were politically unified

across the Tsinghai-Tibetan Plateau region, at this time it appears that localized communities may be perceived as having had a common form of social structure and an exclusive and common sphere of interaction that allowed for the later unification of the empire. These communities shared a governmental style and culture that may not be defined as Indo-Aryan at the time of unification, but influences of the Indo-Aryans may be perceived, especially through the Bon brotherhood. Over time, clan and tribal associations became mixed through political alliances, intermarriage, and the Bon hierarchy. Lineages evolved which may be traced, if not accurately then at least generally, to several locations of legendary reputation. They provide some idea of the ancient organization and structure of a unique society and suggest probable origins. This information, coupled with what we know of the Ch'iang and the early developments on the eastern side of the Tsinghai-Tibetan Plateau, indicates that the proto-Tibetan peoples had begun the process of coalescence long before the first Tibetan Empire.

Although we are not able to determine an exact date, we may assert with some certainty that by the fifth to the third centuries B.C.E. developments in local spheres in all four directions had recognizable characteristics that identified the cultures as proto-Tibetan. We cannot confirm the identity of the first king, completely validate the genealogical sequence, or assuredly define the location of the kingdoms. Nevertheless, the context of a series of kings, kingdoms, tribal

associations, Bon priests, and localized cultures on the Plateau may be perceived through the indications found in the seventh century, the reconstructed historical sequences, and the time spans necessary for their development.¹⁶⁵

Two kinds of cultures became prominent on the Plateau: pastoral and agricultural. The Chinese defined them as the Ch'iang and the T'u-fan in the annals of the seventh century C.E.¹⁶⁶ The main difference perceived by the Chinese was that the Ch'iang were more nomadic and pastoral, while the Tibetans on the Plateau [Chinese: T'u-fan] were agriculturalists who had adopted the monarchial system of government.¹⁶⁷ While the various clan and tribal associations lived separately and each in their own region, they became bound by the networked brotherhood of the Bon priests who stamped their seal of approval upon each new ruler. The interconnecting trade routes on the Plateau over which the people maintained their cultural and trading links with each other became one of the elements that solidified their people into one sphere of interaction, if not into one empire before the seventh century. The Tibetan claim that the regions remained separate may constitute an accurate political analysis, but the basic culture seems to have resisted the imposition of overlords not approved by the Bon, thus, Bon influences appear to have been a strong factor to the uniting of the people as a whole, prior to the entrance of Buddhism. Apparently they were joined in what may be called a loose federation

of tribes linked by the Bon at an early date. The sources suggest that the some of the early kings and chiefs were Indo-Aryans, confirmed by a Bon hierarchy especially in the southern regions. Economically, the quest for prosperity due to the expansion of the Mauryans and the desire to trade with Shu seems to have been the stimulus for the creation of a trading network. This trading network became the economic glue that bound the Tsinghai-Tibetan Plateau together in early as well as later times.¹⁶⁸

Endnotes

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2. Louis Dupree, Afghanistan (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973), 266-271 passim.
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4. Ibid., 12.
5. Dupree, Afghanistan, 266-71 passim.
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8. Ibid., 14.
9. Lionel Casson, Travel in the Ancient World (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1994), 55.
10. Ibid., 56-57.
11. For a detailed discussion of this matter see Chapter 1.
12. T.R. Tregear, China: A Geographical Survey (New York: Halstead press, 1980), 57-63.
13. Burton Watson, Records of the Grand Historian of China, trans. from the Shih chih of Ssu-ma Ch'ien, 3 vols. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1969) 2:265-78 passim.
14. Michael Loewe, The Cambridge History of China, vol.1, The Ch'in and Han Empires, 221 B.C. to A.D. 220, ed. Denis Twitchett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 428.
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17. Ibid., 2:266-69 passim.
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19. Times Atlas of World History , "Bonds of Asia."
20. Ying-shih Yu, Trade and Expansion in Han China: A Study in the Structure of Sino-Barbarian Economic Relations (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), 199.; Watson, Records, 2:278.
21. Watson, Records, 1:278.
22. Chen, The Sinkiang Story, 45.
23. Tregear, China, 59.
24. Ibid., 60.
25. Rene Grousset, The Empire of the Steppes: A History of Central Asia, trans. Naomi Walford (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University, 1991), 48.
26. Cho-Yun Hsu, Ancient China in Transition: An Analysis of Social Mobility, 722-222 BC (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1965), 116.
27. Hsu, Ancient China, 119. Yang was a smaller part of the greater territory that was called Ch'in in the early Chou period.
28. Ibid., 121.
29. Watson, Records, 2:485.
30. Ibid., 265-69 passim.
31. Ibid., 270.
32. Ibid., 265.
33. Ibid., 269. Chang Ch'ien also reported learning of the kingdom of Shen-tu [India] "located twelve thousand *li* southeast of Ta-hsia [Bactria]"(Ibid.)

and of a country whose people rode elephants into battle and who were situated on a large river. In this way the Han, while searching for a route to Ta-hsia, "first came in contact with the kingdom of Tien" (Ibid), a place to which trade goods from Shu were transported into India on "unofficial trading missions" (270); Tien later became the province of I-Chou, (present day Yunnan). Loewe, History of China, 428; The search party was located one or two thousand li west of Tien (one li is approximately one-third of a mile). The location of the Ti tribes to the north indicates that the Ti were lodged in the area south of the Ch'eng-tu Plain as well as in the west at this time (Ibid.).

34. For a detailed discussion of this matter see chapter 2 above.

35. R.A. Stein, Tibetan Civilization, trans. J.E. Stapleton Driver (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1972), 19.

36. Loewe, History of China, 428-29 passim. A sixth *shu kuo* was added due to the *surrender* of the Great Ts'ang-I tribe of 55,180 people in Shu-chün (Szechaun) in the year A.D. 94.

37. Giuseppe Tucci, The Religions of Tibet, translated from German and Italian by Geoffrey Samuel (Berkeley: University of California, 1970), 214.

38. Stein, Tibetan Civilization, 21.

39. Ibid.

40. David Snellgrove, Indo-Tibetan Buddhism: Indian Buddhists and Their Successors (Boston: Shambhala, 1987), 387-88.

41. Stein, Tibetan Civilization, 36.

42. Ibid., 20.

43. Ibid.

44. Watson, Records, 2:269.

45. Ibid.; William O. Douglas, Beyond the High Himalayas (New York: Double Day & Company, Inc., 1952), passim. Douglas' personal trek demonstrates, that the passages are traversable and regularly used by those peoples who live in the region. The passage from the plains of India, from Palampur to Leh, Ladakh, a distance of 240 miles, may be accomplished in 20 days on foot with a pack (29); Caravans utilize sheep, goats, yak, and pack

mules for transport. Sheep and goats may number a hundred or more in a band and transport bags on either side of their flanks. In this case the loads were of salt from the inner salt lake lands of Tibet. The sheep were sheared for their wool at their destination. Merchants from Leh, Yarkand and Tibet met at Patseo (12,400 ft.) on the southern side of the Himalayan Mountains above the Chenab River at an ancient marketplace. The designations for pack animals as defined by the locals were: sheep-32 lbs.; horses-128 lbs.; yak-188 lbs. Commodities included: salt, borax, wild onions, tea, marmot skins, wool, and silks, cereals, tobacco, and spices (86-88); At an ancient bazaar at Leh historic items of trade included: "wool, silver, felt, tea, candy, skins, velvets, silk, gold, carpets, musk, coral, borax, jade cups, salt . . . from the north. Cotton goods, shawls, brocades, opium, indigo, plumes, shoes, pearls, ginger, cloves, pepper, honey, tobacco, sugar cane, barley, rice, wheat, corn . . . from the south. . . . [and] ponies were bought and sold" (225).

46. Denis Sinor, ed., The Cambridge History of Early Inner Asia (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 372-73.

47. Singhal, India, 1:280.; Joel L. Swerdlow, "Burma" National Geographic (July 1995) 188:78. Today the eastern portion of Burma speaks Tibeto-Burman language in an area extending from the major river complex in the north and along the entire western portion of Burma along the coast.

48. Sinor, History of Early Inner Asia, 376.

49. Stein, Tibetan Civilization, 20.

50. Tucci, The Religions of Tibet, 223. Describing the accessibility and popularity of the Tibetan regions to surrounding cultures Tucci states, "One should not forget that since most ancient times the region around Mt. Kailasa and Lake Manasarovar [along the Upper Indus in Tibet] have been a significant center of attraction for Indian pilgrims and believers from all the adjoining regions."

51. Stein, Tibetan Civilization, 47.

52. Tucci, The Religions of Tibet, 216-17.

53. Thapar, A History of India, 1:50-69.

54. Ibid., 1:29-31.

55. Wolpert, India, 29.
56. Francois Watson, India: A Concise History, (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1979), 35.
57. Thapar, A History of India, 1:50-52 passim.
58. Ibid.
59. Ibid.
60. Snellgrove, Indo-Tibetan Buddhism, 381, 392. Snellgrove agrees the kings most likely came from Zhang zhung.
61. Ibid., 1:53.
62. Watson, India, 35.
63. Thapar, A History of India, 1: 58.
64. Mary Boyce, Zoroastrianism, editor and translator, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1984), 9, 22.
65. Watson, India, 47.
66. Ibid., 50.
67. Tucci, The Religions of Tibet, 213-16 passim. Tucci engages in an extensive discussion regarding the first infiltration of Bon religious ideas into western Tibet during the Achaemenid Period.
68. Thapar, A History of India, 1:28-30.
69. Thapar, A History of India, 59.; Robin Fox, The Search for Alexander, (Boston; Little Brown and Company, 1980), 329-36.
- 70.
71. Stein, Tibetan Civilization, 35.
72. Boyce, Zoroastrianism, 11.
73. Ibid., 9.; Tucci, The Religions, 236. Tucci says the age was thirteen.

74. Ancient Tibet Research Materials, (Berkeley, 1986), 140-43.
75. Tucci, The Religions of Tibet, 277.
76. Ibid., 226-27.
77. Stein, Tibetan Civilization, 35.
78. Ancient Tibet Research Materials, (Berkeley, 1986), 105.
79. Ibid., 140-46 passim; Thapar, A History of India, 1:32, 52-53.
80. Thapar, A History of India, 1:33.
81. Ancient Tibet Research Materials, (Berkeley, 1986), 140-43.
82. Smith, The Early History of India, 137.
83. Ibid., 1:32-33.
84. Stein, Tibetan Civilization, 41. The Tibetans regarded the north of their own country, the Khotan area or somewhere near that area as the mythical Śambala.
85. Thapar, A History of India, 1:33.
86. Tucci, The Religions of Tibet, 213-16 passim; Snellgrove, Indo-Tibetan Buddhism, 390.
87. Singhal, India, 1:31.
88. Ibid., 1:34.
89. Tucci, The Religions of Tibet, 213. Tucci describes the *bLo* (Mustang) people as an example of one population of people living in the adjacent region of Nepal who are not a part of Tibet today, but who are linguistically and culturally of Tibetan extraction.; Snellgrove and Richardson report, "The Tibetans of the southern valleys. . . may preserve a way of life hardly changed for two thousand years. . . . Tibetan peoples seem to have made their way ever further westwards and southwards through the Himalayas and into what is now northern and Central Nepal. . . [the migration] is confirmed by the persistence of ancient dialects of Tibetan origin." The authors cite the early Christian era as the period of movement. While this thesis suggests an earlier

date, it is also possible and probable that several migrations occurred during different periods of time and in both northerly and southerly directions. The area appears to have been regularly traversed by its inhabitants. David Snellgrove and Hugh Richardson, A Cultural History of Tibet, (Boston: Shambala, 1995), 21-22.

90. Thapar, A History of India, 1:35. The Dasas were finally conquered by the Aryans in India.; Even today, Tibetan peoples exhibit poor attitudes towards remnants of these ancient peoples, called the Man people, made up of numerous tribes living along the Sino-Tibetan border, who R.A. Stein suggests may be related to the ancient Man tribes mentioned by Chinese historians. They are regarded by the Tibetans as of a lower caste.; Stein suggests that these are the Man tribes referred to by the Chinese annals. Stein, Tibetan Civilization, 35.

91. Boyce, Zoroastrianism, 9.

92. Thapar, A History of India, 1:37.; Tucci, The Religions of Tibet, 213-16 passim.

93. Boyce, Zoroastrianism, 9; Ancient Tibet Research Materials, (Berkeley, 1986), 122, 140.

94. Ibid., 145.

95. Dupree, Afghanistan, 285.

96. Ibid.

97. Thomas J. Barfield, The Perilous Frontier: Nomadic Empires and China, 221 BC to AD 1757 (Cambridge: Blackwell Publishers, 1989), 29n.39, citing Watson, Records, 2:159.

98. Watson, Records, 2:265-70 passim.

99. Herlee Glessner Creel, The Origins of Statecraft in China, vol. 1 (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1970), 213.

100. Tucci, The Religions of Tibet, 213-17.

101. Ibid., 1-3.

102. Ibid., 1.

103. For a full discussion of this matter see Chapters 1 and 2.

104. Tucci, The Religions of Tibet, 1-3.

105. Ibid.

106. Ibid., 3.

107. Stein, Tibetan Civilization, 47-52 passim.

108. David Snellgrove, Indo-Tibetan Buddhism: Indian Buddhists and Their Successors (Boston: Shambhala, 1987), 22.

109. Ibid., 23.

110. Stein, Tibetan Civilization, 45; and Ancient Tibet Research Materials, (Berkeley, 1986), 146-48 passim. Tulku, a Tibetan historian, and R.A. Stein, a Western historian, interpret the Tibetan annals differently. Tulku dates the era of the first king to sometime between the era of the Buddha and the fourth or third century B.C.E. He admits that the listings are an incomplete historical account and concurs with others that the records have probably been altered in order to validate Buddhist family lineages, but he also believes that the histories tell the story of Tibetan kingship in the early centuries even though the dates may not accurately correspond exactly to specific periods. Stein, one of the more conservative western historians, asserts, that the dates of the first kings "have been more or less arbitrarily assigned to various periods by the scholastic historians of a later age," in imitation of the form used by Chinese and Indian Buddhists, in order to establish a valid Buddhist lineage. He dismisses the records as relatively unreliable to an even greater degree. Unfortunately the earliest sources of Tibetan recorded history date from the ninth century C.E. and can only be corroborated by other written sources from the seventh century forward as to their accuracy.

111. Ancient Tibet Research Materials, (Berkeley, 1986), 109.; A legend recorded by R.A. Stein, told to him by tribes living near Tibet along the Min river, describe a "primitive population" of people of their ancient history, whom they called Qa could indicate that Stone Age people survived to a very late date. They described them as a people "with sloping foreheads, thick dark hair, red faces and short tails . . . savage inhabitants [who] knew nothing of farming and lived in caves." It is difficult to determine at this late date whether the tribes heard this story from Tibetan monks and perpetuated it or whether this story is a part of an ancient folklore older than the seventh century. And while we may

absolutely disregard the notion that they had tails, what is important to note is that an uneducated people of the twentieth century tells this story as a part of their ancient history. It is a prime example of the carrying forth of an oral history tainted by superstition and magic. Anthropological studies indicate that Neanderthal peoples inhabited Eurasia as late as 12,000 years ago; it is not out of the realm of possibility that remnants of these peoples survived to a later period, in isolation on the Tibetan Plateau until relatively more recent times and as the archeological data supplied earlier shows us there is evidence that people did live in caves in a relatively recent period. Stein, Tibetan Civilization, 46.

112. Basil C. and Anne K. Hedrick, "Hanuman" in Historical and Cultural Dictionary of Nepal (Metuchen, N.J.: The Scarecrow Press, Inc. 1972). The people of Nepal worshiped Hanuman, the monkey god who according to legend aided Vishnu in the form of Rama against Ravana.

113. Stein, Tibetan Civilization, 46.

114. Wofram Eberhard, The Local Cultures of South and East China, translated from the German by Alide Eberhard, (Leiden, E.J.Brill, 1968), 52-53.

115. Ancient Tibet Research Materials, (Berkeley, 1986), 102.

116. Ibid. The writer suggests that the stories of the Monkey and the demoness may reflect a time when two groups were living together and intermarrying like the monkey and the demoness. He also suggests that the monkey's descendants dominated and may have absorbed the older population. 'We might even speculate that different groups. . . were associated with various Stone Age tools and sites of habitation found on the Tibetan Plateau'(109); Tucci provides an extensive description of human and inhuman gods and goddesses of pre-Buddhist origins that supports the idea. Tucci, The Religions of Tibet, 163-68 passim.

117. Ibid., 108.

118. Stein, Tibetan Civilization, 28.

119. Samten G. Karmay, ed. and trans., The Treasury of Good Sayings (London Oriental Series Vol.26. London: Oxford University Press, 1972), 4. Karmay states, "The Tibetans believe that this lineage will continue until the next Enlightened one appears."

120. Stein, Tibetan Civilization, 28.

121. Loewe, History of China, 455.

122. Jacques Gernet; J.R. Foster., translator, A History of Chinese Civilization (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 72.

123. Ibid., 73.

124. Stephen F. Sage, Ancient Sichuan and the Unification of China, SUNY Series in Chinese Local Studies, ed. Harry Hamlin (New York: State of New University of New York Press, 1992), 73.

125. Watson, Records, 2:265-70 passim. Chang Ch'ien's comments and extensive report suggest that the Chinese court was hearing for the first time an eyewitness account of what lay beyond their borders. He details the locations of the tribes and barriers to trade, mentioning the Ch'iang as traders and blocks to progress due to their activities and locations.

126. Ibid.

127. Sage, Ancient Sichuan, 72-73.

128. Ibid., 109.

129. Ibid., 154.

130. Ibid., 126 n.22.

131. Ibid.

132. Ibid., 191. Sage writes, "The stasis on this southwestern extremity of China lasted for centuries . . ." Several ancient routes have been mapped out by archeologists as possible remnants of what became known as the five-foot-wide road, but none of them logistically were able to command the mountain ranges in such a way as to control the areas surrounding the Ch'eng-tu Plain, nor the many roads running through the hills or the tribes who lived within them. The most probable is that called The Old Cattle Road. It emanated from a few miles west of Hsien-yang to the south, where it forded the Han River, continued south crossing over the Ta-pa mountain range through the Wu Ding Pass and finally terminated at the Sword Gate, near present day Nan-ch'ung (175).

133. Sage, Ancient Sichuan, 191.

134. Watson, Records, 1:291.

135. Sage, Ancient Sichuan, 189-91 passim. Liu Pang (Han Emperor Kao-tsu, 206-195 B.C.E.), used Szechuan as a means to gain control of China. Upon arriving, he demolished a second main road which had been built by the Ch'in and used the Old Cattle Road and other mountain passes to launch surprise attacks on both sides of the Hanku Pass and the Central Plains. Following in the steps of his Ch'in predecessor, he also used the Yangtze to float troops and supplies downriver.

136. Snellgrove, Indo-Tibetan Buddhism, 386.

137. Sage, Ancient Sichuan, 189-91 passim. Soon after garrisons were established they were dismantled. The chiefs of the neighborhood tribes of Ch'iang, Ti, Za, Man, Mang, Mo, and Rong, etc. and their peoples kept their own cultures and were left to their independent status by both the Ch'in and the Former and Later Han; in many cases the chiefs were awarded imperial official status; this situation lasted until the T'ang dynastic period, though other attempts were made to organize the territories.

138. Yu, Trade in Han China, 7.

139. Sage, Ancient Sichuan, 72.

140. Ibid., 81.

141. Loewe, History of China, 422-35 passim.; Chinese historians speculate that the Shu people were of Ch'iang-Tibetan origin from the Min River Region. The name Ch'eng-tu in the ancient Shu language means High Plateau People. Sage, Ancient Sichuan, 225n.44.

142. Sage, Ancient Sichuan, 65. Neighboring Ba peoples intermarried with peoples of the state of Chu, who were in need of metallic ores that could be obtained from thru contact with the Ba.

143. Ibid., 82.

144. Ibid., 43-46.

145. Loewe, History of China, 815.

146. Sage, Ancient Sichuan, 65.

147. Loewe, History of China, 455. The southern part of present day China is riddled with waterways and the memories of ancient kingdoms that were ruled by descendants of the famous King of Yüeh (496-465 B.C.E.) These kingdoms were a part of an extensive trading community with Southeast and India existing within the regions of Tien and Yeh-lang to the south of Shu.

148. Ibid., 422-35 passim.

149. Thapar, A History of India, 1:106-107.

150. Ibid., 1:25; 55-58 passim. While the Chou states under the Ch'in were in the process of a major societal transformation, they were essentially underdeveloped when compared with India. The Mauryans were already an advanced culture: they began their rise to power under Bimbasara in the (second half of the sixth century B.C.E.) when they conquered Anga in the southeast of India. Anga was at that time a trading nation "which controlled the trade and trade routes to the sea ports on the Ganges delta, that in turn had commercial contacts with the coast of Burma and the east coast of India" (55); Ajātashatru, Bimbasara's son, became king (ca. 493 B.C.E.) and continued his father's expansion. He established his capital at Rajagriha and built a small fort at Pataligrama which later became Pataliputra under Chandragupta. He launched a war against the Vriji confederacy that lasted 16 years in which he was victorious, firmly establishing a monarchy across the Ganges Plain and setting the stage for the Nandas who are sometimes described as "the first empire builders of India" (57); The Nandas "built up a vast army" and extended the frontiers. They created a "methodical" system of taxation based primarily in taxes from farming lands that they used to build a vast irrigation and canal system, setting the foundation for the Mauryans who were to follow (Ibid.)

151. Ibid., 1:106-107.

152. Sage, Ancient Sichuan, 177-85 passim.

153. Ibid., 1: 105-107 passim.

154. Thapar, A History of India, 1:54. "Kingship had by now become hereditary with preference for rulers of the Kashatriya castes, although this preference remained theoretical, since kings of all four castes are known to have ruled, according to political expediency . . . The divine nature of kingship was an established idea. It was reinforced from time to time by means of an elaborate ritual sacrifice which the king initiated. . . . when his legal status as king had been established, he began the year-long royal consecration (rajasuya) which

invested him with divinity brought by the Gods by the magic power of priests. . . . [T]owards the end of the year the king was required to make an offering to the twelve 'jewels' (ratnins), i.e., his ministers, members of his household, and certain sections of the population - in return for their loyalty" (Ibid.); By this period it appears that the divine nature of kingship and hereditary lines of the office were established and reinforced by ritual sacrifices performed by shamans. The blessing of a shamanic priesthood would have validated the right of any such person willing to assume the role of king of the right to rule. It is likely therefore that other kingdoms, including Tibetan kingdoms should adopt a similar practice as a means of controlling these territories in the highlands.

155. Basil and Hedrick, "Hanuman," 128. Twenty-four high passes (averaging 17,000 in altitude) lead into Tibet from Nepal. "The lowest of these, at Kodari and Rasua (6,000 feet elevation), have been important trade routes since recorded history and there is no reason to believe they do not date back much further. Through the northern passes are exported food grains and manufactured articles in exchange for Tibetan salt, wool, sheep and goats. . . . The major northern passes, from east to west across the nation, are: Takhu Pass; Namja La; Gya La; Lajing La; Thaple; Salbu; Rasau; Nangpa La; Rakhala; and Khangla Deorali. There is also a Changri La, which some people conjecture supplied the name for James Hilton's fictional Shangri-la" (Ibid); Loe E. Rose numbers eighteen passes. The two most important he notes are those leading to Kerong and Kuti at 13,000 to 14,000 feet and are usually traversable even in winter. Leo E. Rose, Nepal: A Strategy for Survival (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), 4.

156. Ibid., 1:59-62 passim. The histories tell us, that during the reign of Darius, Alexander the Great crossed the five Punjab Rivers, in an attempt "to solve the 'problem of Ocean' the limits of which were a puzzle to Greek geographers" (61). Most likely this high minded endeavor was really motivated by the desire for great wealth and fame. In any event Alexander's armies "opened up and reinforced a number of trade routes between north-west India via Afghanistan and Iran to Asia minor and to the ports along the Mediterranean" (Ibid). But his early departure resulted in the immediate disintegration of the Greek Satrapies as a unified Empire, and thus, led to a reduction in the safe flow of trade into the north and the Tarim for a time. After Alexander's death the Seleucids ruled the entire region from Phrigia in Asia Minor to the Indus and from the Ferghana Valley to the Arabian Sea. Chandragupta "exploited" the disruption in Alexander's Empire and immediately moved into the northwest area of India thus the Mauryan empire came to dominate trade from Taxila (the outlet for overland trade) across the entire north of India along the Ganges, through

Pataliputra and the Ganges Delta to the coast of northern Burma and south along the Indian coast (62); "Sinkiang and the area west and east of the Caspian and the Aral Seas remained free under their nomad rulers. . . . Sinkiang, the secure rear of the nomads, lying east of Bactria, was never reached by the Greeks and was unknown to them" (as probably was Tibet). These northern trade routes remained under the domain of the Indo-Aryan, Mongol and Tibetan until the time of Wu-ti. Chen, The Sinkiang Story, 15.

157. Singhal, India, 1:3.

158. Yu, Trade in Han China, 152-53 passim.

159. Snellgrove, Indo-Tibetan Buddhism, 395. One of Ashoka's daughters is said to have married a nobleman from the mountains of Nepal.

160. Thapar, A History of India, 1:74.

161. Watson, Records, 2:270.

162. Rhoads Murphey, A History of Asia (New York: Harper Collins, 1992), 30.

163. Ibid.

164. Watson, Records, 2:485-86.

165. Tucci, The Religions of Tibet, 227.

166. Stein, Tibetan Civilization, 46-47. Stein states, "The earliest tribes are referred to as mi'u," meaning "dwarf or little man" while Tibetan authors define Zhang chung, Sumpa, Asha and Minyak and other populations including the Ch'iang as foreigners, but the T'ang dynastic descriptions define differences between the Ch'iang and the rulers whom they called the T'u-fan as minimal; their view was that they shared a culture in common. The Ch'iang were classified as stock breeding nomads, having no fixed dwelling and on the move depending on the water and grass. Their country lacked cereals, and their occupation was pastoral stock breeding.

167. Ibid., 116.

168. Ibid.

Chapter 4

The Early Tibetan Trading Network:

Ca. 300-100 B.C.E.

During the expansion of the Eurasian trading community the Tibetan tribes played a significant role as intermediaries from the third century through the first century B.C.E. In the process, the proto-Tibetan peoples absorbed cultural influences from the peoples they encountered. These cultural influences contributed to the emergence of Tibetan Buddhism and the Tibetan Empire in the seventh century.¹ By the third century B.C.E., after the fall of the Mauryan Empire, the three major trade routes that emanated from the Middle East through Eurasia had again become the primary pathways over which trading caravans made their way back and forth between Central Asia and China.² Other roads crisscrossing the Tsinghai-Tibetan Plateau through proto-Tibetan territory offered alternatives. Groups of traders traveling on foot or using pack animals used these routes when they wanted to avoid contact with the cities and the nomads below the Plateau.³ Travelers and traders brought new wealth and ideas to the Plateau cultures as trade increased over these routes spurring evolution of the infant kingdoms of the Tibetan regions. Controlled by the Bon

religious hierarchy, they became gravitational centers of cultural enrichment and trade. Attached to nomadic tribes by clan associations, who protected them, these centers proliferated. Fed by these centers located in the midst of agricultural vales, the proto-Tibetan people multiplied and clan and tribal associations expanded. At some point the Bon shamanist brotherhood extended into the greater community and the clans and tribes became loosely united under its umbrella.

In the eastern regions, by the second century B.C.E. the Han noted that approximately one-hundred and fifty tribes of Tibetan and Tibetan Ch'iang and Ti lived along China's western borders alone. They controlled the flow of trade into and out of China along the Jade Route and the western side of the Plateau. Their numbers and dominance of the routes at critical points at the edges of the Plateau regions were a significant block to the expansion of the Chinese Empire.⁴ The relationship of these tribes to others in the Hindu Kush region and the Tsangpo River Valley created a common sphere of interaction that may be defined as the root of the later seventh century Tibetan culture. The proto-Tibetans were pushed toward this greater unity by the events following the Mauryan Empire.

By the mid-third century the Mauryan and Achaemenid Empires had risen and fallen. Ashoka, the last great emperor of the Mauryans, died in 232 B.C.E. after a triumphant thirty-seven-year rule. During his reign, he had extended the

Mauryan Empire to include the Indus River Valley and the Hindu Kush.⁵

However, his death initiated a period of political decline and the Mauryan empire soon disintegrated. While the Mauryans in the Ganges Valley of north-central India remained in power for another fifty years, the northwestern regions containing the Indus River Valley were lost to the Bactrian Greeks by 180 B.C.E.⁶ During the changeover of power, trading patterns shifted. The breakup of the Mauryan Empire destroyed the cohesiveness of the extensive system of water trade routes stretching across northern India. As the Bactrian states became more powerful in Central Asia and Northwestern India (including the Hindu Kush) they became the main hub around which trade revolved. As the Mauryan Empire fell apart and the locus of trade shifted to central Asia, land routes in the northwest replaced water routes as the main means of transportation.⁷ West of the Takla Makan Desert, Afghanistan was still the "crossroads of Asia," however.⁸

In the north of Central Asia, the small principalities of the Ferghana Valley continued to grow in power as caravans loaded with treasures from both Central Asia and China passed through their cities. These ancient trading cities, infused by centuries of Mauryan and Greek culture and ruled by a series of Greco-Bactrian kings, continued to expand in riches.⁹ Political and cultural ties connected wealthy nobles and merchants to the advancing civilizations of the Mediterranean. Central Asia drew traders in greater numbers than ever before

to a vast multi-cultural trading market "of a thousand cities."¹⁰ Because of this increase in trading activity, the relatively new market of north China was drawn more fully into the economic fabric of Eurasia and trade increased across the Tsinghai-Tibetan Plateau.

During this new expansion in trade the small farming communities in the Middle East and in the Takla Makan Desert entered a period of transition and became powerful, self-ruling entities. They developed into thriving commercial, industrial and agricultural centers and sources of food, rest and safety for increasingly larger and larger caravans.¹¹ These city-states also became cultural repositories for what the Middle Eastern, Greek, Indian, and Chinese civilizations brought along the caravan routes. In the process they lost their individual loyalties and dependence upon other entities and developed into self-sufficient, cosmopolitan societies with walls, moats and their own armies to protect themselves. Economic interests superseded any cultural ties that might have existed among even a minority of communities, initially dominated by one civilization or another.¹²

The Sakas in the west and the Tocharians in the east occupied the Indo-European cities of the northern Takla Makan Desert.¹³ While, the Hsiung-nu began expanding their dominance over the northern route, the proto-Tibetan tribes of Ch'iang and the Yüeh-chih remained in control of the whole of the Jade Route along the lower edge of the desert until at least circa 165 B.C.E. The

escalation of activity and the promise of new wealth along the Jade Route apparently drew larger numbers of proto-Tibetan tribes into the region during this period. At the beginning of the second century the Chinese annals note that the Ch'o Ch'iang inhabited the entire length of the Kun Lun and the Nan Shan mountains, from the Pamirs to Tunhuang,¹⁴ while their allies, the Yüeh-chih, occupied the Ch'i Lien Mountains along the Kansu Corridor and the northeastern cities of the Tarim Basin from Kucha west to Tunhuang.¹⁵ Dominance of these cities and regions gave the Ch'iang and their allies, the Yüeh-chih, control of all trade entering or exiting China along the trade routes of the Takla Makan, even from the northern route.

The changes in trading patterns caused by the fall of the Mauryan Empire and the rise in power of the city-states of Central Asia naturally affected China economically. The Chinese, probably initially confused over the change in the flow of traffic, may have perceived of the situation as ruse by the barbarian tribes to extract higher fees. Chinese knowledge of the political situation in the west was extremely limited at this time.¹⁶ It is probable they had little, if any, knowledge of the changes taking place in the west. The Ch'in decision to build their capital at Hsien-yang was no doubt dictated by the need and desire to gain control of trade in the northwest. The Ch'in economy had become so intertwined with the barbarian trading community and the other Chou states that without economic control the state surely would have collapsed at the outset.¹⁷ The

father of the first Ch'in Emperor, P'ui-yiu, "was an important merchant from Yangdi" who had "amassed a fortune worth thousands of *jin* [yellow metal]";¹⁸ it is likely that he and other merchants of his generation clearly grasped the implications of the changes in the economic fabric. Soon after the disintegration of the Mauryan Empire problems with the barbarians to the east increased. It was during the period immediately following that the Ch'in built the Great Wall (214 B.C.E.) to hold back the hordes of Hsiung-nu and eliminate the Ti tribes in the Ordos.¹⁹

Of all the developments influencing neighboring cultures across Eurasia, during the third to second centuries B.C.E., changes taking place in India and Central Asia seem to have had the most impact. In ancient times, Indian culture was so widespread that Central Asia became known as Indian territory. The Parthians called Kandahara, "White India," while the Sassanians thought Bactriana had always been an Indian country. Ancient Greek records testify to the early spread of Buddhism, reporting that "thousands of Brahmans and Buddhist monks" resided in these regions.²⁰ Buddhism had already made inroads into the northwest of India and evidently the Hindu Kush via the trade routes under its "patron saint Ashoka."²¹ By the mid-third century B.C.E., Buddhism was in the early stages of spreading throughout Central Asia and the trade route communities of the Takla Makan Desert.

Some scholars doubt that Ashoka had any impact in the Himalayas or in

Central Asia. However, Ashoka was both a politician and a missionary who demonstrated a zeal for spreading Buddhism throughout India and afar. During his lifetime, Ashoka spread the new teachings throughout Western and Southeast Asia. He “exchanged missions, diplomatic and otherwise,” with such personages as Antiochus II of Syria (260-246 B.C.E.), Ptolemy III Philadelphus of Egypt (285-247 B.C.E.), Antigonus Gonatus of Macedonia (276-239 B.C.E.), Magus of Cyrene, and Alexander of Epirus. A “continuous interchange of envoys” between the Mauryans and Seleucids for three “generations of kings,” and with Nepal and Southeast Asia, suggests contacts with other adjacent communities as well, if not directly, then indirectly. Some sources report that Kashmir was a part of the Mauryan Empire and that Ashoka himself, built Srinigar.²² The Tibetans assert that Indian and Chinese political exiles founded Khotan and that Ashoka visited this city lying over the Karakoram Mountains.²³ The idea of a Chinese joint founder may be questioned. We know that China was still separated from the west by the Ch’iang tribes and the Hsiung-nu. But, it is also a historical fact that Ashoka maintained vast contacts during his reign. While absolute proof is lacking, Ashoka’s wide diplomatic reach, coupled with the awareness that the Hindu Kush was invaded repeatedly and used frequently as a thoroughfare from India to Central Asia from earliest times, suggests that Buddhism may have gained a foothold in the southwest of the Takla Makan as early as the later days of the Mauryan Empire.²⁴

By the mid third century B.C.E., the Tibetan nomadic societies (and small kingdoms) had achieved an early stage of organization sufficient to allow at least a small amount of trade across the Plateau in all four directions. The Bon in this period extensively inhabited and dominated the area of Zhang zhung. They also infused the region with a cosmopolitan culture brought to the high plateau by not only themselves, but also by traders, missionaries and refugees from the plains below.²⁵ Zhang zhung held within its sphere the areas of Kashmir, Gilgit and Baltistan.²⁶ A shamanistic priesthood of similar origin had also spread into Central and Northern Asia and across the Plateau, through the cities of the trade routes including Khoton along the Jade Route.²⁷ The peoples of the Zhang zhung region held no loyalties that we know of to any other nation of the Plateau; nevertheless, they apparently held political and cultural ties to the Ch'iang of the Nan Shan and eastern Tibet through intermarriages and the bonding of clans and tribal associations. The Ch'iang also held such ties to the Yüeh-chih, whose southern border included the Ch'i Lien Mountains bordering the Kansu Corridor.²⁸ As a result, the proto-Tibetan peoples of the eastern portion of the Plateau held a relationship with their neighbors living at the higher altitudes and in the west. The Plateau itself formed a huge barrier in the midst of Asia. Unconquerable and geographically insurmountable by peoples unaccustomed to the harshness of the climate and terrain, the Plateau prevented easy intercourse between the nations at its extremities. The proto-

Tibetans, however, had mastered living under such conditions and obviously found them conducive to the incorporation of other cultures and expansion.

Scholars estimate the population of the proto-Tibetan Ch'iang tribes along the Chinese borders totaled so many by the Han period that their numbers exceeded those of the Hsiung-nu.²⁹ We can only imagine the size of the communities upon the Plateau from which they gained their strength and support. It is probable that villages were spread out amongst the valleys, interconnected by associated tribes as in later historic times. The primary evidence that these tribes impacted the east-west trade, especially in China, can be found in the Chinese annals. They, in fact, dominated trade on the peripheral regions of the Tsinghai-Tibetan Plateau in the north and the east at certain key points where no other passage was available. Evidence of their strength may be noted by the preoccupation of the Chinese throughout the Han dynastic periods with gaining control over the northwestern and western territories. As previously noted, the Hindu Kush in the west of Tibet,³⁰ Lanchou in Kansu in the northwest of China, Ch'eng-tu in Shu and the southern trading communities of India, and Southeast Asia were interconnected by trade routes running across the Plateau through the territories of the proto-Tibetan tribes.³¹ To gain an additional understanding of how the Tibetans became involved politically, culturally, and economically in the greater Eurasian trading community, it is necessary to investigate the interconnecting trade routes that lay like a web over the Plateau

and the general locations of main thoroughfares.

The four regions of the Tsinghai-Tibetan Plateau, the West, the North, the Northwest and Southwest, all of which have distinguishing features, may be grouped into three interconnecting trading regions for the sake of discussion. First, there are the far northern and northeastern portions containing the Changthang Plateau and the Amdo region, including from west to east the Kun Lun Mountains, the Tsaidam Basin, the Nan Shan Mountains, the Ch'i Lien Mountains, the Kansu Corridor, and Koko Nor. Second, there is the whole of the south, including the Central Valley of the Tibetan Plateau through which the Tsangpo River runs, and Kham in the southeast, containing the sources of the Yangtze, Salween, and Mekong rivers. The third region contains the far west of the Tibetan Plateau, harboring the Upper Indus River Region, Zhang zhung, Kashmir, Ladakh, and adjacent smaller communities.³²

Bod, centrally located in southern Tibet along both sides of the Tsangpo River, contains the major route connecting the far west of the Tibetan Plateau with the far east. This ancient highway begins in Ladakh, passes through Bod in the Tsangpo River Valley, and continues to the far southeast, progressing through Kham and the Tibetan city of Chamdo (Chinese: Ch'ang-tu), where it finally reaches Ch'eng-tu in Shu (Szechuan). This is the road mentioned earlier,³³ along which trade flowed across the Himalayas through the passes of Nepal, Bhutan, and Sikkim from Pataliputra, India.³⁴ The journey was far too

arduous for camel caravans bound for China. However, the length of travel and expense was considerably less, entirely feasible, and cost effective using strings of pack animals over the mountains led by people adapted to the mountainous terrain.³⁵

The importance of the Upper Indus Region of Tibet and Zhang zhung, at the western end of this route, as a crossroads between India and Central Asia and the Takla Makan Desert in ancient times must not be underestimated.³⁶ The visible use of the area by the traders of Central Asia, especially during the Mauryan Period, was probably the central reason the proto-Tibetan tribes of the high plateau became involved in trade.³⁷ As we have seen, literature documents that the western region was already well-known to the Indian peoples by circa 700-500 B.C.E. as the "City of the Gods." Zhang zhung, whose size alone dominated the landscape at the higher elevations held the Bon hierarchy's religious and political center at its heart. The region was linked to other regions of the Tsinghai-Tibetan Plateau by the branches of the brotherhood that permeated the clans and controlled tribal associations to various degrees. In any case we can imagine a free flow of trade via Zhang zhung and the Tsangpo River Valley across the Plateau in either direction.³⁸ This trade no doubt increased during the Mauryan period and into Ch'in and Han times commensurate with the growth of the proto-Tibetan kingdoms, trade associations, and the trading community as already discussed.³⁹

The Tsangpo River Valley route was also the main thoroughfare travelers used to gain access to other parts of the Tsinghai-Tibetan Plateau. Traders from Ladakh could travel east to the Lhasa region and from there connect with other major routes reaching to the north, east and south to the Jade Route and onto Shu. One such major route ran in a northeasterly direction from the area of Yarlung, cutting nearly through the middle of the Plateau to the Tarim Basin and Golmund in Amdo. Amdo, was a Ch'iang center and the most frequently mentioned as such by the Chinese during the Former Han period. At Golmund the road forked into three branches. One branch crossed the Tsaidam Basin pasture lands to meet eastern routes traversing either side of the desert and the southern side of the Ch'i Lien Mountains,⁴⁰ while two other branches reached east and west. The western branch joined the Jade Route at the ancient city of Charklikh, near Miran, while the eastern branch continued to the southern end of the Kansu Corridor, skirting the shores of Koko Nor and passing through Hsi-ning to Lanchou.⁴¹ These routes, following the northern and western outer edges of the Tsinghai-Tibetan Plateau funneled trade into northwestern China and south to the Ch'eng-tu Plain. From the Ch'eng-tu Plain other roads descended even further south to connect with routes from the south and the Yunnan-Burma Road.⁴²

Amdo encompassed Koko Nor, the Tsaidam Basin and the Ch'i Lien and Min mountain ranges adjacent to the Kansu Corridor. This was the region from

which the proto-Tibetans first entered pre-Shang China and probably Shu in Neolithic times (ca.2500 B.C.E.). It is also the region from which the Ch'iang and other proto-Tibetans directly interacted with the Yüeh-chih, the Hsiung-nu and the Chinese in the northwest. The area was in Chou times, and is today, a well-known region of horse breeders and mountain tribes, whom the Tibetans call grass men (or dwellers in the plain) and mountain dwellers.⁴³

The layout of these routes and control of the key points prevented the Chinese from having their own independent trade routes to the west. Effectively, two sets of trade routes existed along the northeastern and eastern borders in China. One group ran through the foothills of the mountains controlled by the Ch'iang. The second group passed through the plains guarded by the Chinese.⁴⁴ The Ch'iang controlled the internal trade on their own mountain routes as well as the trade flowing into the Chinese routes at the lower elevations. Thus, ultimately the control of trade goods in and out of China was within the domain of the proto-Tibetan tribes.⁴⁵ They could either withhold passage or regulate the flow of trade goods between east and west.

In Amdo, southwest of the small loop of the Yellow River and Koko Nor is the source of the Min River within the mountains bearing the same name. From this area, some historians believe, the proto-Tibetans migrated during an unknown time into the Ch'eng-tu Plain.⁴⁶ The Chin-cheng and Lung-shi commanderies of the Former and Later Han periods, notoriously occupied by

Ch'iang, were located on either side of the Great Wall immediately north and adjacent to this Min River area. These sites were often staging areas for large-scale attacks by Ch'iang around the turn of the first century B.C. E. In fact, the first Office of Protector General was established in 111 B.C.E. after one such attack.⁴⁷ However, while evidence is strong that the Chinese attempted to gain control over this area, there is no evidence to suggest that either the Former or the Later Han garrisons ever constituted anything other than large trading posts, nor is there any evidence to show that either dynasty ever controlled the areas beyond the immediate vicinities of the garrisons. This is especially true in the extreme northwestern regions and in the mountains to the west of Shu until the time of Wu-ti, when even then the Ch'iang of the mountain regions presented a formidable adversary.⁴⁸ In later years, Wu-ti made some short-term gains, but these areas were never truly sinicized; they were continuously occupied by the Tibetan tribes throughout both dynastic periods.⁴⁹ By the end of the Han the Chinese still identified the region as barbarian territory and the Ch'iang were still in control of the key trading locations in the south of the Takla Makan Desert and along the western side of China.⁵⁰

In the Shu area, gaining control of Ch'iang territories was even more difficult for the Chinese. The Ch'iang occupied lands immediately to the west of Shu that the Later Han designated as the Shu-chün and the Kuang-han *shu-kuo*.⁵¹ These regions held the mountain trails and the trade routes entering Shu

from Kham.⁵² The Ch'iang also controlled the roads heading from the Ch'eng-tu Plain north and northwest through Amdo and the Min Mountains to Lanchou and the Tsaidam Basin.⁵³ The Amdo region related to the northwest of China, the Jade Route and the northwestern Ch'eng-tu Plain as Kham related to the southern Ch'eng-tu Plain, Assam, India, Southeast Asia, and southern China. The Kham region was connected to the Central Valley of Tibet by the Tsangpo River Valley Road through the southern Plateau. After wending its way along the river east to its end—the river turns south and becomes the Brahmaputra—the route crosses into Kham and continues through the valleys and mountains of the Salween, Mekong, Yangtze, and Ya-lung Chiang rivers. After crossing the Ya-lung Chiang River the route descends rapidly into the foothills of the Ta-hsüeh Mountains southwest of Ch'eng-tu. Another branch of this route, traveling through the western mountains of the Ch'eng-tu Plain and connected to the Kuang-han road, bypasses the foot of the Bayan Mountains.⁵⁴

The Bayan Mountains separate Kham in the southeast from Amdo, in the northeastern region of Tibet. Kham, during Ch'in and Former Han times, encompassed the marches of the Plateau, running through the western half of Szechuan, most of northern Yunnan, the extreme west of Kweichow and the far north of Burma and Assam. In the Later Han these western regions of Kham contained the *shu-kuo* of Shu-chün and Chen-wei. Within the vicinity of these *shu-kuo* were located the Southwest Ch'iang barbarians described by Chang

Ch'ien, including the Ti, Poma, Jyarung (Rong), Lolo and Nakhi or Moso tribes.⁵⁵

During the period under discussion, self-governing principalities flourished throughout Kham, interspersed among the lands of many independent tribal peoples. The districts of Poyül (Powo) and Kongpo were noted for their fine horses as well as long haired oxen and small pigs. These more temperate regions produced, as they do today, numerous fruits and grains. These included grapes, apples, pears, rice, wheat, barley, medicinal herbs (also a product of the wooded mountains of Amdo), nuts, bamboo, and spices, all of which were tradable commodities.⁵⁶ During this third century B.C.E. proto-Tibetan peoples were in a position to act as intermediaries for the products and goods coming from and flowing to southwest China, Southeast Asia, Burma, and India.⁵⁷

One last road of importance from the Kham area should be mentioned. It descended south from the main road at Peng-ta in Kham and followed the descent of the Mekong River, crossing the mountain ranges to the Yangtze. From there it followed the Yangtze River valley through Yunnan to meet the Burma-Yunnan Road extending to Kun-ming. Many other tracks and trails branched from this main road throughout the southern regions of Kham into Assam and Yunnan and into the upper Burma area, a region famous especially for its jade, diamonds, rubies, and sapphires.⁵⁸ The Burma-Yunnan Road, which this road met, was an eastern extension of one long trade route, the Grand Trunk Road of the Gangetic Plain, that which had formed the main land route

through the Mauryan Empire from east to west. The Grand Trunk Road extended from the northwest of India and the Taxila area through a network of routes in the north of India and passed through Pataliputra to Assam and finally into Burma. In Assam and Bangladesh many other branches reached south to ports in the Bay of Bengal. The Burma-Yunnan Road was known to Chang Ch'ien and left unconquered by Wu-ti, due to the proto-Tibetan Ti and Man tribes that blocked the way.⁵⁹

The network of these roads accorded a large degree of latitude to the proto-Tibetan tribes within the trading community. They could divert trade along the routes that would provide the most profit and act as intermediaries for those trading agents who wished to transport goods within a few months, rather than by caravan which could take a minimum of one year, but usually several. Meanwhile, Chinese control of trade to and from the west was basically limited to routes in the lowlands in the northwest where garrisons and soldiers could protect them. The mountains provided natural defenses to conquest that the Chinese could not overcome.⁶⁰ In effect, the Chinese had no choice but to negotiate trading arrangements with the many tribes controlling the trade.⁶¹

Other commodities gleaned from the natural resources of the mountains by the Tibetan tribes accompanied articles from India and Southeast Asia to the courts of the Chinese.⁶² A Chinese official noted that furs, sables, marmots, foxes and badgers, colored rugs and decorated carpets filled the Imperial

treasury, while jade, other auspicious stones, corals and crystals, become national treasures.⁶³ All of these products were especially available from the regions of Kham, from Kham itself, or India, Assam and Burma. Kham was ideally located between four trading communities: Amdo in the north, the Tibetan Central Valley to the east, Assam, Burma and Yunnan in the south, and the Ch'eng-tu Plain in the west.

The period between the end of the Mauryan Empire and Chang Ch'ien's journey to document the location of the tribes covers a span of only a century. While we may assuredly accept that, since circa 700 C.E., the Ch'iang tribe and the Tibetans had grown apart, during the ancient period, when trade was at its height, the evidence suggests that the Ch'iang and those Tibetan tribes on the Plateau were much more akin to one another than today.⁶⁴ Notably, the Chinese sources make no distinction between the tribal populations ethnically, and even today there is no reason to believe that they were different peoples. Ancient Chinese sources identified them all as Ch'iang, while current scholars identify them as Sino-Tibetan, Tibeto-Burman or Tibetan.⁶⁵

The annals note the identity of the Ch'iang and their occupation of the region in the later centuries as well. According to the Chinese sources, the kings who historically united Tibet in the seventh century were the T'u-fan, a branch of the Ch'iang from the Amdo region.⁶⁶ In the earlier years, the Hou Han shu, records the existence of an even earlier group (ca. 165 B.C.E.), the Fa

Ch'iang, living "deep" in the Tibetan interior, a nation of people with whom the Chinese never had any contact,⁶⁷ but whom it seems were known to them. They probably lived in the Amdo region. As we have seen, the Han dynasty annals interpretation of history notes that by circa 500 B.C.E. the Ch'iang were organized into tribes and some had begun farming and raising cattle in the northwest of China. By the second century B.C.E. the annals record yet another migration of proto-Tibetans from the western borderlands into the northwest of China.⁶⁸ Ssu-ma calls the various groups "the Ch'iang barbarians of the west,"⁶⁹ the Ch'iang of the southwest,⁷⁰ the Ch'iang of the Nan-shan,⁷¹ the Ch'iang south of the Great Wall,⁷² the Ch'iang along the mountain trails,⁷³ and the Ch'iang of the southern regions (among whom were "profits to be made").⁷⁴ He makes no distinction between these Ch'iang at the lower elevations and the Ch'iang along the mountain trails of the Plateau. The existence of these numerous tribes of Ch'iang and Chinese descriptions imply, in context, that they were all people of one overriding culture.⁷⁵

Modern anthropologists claim that Tibetans belong to the Mongoloid race, but until now no comparisons of Tibetan and Mongol skulls have been made.⁷⁶ R.A. Stein states that it is more than likely that the racial characteristics prevalent today are a result of the mixing of several different races over time. Intermarriage was regularly used as a means to create alliances among the tribes of the Plateau, the Steppe, China, and surrounding regions.⁷⁷ We know

from the Chinese annals that the Tibetans absorbed the Smaller Yüeh-chih in the second century B.C.E. It is most probable that intermarriages occurred as a means of incorporating them into their society. Therefore, racial characteristics changed at this time, but in later periods, other Indo-European tribes, such as the Hsien-pi, also melded with Tibetan populations.⁷⁸

Both clan and tribal names existing in the ancient writings testify to such racial blending. But, during the period under discussion it appears that while the tribes intermarried among themselves on the Plateau, the inclusion of tribes of other strains occurred only on rare occasions. Evidence of this can be seen by the two types of Tibetans that can still be observed today; however, these seem to be the result of the joining of populations primarily after the second century. Until that period the greater area of the Plateau was a fairly unknown region to the surrounding civilizations, with the possible exception of Zhang chung. "The majority of the people in the U-T'sang region" (Tsangpo River Valley area: Bod) are short in stature, round-headed and have high cheekbones while the people of Dotod (Kham) and Domed (Amdo) are tall, long headed, and long of limb.⁷⁹ In some places they are known as the red people due to the red cast of their skin.⁸⁰ Those who are long-headed and tall in stature come from the areas that historically had the greatest amount of contact with the Indo-Europeans, Mongols, and the Chinese. The characteristics attributed to the peoples of the southern part of the Plateau may be associated with the archetype of the ancient

Tibetan including strains of ancient peoples thought to be indigenous to the Himalayan regions.⁸¹

The Tibetan histories document the spread of the tribes and the Bon from the earliest days. They describe the transmission of two lines of Bon: one emanating from India and the other from Persia. These histories also identify the lineages of the tribes, the kings, their Bonpos (shamanistic priests of Bon) and their tribal interrelationships. Many historians believe the Buddhists invented the histories to affirm the right to rule of *Srong-btsan-sgam-po*, the first king and unifier of the Tibetan Empire in the seventh century C.E.⁸² While they may have compiled the lists with this purpose in mind, studies of the lists suggest that the writers also made a serious attempt to sift through myth and legend. The record, however accurately or inaccurately, lists the lineages of the ruling families and their lineages as the writers saw them at the time.⁸³ They were found at Tunhuang and date from the eighth century C.E. The language found in some of these documents suggests that the Tibetan culture extended over the whole of the Plateau by the Kushan period (the first century C.E.).⁸⁴

People still speak this language in isolated locations in both the southeast and southwest of the Plateau. There is a wide divergence between the pronunciation of the script today and that "laid down by the inventors." There is also a significant gap between what can be read and translated; nevertheless, undeniable similarities in the script may be associated with present day dialects

still spoken in Amdo and Ladakh that come close to the "archaic orthography."⁸⁵

The two similar dialects found at the extremes of the Plateau and the voluminous amounts of written material in Tibetan suggest that before the eighth century the two regions were in contact with each other and that the people spoke the same language. The documents indicate that a somewhat complex society, sharing an intellectual affinity, stretched across the Tsinghai-Tibetan Plateau. The fact that the documents are extensively Buddhist in nature and that the Tibetans used Sanskrit as a base for a Tibetan script has already been justified in Tibetan histories as due to the strong influx of Buddhism in the seventh century, yet, it does not explain the appearance of the ancient dialects of the earlier period.⁸⁶

Other collections of documents of the second century have been found in locations east of Khotan, stretching to Tunhuang along the Jade Route. They affirm that the Tibetans were in close contact with the Kushan Empire and that Kushana civilization had spread along the Jade Route almost to Tunhuang. The presence of these documents in locations known to have been occupied by proto-Tibetans, together with the Tibetan histories of Tunhuang, suggests that the Tibetans may have had a second earlier script in the seventh century based on a Kushana script that they later replaced.⁸⁷

More complete evidence for this assertion can be found through an analysis of the dispersion of the Buddhist, Tibetan and Kushana documents and the scripts used to create them. Studies have shown that it is certain the

Kushana sent the earliest Buddhist texts to Central Asia through Bactria and Gandhara. They did not write these documents in Sanskrit; rather they were in Kharoshthi script. They derived this script from an Aramaic version used in Iran and employed in the Peshawar area. "Elsewhere in India" the Brahmi script was used almost exclusively and it is the Brahmi script that the Tibetans adapted in the seventh century.⁸⁸ As in the time of Ashoka, in Kushana times the Kharoshthi script was the primary means of transmission of any political or other important communications and merchants especially used it.⁸⁹ Evidence of Kushana influence and Kharoshthi script in the form of rock inscriptions, wall murals and hundreds of documents have been found along the southern Jade Route from east of Khotan to Lob Nor, all territories frequented by the Ch'iang tribes.⁹⁰ These suggest that Buddhism was well established in this region, called Shan-shan by the Chinese, by at least the first century C.E., six hundred years before the Tibetan Empire.⁹¹

While there is no evidence of a previous adoption of a Kharoshthi script by the Tibetans, Tibetans claim that the Tunhuang documents are translations of Zhang zhung texts they originally wrote in Kharoshthi. Due to Zhang zhung's proximity to the Mauryan Empire and its location within the perimeters of the Kushan Empire, second century and earlier documents would have been written in Kharoshthi script. To date there is no evidence of second century Tibetan Bon documents written in Kharoshthi script predating Buddhism; hence, the

mystery remains. However, the notion that Tibetans used the Kharoshthi script under the influence of the the Kushana and that the Tibetans adopted the Brahmi script later remains a high probability.⁹² It is altogether possible that Tunhuang documents may contain renditions of other texts much more ancient than the seventh century, but this fact remains to be discovered. Meanwhile, some scholars already accept that a Tibetan Kharoshthi written language preceded the introduction of Buddhism.⁹³ Certain texts such as the Bon of Cause, while written in Brahmi script, appear to have been uninfluenced by Buddhist thought. The absence of a Buddhist undercurrent intimates the text is a translation of an earlier Bon document that would most probably have been written in Kharoshthi script.⁹⁴

The eighth century Tibetan documents from Tunhuang and the existence of an archaic language still spoken at the extremes ends of the Plateau, suggest that proto-Tibetans of a relatively homogeneous culture lived in the same area occupied by them today, by the first century B.C.E. From the Tunhuang documents the approximate locations of some Tibetan ancient cultures and clans can be determined by extrapolating backwards from the recorded locations. While these are seventh century designations, we may assume that these at least identify the general regions from where the tribes originated. For example, 'A-zha was located in the northeast around Koko Nor, Zhang zhung was centered around Manasarovar in the far west, Sum-pa occupied parts of the

east and the central plains of Byang-thang, and Mi-nyag was located along the eastern borderlands.⁹⁵

The Tibetan lists detail the genesis of the clans, the tribes, their origins, and their associations with the Bon brotherhood. The records describe the ancestors of the tribes as the six children of the monkey line and are complex in nature. Two lines can be traced. The first, the *rus-chen-bzhi* line, or bone line, is composed of four great tribes and refers to the father's side of the family. The second line, the *mi'u-gdung-drug*, or bloodline, is composed of six tribes and refers to the mother's side of the family. Some sources included a third line, the *reus-chen-linga* or *zhangs-po-lha-rigs rGo*, also called the uncle-god lineage of *rGo*. To this line is attributed a special connection to the gods and spirits that gave the *rGo* supernatural powers. They were a shamanic priesthood that officiated over the ceremonies and rituals of the tribes. More likely these were the forerunners of the Bonpo priests who later rose to power to become hereditary ministers at the sides of the kings. They were also known as the nephew-uncle line and were renowned for their psychic powers. "Sometimes the *lha-rigs* were said to be made up of the good leaders of each tribe," suggesting that they may have at once held the positions of both spiritual and political leadership and which again hints at an Indo-Aryan root.⁹⁶

According to the Tibetan sources, from these tribes arose twelve, twenty-five and then forty small kingdoms.⁹⁷ The lists detail the generation of these

kingdoms and seem to have been very important in establishing the hereditary rights of the kings during invocations. They were an elemental part of the ritual used during the enthronement ceremonies to affirm the king's hereditary "right to reign over territories ruled by the preceding king."⁹⁸ It is hard to believe, considering the complexity of the lists, that they were suddenly invented simply to bolster a Bon hierarchy challenged by Buddhists, though they may have been used for that purpose.⁹⁹ It appears that an invocation of the lists was a historical precedent established in some ancient period to confirm the right of the king to his inheritance; they were indispensable to the enthronement of one king to rule over all. While the lines may not be accurate, they at least provide some substantial evidence of interrelationships between clans and their lineages.

The Tibetan *bKa-thang-sde-Inga* manuscript (ca. seventh century C.E.) asserts the mission of the first king was to establish the proper relationships "between people, between countries, and between the world of human beings and other realms and powers."¹⁰⁰ Tibetan historians date his reign to circa 150 B.C.E. Tibet's central location in Eurasia and the amount of traffic over the Hindu Kush in the early centuries B.C.E. indicates a need for some sort of leadership among the Tibetans. If such a leader existed, he would have to have been an individual of power and stature backed by a legitimate force. From what we know, the Bonpos were the only cross-cultural group powerful enough to unite what was probably a loose organization of tribes. The establishment of the

early kings, united by the brotherhood of the Bon, would have been the means to cement such a union.

The early historians divided the clans into groups and associated each tribe with a particular clan. For example the *bSe* tribe was led by the clan *bSe-khyung sBra*, which was listed as a part of three groups of nine smaller groups: nine white, nine black and nine mixed. However, it must not be thought that these groupings were of small numbers of people or that these groupings indicated a strict segregation across the Tsinghai-Tibetan Plateau regions. Intermarriages and political alliances produced a variety of patterns, and in some locations the territories of the clans and tribes overlapped. A few listings, for example, connected the *White sBra* with Zhang chung, *sPu-rang* and Bal-po in the west, while the *Black sBra* connected with the eighteen tribes of *rGyal-morong* in the east and with the *'A-zha* in the far northeast. The mixed *sBra* branch included the *Ar* or *A-dra* lineage and was also linked to central Tibet.¹⁰¹ These linkages and lines served, connected and gave rise to other clans and entire subgroups. Each tribe was famous for particular things. The *Bse* tribe was famous for its wealth while the *IDong* tribe was famous for its leaders.¹⁰² The *sTong* tribe was famous for its heroes and was closely related to the *Sum-pa*; it also provided ministers and wives for the early kings known as the *Eight IDe*.¹⁰³ The *dMu* tribe was known for its learnedness and was closely associated with the Bon tradition and with Zhang chung, the area from which it is believed the

Bon Priests originated.¹⁰⁴

The complexity of the lineages, the detailed emphasis given to hierarchical and organizational structure, and the importance given to hereditary rights suggests the sorting of, and a recording for posterity, an oral history of a people rather than the invention of one. While the lists may have been altered in the interest of political aims, we should not disregard them completely. They provide at least indications of the genesis and locations of the tribes, even if only general conclusions may be drawn.¹⁰⁵ The idea that the lists should be rejected because they contain so many similarities to the Chinese or Indian histories should also be put aside. The similarities may merely intimate, an intention of making such a history more palatable cross-culturally. The deviations from or similarities mythologically and prehistorically with the Chinese and Indian histories, and the assertion of the Tibetans that the histories hold the story of their people suggest the need for a more in-depth study.¹⁰⁶ While such extrapolations may seem futile to the conservative historian, we must take into account the possibility that historical sources of the first and second centuries were available in the seventh to the ninth centuries that are not available now. This idea has not been ruled out. They also no doubt must have used some oral histories of the period dating back to the first centuries in the creation of the record. It would seem that the historians of these periods would have had to present at least a plausible history in the seventh and eighth centuries to hold

their political positions and avoid complete rejection by either the Bon or the Buddhist factions or even the Tibetan Royalty. It is appropriate therefore to search for that which might be true and exclude the less plausible, rather than reject the whole.¹⁰⁷

A reading of the Tibetan histories leaves one with the sense that the early historians attempted to be as accurate as possible with the knowledge they had at their disposal and intimates that the Tibetan peoples in the eighth century valued their historical past. Today both Bon and Tibetan Buddhists accept the validity of much that they have recovered.¹⁰⁸ A comparative evaluation would no doubt reveal the interest of competing Buddhist and Bon factions. Such an evaluation would also allow for the extraction of more reliable conclusions and would perhaps shed more light on what the Tibetans call the "Dark and Gloomy" period before the Buddhists rose to power and Tibet was united in the seventh century.¹⁰⁹

The area that the proto-Bon hierarchy dominated appears to have incorporated not only the Tsinghai-Tibetan Plateau regions, but also a good portion of Central Asia before the rise of the Persian Empire and Buddhism. Although in later years, Buddhism had made its inroads, Buddhist political ambitions had not yet reached a peak of power by circa 150 B.C.E. The proto-Bon apparently appeared in the Zhang zhung region before Buddhism when their unique association of a brotherhood allowed for a division of the land into

profitable territories for the most powerful of their ranks. There is no reason to doubt that this shamanistic brotherhood had a good deal to do with the organization of early kingdoms or that the lists do not contain elements of truth. Clans and lineages were fairly well developed at the onset of the Tibetan empire, so well in fact that at the end of a power struggle Buddhism simply imposed itself for the most part in place of the existing structure.¹¹⁰

The genesis of the Bonpo power structure, aside from that of the kings, was rooted in Bonpo rituals that "imposed reciprocal obligations" and an oath of loyalty upon those who were initiated into the religious hierarchy. "Breach" of the obligations or of the oath of loyalty "involved severe punishment." The Bonpos were called *mched*, meaning brothers and thus were identified as a brotherhood.¹¹¹ They held a great deal of, if not total, political power. Each king had his own Bonpo and was bound to him by other specific religious ceremonies. The king "could not undertake anything" if the Bonpo had not performed the appropriate ritual and it was through the Bonpo that the king was confirmed as the rightful heir to the throne.¹¹² It was also the responsibility of the Bonpo to "look after the life of the king and his ministers." They kept "in view the defense of the country's borders." The Plateau society was protected by the Bon, "here meaning the entire religious system." The priesthood included exorcists who cast out demons and bards, "who sang the heroic epics, family genealogies and cosmogonic myths."¹¹³ It was the responsibility of the Bonpo

not only to keep order, but also to maintain the history. Such a powerful group surely held the political fabric together. Although we cannot say the tribes were united as a nation, in the period the Bon rose to power, the proto-Tibetans were apparently united by cultural and religious affiliations.

Tibetan authors agree "that after the development of the tribes and before the arrival of the first king, the land was divided as noted earlier, among a series of twenty-five, twelve, and forty local rulers."¹¹⁴ Tibetan records state that the first king *gNya-khr* settled at Yarlung sometime in the third or fourth centuries B.C.E. and that he subjugated and brought peace to twelve little kingdoms. He and the following six kings (the sky-kings) are grouped together as the *Seven Thrones*. The literature declares that they enthroned the first son of each king when he was old enough to ride a horse. The father would then hand over the title and disappear into the sky, leaving no corpse. Reportedly every new king resided in a new palace and every king took his place at the age of thirteen. According to Giuseppe Tucci the age of thirteen was indicative of having reached a stage of readiness spiritually, rather than physically. Bon traditions attribute magical powers to these kings, "describing how they underwent trials and tests of magical skill," doubtless under the supervision of the Bon.¹¹⁵ The creation of a superstitious myth surrounding the Bon priests and the kings could only have created an atmosphere of fear and awe and thus obedience.

The lineage of the kings (before 150 B.C.E.) is recorded to have

“remained separate from the tribes of the Tibetan people” for ten generations. The kings did not intermarry with the people, but instead took wives from among the gods and nature spirits. The most likely explanation is that the kings were, like their divine wives, mythological in nature. Some interpret this information to mean that the kings married goddess-like figures of other tribes, but there remains no evidence to substantiate such an assertion. Rather, the evidence suggests that the wives of the king came from powerful Bonpo families, which were renowned for their magical powers. An increase in the importance of burial rites indicates that kings in later years did enjoy a more god-like status.¹¹⁶

The period after the reign of the *Seven Heavenly Thrones*, known as “*The Era of the Two Steng Kings of the Upper Regions*” (c.150 B.C.E.), includes the reign of *Drigum Tsenpo*. He was the son of the last of the *Heavenly Throne Kings*. His son, *Chatri*, who took the name of *sPu-de-gung-rgyal*, was the first of the earthly kings. This is the era that historically marks the beginning of royal burial practices when the Bon no doubt increased their power, since a king could not be buried without them. The era must have hastened great social changes.¹¹⁷ It was at this time that it appears, the Bonpo became an indispensable part of the government. The Bonpo confirmed the king, buried the king and approved the hereditary heir, while Bon families gained in power and status by virtue of their relationships to the royal households.¹¹⁸ As the years wore on, a ruling aristocracy arose composed entirely of Bon families that all but

wiped out any other shamanistic groups. The Bon apparently had no other significant political competition until the rise to power of the Buddhists in the seventh century when the historical records supposedly were first written.¹¹⁹

The kings were under the rule of the Bon and “became heirs to a sacredness” based upon their relationship to “heavenly ancestors” and lineages identified and confirmed by the Bon.¹²⁰ These lineages needed to have validity based in a historical past. The fact that kings could not be confirmed without the blessing of the Bon priest and the reading of the lineages is a demonstration of their powerful influence within the society. The Bon established a pattern of hereditary rights to rule so strongly, that the Buddhists later imitated it as they began to assert themselves in Tibetan society during the seventh century.

This pattern may have initially become established across the Tsinghai-Tibetan Plateau, during the early third century B.C.E. At that time trade was increasing in all regions around the Plateau and over it. The Hindu Kush held roads passing through the western regions of Tibet, while on the eastern side of the Plateau, Ch’iang tribes dominated the mountain routes. In the north, the Ch’o-ch’iang tribes controlled the Jade route. In the south, Indo-Aryan kingdoms in Nepal (as well as in Bhutan and Sikkim) had been established for several centuries.

The historical assessments of the Chinese concerning the numbers of Ch’iang peoples in the second to first centuries B.C.E. indicate that the Ch’iang

tribes were numerous. The fact that we know the Bon were well established in western Tibet during this period suggests that a Bon theocratic political system united proto-Tibetan cultures across the Plateau at least 800-1000 years prior to the seventh century.¹²¹ Secondary evidence for such an assertion may be found by comparing the lists of kings. The names of the Tibetan kings appear in many sources and "the lists generally agree" although they may differ in spelling and in grouping.¹²² These sources apparently came from different regions suggesting that the cultures shared a common literary heritage in an early period. "Judging from the number of kings in the Tibetan Dynasty," it has been calculated by Tarthang Tulku that perhaps "forty-two generations or approximately 1050 years elapsed between the first king and the last, who is known to have died about 841 A.D." In other words the legendary Tibetan dynasty had its beginnings somewhere around the third century B.C.E., roughly coinciding with the unifying of the Ch'in (221-206 B.C.E.) dynasty and close to or during the period of Alexander the Great (356-323 B.C.E.) and the founding of the Mauryan Empire (322 B.C.E.).¹²³ Tulku states:

If we consider the third century B.C. as the beginning of the civilization of Tibet, then nine hundred years passed till the days of Srong-btsan-sgam-po, fifteen hundred years passed till the days of Sa-skya Pandita, and over twenty-three hundred years passed until the end of the traditional government of Tibet some thirty years ago. Among all older civilizations that have continued into modern times, Tibetan civilization may be one of the oldest.¹²⁴

The dating of the kings or their true lineage may never be established, but

the origin of the Tibetan civilization clearly predates the common era. The notion of a homogeneous Tibetan society, living across the Plateau, in these early periods rests almost entirely upon the history of the Bon. However, while some scholars question the existence of kingdoms, the existence of Zhang zhung in the Indian literature, and what can be gleaned concerning the Bon from the Tunhuang documents (recorded circa the eighth century C.E.), the Chinese references to the existence of one-hundred and fifty tribes along the north and northwestern edges of the Plateau, Chinese references in the second century B.C.E. to the peoples of the Plateau, and our knowledge of the trade routes seem to dispense with this notion. Considered separately these elements may be rejected on the grounds of insufficient evidence, but when considered together, it is difficult to form any other conclusion than that, during the third to first centuries before the common era Tibet had already developed the roots of a civilization that was relatively homogeneous.

Endnotes

1. Michael Loewe, "The Written Sources and Their Problems," The Cambridge History of China, vol.1, The Ch'in and Han Empires, 221 B.C. to A.D. 220, eds., Michael Loewe and Denis Twitchett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 2-7 passim. The Shih chi, the Han shu, and the Hou Han shu, comprise the main sources of history available for the Tibetans between the years of 221 B.C.E.-220 C.E. from the Ch'in dynastic period to the end of the Later Han dynasties. Ssu-ma Ch'ien, his son and the Pan family, wrote from a Chinese perspective. Ssu-ma used the Tso-chaun and possibly other sources lost to us and did not even begin writing until the reign of Wu-ti.; The Pan family, later used some of Ssu-ma's work as a beginning point for their history, thus, the sources are not eyewitness accounts. Burton Watson, Records of the Grand Historian of China, trans. from the Shih chi of Ssu-ma Ch'ien (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961) 2:265-68 passim.
2. W.W. Tarn, The Greeks in Bactria & India (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1951, reprinted 1966), 62.
3. Ibid., 138-40 passim;155.
4. Watson, Records, 1:100-101; and Ancient Tibet: Research Materials from the Yeshe De Project (Berkeley:Dharma Publishing, 1986), 121.
5. Vincent A. Smith, The Early History of India: From 600 B.C. to the Muhammadan Conquest (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1924), 169.
6. D.P. Singhal, India and World Civilization, 2 vols. (Michigan: Michigan State University Press, 1969), 1:90-91.
7. Louis Dupree, Afghanistan (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973), 285. In the Northwest of India and in the Middle East , the collapse of Alexander's empire resulted in the formation of smaller kingdoms ruled by Alexander's Generals. Bactria and Parthia broke away from the Seleucids in the mid-third century (c.250 B.C.E.) and became practically independent. Numerous kings fought each other for almost a hundred years, managing to march at various times from Central Asia to the Arabian sea and from northern India along the Ganges as far as Pataliputra (Patna). At first Bactria was the most powerful, lying between the Hindu Kush and the Oxus. Bactria contained the main route from Gandhara in Northwest India to Persia and the Black Sea and thence to

Greece and the routes emanating into Central Asia and China. In 206 B.C.E., the Bactrian King Demetrius marched into Northwest India and established the Indo-Greek dynastic line and took over the territory formerly controlled by the Mauryans (*Ibid*).

8. Singhal, India, 1:272.

9. *Ibid.*, 272.

10. Tarn, The Greeks in Bactria, 120.

11. Jack Chen, The Sinkiang Story (New York: Macmillian Publishing Company, Inc., 1977), 27.

12. Tarn, The Greeks in Bactria, 120-21.

13. Rene Grousset, The Empire of the Steppes: A History of Central Asia, trans. Naomi Walford (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University, 1991), 28.

14. Chen, The Sinkiang Story, 21, 44. The Yüeh-chih, who lived in the Ch'i Lien Mountains to the immediate south of Tunhuang, were allied with the Ch'iang, and controlled the southern Jade Route, until Mao-tun, the Hsiung-nu shanyu, in 165 B.C.E., conquered the Yüeh-chih and split them into two groups, the Greater Yüeh-chih and the Smaller Yüeh-chih, and took over the Kansu Corridor. The Greater Yüeh-chih began a migration to the west along the northern Silk Route which lasted a number of years. They finally settled in the Ferghana-Oxus region, later moved south, and formed the Kushan Empire. The Smaller Yüeh-chih were absorbed by the Ch'iang tribes. Up until that time the southern trade route had always been the busiest; that route located along the Kun Lun Mountains on the southern edge of the Tarim Basin.

15. Grousset, The Empire of the Steppes, 28.

16. Tarn, The Greeks in Bactria, 110.

17. Raymond Dawson, trans., Sima Qian: Historical Records with an introd. and notes (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 28.

18. *Ibid.*, 3.

19. Denis Sinor, ed., The Cambridge History of Early Inner Asia (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 119-22 passim. Difficulties

with the barbarians and trading relationships had been a continuing theme throughout the period of the Chou states. It was during this period of change especially, that the Chinese record an increase in Hsiung-nu raids (*Ibid*).

20. Singhal, India, 1:272.

21. Watson, Records, 1:47-50 *passim*.; Prior to Kushana rule Buddhism passed first into Bactria and Sogdiana, west of the Pamirs and in varying stages made its way across the Silk Route to China. By A.D. 316 only six translators of Buddhist texts into Chinese were probably Indian. Sixteen others are known to have been Central Asians, emanating from Parthia, Sogdia, Kucha and Khotan and they were mainly Yüeh-chih. David Snellgrove, Indo-Tibetan Buddhism: Indian Buddhists and Their Successors (Boston: Shambhala, 1987), 330.

22. Smith, The Early History of India, 170n.1.

23. Romila Thapar, A History of India, 2 vols. (New York: Viking Penguin, 1966), 4. One of Ashoka's's daughters may have married a nobleman from Nepal.

24. Smith, The Early History of India, 169.

25. Denis Sinor, ed., The Cambridge History of Early Inner Asia (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 375. Denis Sinor states: "The Zhang-zhung were unquestionably the Ch'iang and spoke a language similar to but not identical with Tibetan. The Zhang-zhung empire comprised all of Western Tibet and included Gu-ge, Ladakh, Zangsdkar, Lahul, Khu-nu, and the ditricks of Ru-thong, Da-rong, Guge, and the Manasarovar region in the east as well as the much discussed Survarnogotra (Tibetan: gSer-rabs) which I hesitate to identify with Zhang-zhung, considering it rather a vassal state. Zhang-zhung power extended as far as the mountains of Khotan and to the east upper Yangtze (Tibetan: 'Brichu) formed the boundary of the sphere of influence of the Sum-pa (Chinese: Su-p'i) who carried on military brigandage campaigns against Khotan. The Sum-pa were finally conquered by the Zhang-zhung. . . . The Sum-pa also spoke a Tibeto-Burmese language.; Tucci writes: Within her boundaries during the ancient period Zhang-zhung held the Changthang Plateau whose peoples in the seventh century were found speaking "eight main languages and twenty-four less important ones." Giuseppe Tucci, The Religions of Tibet, trans. from German and Italian by Geoffrey Samuel, (Berkeley: University of California, 1970), 214.

26. David Snellgrove and Hugh Richardson, A Cultural History of Tibet (Boston: Shambala, 1995), 26.

27. Watson, Records, 2:266-67.

28. Sinor, History of Early Inner Asia, 152.

29. Loewe, History of China, 422. Loewe notes what is not well known is that during the Former Han period it is estimated that the "numerical strength of the Ch'iang surpassed that of the Hsiung-nu," yet we read little if anything about them in the Han records except for an occasional uprising.

30. Singhal, India, 1:272.

31. Sinor, History of Early Inner Asia, 375. Sinor states, "Downward from the myriarchy of the Upper Zhang-zhung and upward from the chiliarchy of Lower Sum-pa, to the north and south between the Türks and the Mon peoples [the peoples on the southern slopes of the Himalayas], was the territory of the Tibet of the four 'horns' or military districts [ru]."

32. Stein, Tibetan Civilization, trans. by J.E. Stapleton Driver (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1972), 29-36 passim.

33. For a detailed discussion of this matter see chapter 3 above.

34. Snellgrove, Indo-Tibetan Buddhism, 362-64 passim. Pillars erected during the Mauryan Empire Period as monuments to the reigns of kings provide clues as to the extent of the boundaries of Mauryan rule. The first datable pillar is attributed to the era of Candragupta (335-76). Snellgrove rejects the idea that Ashoka visited Patna, however he accepts the idea that the Nepalese (the Newars lived there long enough to establish a cultural identity and they may be of Tibeto-Burman extraction). They were living there at least by the first century C.E. he states, but there is no reason not to assume they were there earlier.

35. T.R. Tregear, China: A Geographical Survey, (New York: Halstead press, 1980), 192.; See also Douglas, William O., Beyond the High Himalayas, (New York: Double Day & Company, Inc., 1952), passim. It has been shown by Tregear and William O. Douglas that even in this modern period these pathways have been well traveled by traders who have carried cloth including silks and brocades by pack animal. Tregear states, "In the case of distant places it would take nine to ten years for the entire circuit." Trading missions along the Tarim in many cases took years to complete. During Emperor Wu-ti's time, the largest

caravans included hundreds of people while the smaller ones numbered at least a hundred. The caravans included horses, donkeys, camels, and all necessary items required to care for them. Supplies also had to be replenished along the way by city-states who no doubt took advantage of travelers who could not obtain needed supplies anywhere else. In contrast the peoples living on the Plateau and within the surrounding mountain ranges were accustomed to walking long distances, using animal pack trains, and traversing rough terrain. These peoples of the mountainous regions would have been overly burdened by the complexity of the lifestyles adopted by those living on the plains and in intervening lower altitudes. The peoples of the mountains maintained a relatively simple lifestyle and their main mode of transport was either backpack or mule. Conceivably it was relatively easy to conceal and transport compact valuables, such as gold and jewels, across great distances with relative speed and at considerably less expense than by caravan.

36. Stein, Tibetan Civilization, 29-36 passim.

37. Tarn, The Greeks in Bactria, 107. Ancient legends mention ant's gold which came over the Hindu Kush and passed into India, through middlemen located between Siberia and the northwest of India.

38. Kenneth R. Storm, Jr., Joanna Van Gruisen and Nina Rao, Ladakh: The Secret Beyond the Himalayas (New Delhi: Lustre Press Pvt. Ltd., 1989), 9. Within this region, where it is probable that the Indo-Aryans first entered Tibet, are contained the upper courses of the Indus, the Sulej and the Tsangpo Rivers. In this western horn of the Tibetan Plateau, a number of routes made their way up from the Taxila and Peshawar area of northwestern India into the Tarim Basin and over the Himalayas and Karakoram Ranges. Passing through Srinagar and Leh to the cities of Yarkand, Khotan and Keriya in the Tarim Basin and northwest over the Hindu Kush to the Ferghana Valley and Transoxiana, these causeways leading to Kashmir and Ladakh, rapidly escalate from the plains of northwest India. Once the ascent has been made tracks and trails disseminate in a triad to the northeast, northwest and southeast. Mule tracks through the Zoji-la pass mark the road to the southeast to Dras and Srinagar from Leh providing relatively easy access between them almost year round. The northwestern roads lead to Ferghana and the northeastern to the Tarim.

Near Peshawar on the eastern side of the Indus, one of these tracks, traverses the Rohtang-la pass thru the Himalayas and crosses the Chenab River. The route then abruptly turns north east across the Zaskar Range through the Bara Lach-la Pass to Leh. While the south of Ladakh is riddled with foot trails leading up from the Indian Plain this road remains the most important

in terms of Tibet. At the Thagang-la pass, two-thirds of the way to Leh, the main road from Lhasa joins this route from the southeast. Reportedly in ancient times it took three months for the nomads of Chang Thang to cover the distance between Leh and Lhasa. While this intersection in ancient times had great importance as a trade route, however, it was not used only for trade. Military commanders, including Alexander the Great, often used the Zanskar- Bara Lacha-Chang Thang axis more frequently than the Zoji-la route over the Himalayas as a means to cross over the Hindu Kush to Ferghana and it is by this road that many fled up into this high mountainous area from the invaders below during tumultuous times, from India and Central Asia (9-10).

39. Smith, The Early History of India, 137. Pataliputra was founded during the reign of Ajātasatru in Magahda. He conquered Tirhut, occupying the region from the Ganges up into the Himalayas and its capital Vaisali. It is probable that the Lichchhavi clan, which occupied this region, were of Tibetan origins. Ajātasatru married one of their daughters. His son followed suit. The Lichchhavi clan remained a powerful royal family throughout the centuries into the Gupta period. Ajātasatru founded Pātali which later became Pataliputra. It is most probable that this clan was at this time connected to the Tsangpo River Valley region, since they were of Tibetan origins. Smith discusses the importance of the Hindu Kush as transfer point for gold. It is altogether possible since the gold came from Siberia, that it came across the Plateau through Golmund south to Yarlung; a much shorter route.; The Guyla and Ragba Passes lying to either side of Mt. Everest pierce the sharpest ridges of the Himalaya and separate Tibet from Nepal. Tracks and trails plunge rapidly from heights of 23,000 feet to 4000 ft. in the small space of approximately one hundred miles, and empty into the Kathmandu Valley in Nepal, the Gartok Valley in Sikkim, and the Thimpu in Bhutan and finally wend their way to the cities along the River Ganges. Singhal, India, 294.; See also Joel L. Swerdlow, "Burma" National Geographic (July 1995):185-6.

40. Sinor, History of Early Inner Asia, 39. The other side of the Ch'i Lien Mountains was home to the Yüeh-chih.

41. Singhal, India, 294; The Times Atlas of World History, 1984 ed., s.v. "The Commercial and Cultural Bonds of Asia," 70.

42. Watson, Records, 2:269.

43. Stein, Tibetan Civilization, 24.

44. Ying-shih Yu, Trade and Expansion in Han China: A Study in the Structure of Sino-Barbarian Economic Relations (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), 61.

45. Sir Mortimer Wheeler, The Indus Valley and Beyond (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1966), 142. Waldron reports that there was no fort at Lanchou during Ming times. It is doubtful that a fort during Han times was of much consequence other than as a trading post.

46. Stephen F. Sage, Ancient Sichuan and the Unification of China, ed. Harry Hamlin (New York: State University of New York Press, 1992), 18-34 passim. Sage tells us that pottery fragments show affinities with the second and third stages of the Min culture. Archeological material and the abundance of oracle bones mentioning both the Shu and the Ch'iang peoples together is also significant although absolute proof is lacking. Pre-historic texts support to the idea that Shu (Szechuan) lying to the south, was peopled by migrants from the Min Mountains in western Kansu intimating that they were of Ch'iang origins.

47. Loewe, History of China, 427.

48. Michael Loewe, Records of Han Administration (London: Cambridge University Press, 1967), 1:61. Michael Loewe reports that the commanderies really constituted no more than a string of posts along "armed causeways" in the northwest. The roads to the garrisons were dotted with watchtowers laying 1 - 1½ miles apart armed by only five or six men as late as 104 B.C.E. Only ten caravans a year traveled east guarded by several hundred men (53); The mountainous topography of Shu made control of the southern regions even more difficult. "Frontier garrison posts were dismantled and chieftains of the Qiang [Ch'iang], Za, Ran, Mang, and Siyu were accorded confirmation as imperial officials. . . . New commanderies might have been established but the regions hardly could be considered sinified. Non-Han leaders retained actual power and aboriginal populations stayed in place." Sage, Ancient Sichuan, 125, 189-90.

49. Pan Ku, The History of the Former Han Dynasty, A Critical Translation with Annotations by Homer H. Dubs (U.S.A.: The American Council of Learned Societies, 1944), 2:6:15b: 62. [121B.C.] Dubs states "An-ku was in the time of the Contending States, a city of the Western Ch'iang (81n.22.5); Dubs quotes the Hou Han shu 77:5b, "At this time the Hsien-ling Ch'iang and the tribe of Feng-yang-lao-tzu made up their feuds, bound themselves together by an oath, and communicated with the Hsiung-nu that they would join more than 100,000 of their troops [with them]. Together they attacked Ling-chü and An-ku and there upon besieged Fu-Han. The Han [Emperor] sent General Li Hsi and the Chief of

the Gentlemen-at-the-Palace, Hsü Tsu-wei, with 100,000 soldiers to attack and tranquilize them, and for the first time the Colonel Protecting the Ch'iang was established" (81n.22.6).

50. Loewe, History of China, 335.

51. Ibid., 428.

52. Sage, Ancient Sichuan, 168-69. Sage states, "Shu was more populous [than Ba], with 268,279 registered households comprising 1,245,929 persons in the year A.D. 1 when a census figure is available. A portion of Shu had been split off administratively by Liu Bang in 201 B.C.E. and governed as Guanghan Commandery. This was located north of Chengdu, on the main route to Sichaun. Culturally it remained a part of Shu. . . . Gaunghan commandery had thirteen counties including the administrative seat of Chengdu."

53. Times Atlas of World History, "Bonds of Asia," 4.

54. Tregear, China, 192. Tregear writes "There was comparatively little change either in the routes used or the vehicles passing over them during the 2000 years from the early Han dynasty [even earlier] to the beginning of the twentieth century."

55. Stein, Tibetan Civilization, 21.

56. Ibid., 25-26.

57. Thapar, A History of India, 74.

58. Tregear, China, 61.; Some historians question this route, however Chang Ch'ien mentioned it and it was this route he was sent to seek out. Singhal notes this route as active from at least the third century B.C.E. forward without question. Singhal, India, 294; See also Joel L. Swerdlow, "Burma" National Geographic (July 1995) 188:78.

59. Tregear, China, "China's Trade Routes", 192.

60. Sage, Ancient Sichuan, 189-90.

61. Watson, Records, 2:291.

62. Joel M. and Ester G. Maring, "Ethnic Groups," in Historical and Cultural Dictionary of Burma (Metuchen, N.J.: The Scarecrow Press, 1973).

There are over one hundred different indigenous ethnic groups and subgroups in Burma but only six of these groups are of major importance. The largest are the Burmese who make up about three-fourths of the population and live almost entirely in Burma proper. The other five : Karens, Kayah, Shans, Chins, and Kachins are concentrated in the frontier areas.; See also "Ethnolinguistics," (Ibid.) The majority of the Burmese population are of Sino-Tibetan stock which includes the Tibetan-Burman subgroups: Burmese, Naga, Chin, Kachin, Lahu, Akha, Achang, Hpon, Kadu, and Panthay) and the Karen.

63. Yu, Trade in Han China, 191.

64. Maring, Dictionary of Burma, see separate entries s.v.v. of "Burmese,": Naga, Chin, Kachin, Lahu, Akha, Achang, Hpon, Kadu, Panthay and the Karen subgroups and are associated with the Ch'iang. These groups are all of ancient origins predating the formation of the Chinese states. Thus, these peoples were not a product of the Chinese states, but they did contribute to its formation.

65. Christopher I. Beckwith, The Tibetan Empire in Central Asia: A History of the Struggle for Great Power among Tibetans, Turks, Arabs, and Chinese during the Early Middle Ages (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), 8. Beckwith suggests the kings that united Tibet in the seventh century and the Ch'iang of that era were of a different culture; Sinor believes they were the T'u-yü-hun, a Hsien-pi group, but the Hsien-pi did not come into the region until after the fall of the Hsiung-nu from power. Anyway the assessment is that they superimposed their rule over a Tibetan population. Since the Tibetan regions have always been referred to as areas of the Ch'iang there is no reason to suspect that in the early years any other people lived there and their lifestyle suggests that their culture was characteristic of the Ch'iang even in this later period. In the earlier period of discussion there is no reason to suspect any influences other than the Yüeh-chih in 165 B.C.E. when the Smaller Yüeh-chih joined with the Tibetans. While smaller groups may have achieved political power at certain periods the culture has always been Tibetan. Sinor, History of Early Inner Asia, 373.

66. Stein, Tibetan Civilization, 29.

67. Beckwith, The Tibetan Empire, 7n.10.

68. For a detailed discussion of this matter see chapter 2 above.

69. Watson, Records, 2:100-101.

70. Ibid., 268.

71. Ibid., 265.

72. Ibid., 266-67 passim.

73. Ibid., 269.

74. Ibid., 485.

75. For a detailed discussion of this matter see previous chapters above.

76. Tsepon W. D. Shakabpa, Tibet: A Political History (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1967), 6.

77. Watson, Records, 2:268; and Stein, Tibetan Civilization, 30-33 passim. Stein discusses intermarriages in the seventh century

78. Watson, Records, 2:268.

79. Shakabpa, Tibet, 6.

80. Stein, Tibetan Civilization, 27. During the seventh century expansion period of the Tibetan Empire the Tibetans were noted for having painted their faces with red ocher.

81. Ancient Tibet Research Materials, (Berkeley, 1986), 140. Two traditions exist as to the original ethnic makeup of the Tibetan people. The first is the belief that the Tibetans are of Aryan ancestry which we have already discussed. According to both Buddhist and Bon accounts, the lineage of Tibet's kings, is separate from the lineage of the tribes. The kings are said to have come from outside of Tibet.; The more popular Buddhist tradition states that the kings of Tibet can be traced back to the son of a noble family of Bihar, India. While the mythical nature of the story leaves much to be desired, an Aryan-Indian cultural influence is apparent. The son of a king, born with long blue eyebrows, a full set of teeth, and webbed fingers, was hidden by his father during his childhood out of shame. When the boy grew up it is reported that he traveled to Yarlung, Tibet where he met a number of people who were adherents of the Bon religion who, intrigued with his appearance asked where he had come from. The boy not understanding their questions shrugged his shoulders and pointed to the sky. The story continues that because the sky was holy to the people of the Bon they decided to make him their leader. They raised him up upon their necks and shoulders and carried him off to be ruler, naming him

Nyatri Tsenpo meaning "Neck-enthroned King." Tradition has it that he built the first Tibetan house at Yumbulagang, bringing the Tibetans out of their caves.; See also Shakabpa, Tibet, 23.

82. Giuseppe Tucci, The Religions of Tibet, trans. from German and Italian by Geoffrey Samuel, (Berkeley: University of California, 1970), 226-227.

83. Samten G. Karmay, editor and translator, The Treasury of Good Sayings (London Oriental Series Vol.26. London: Oxford University Press, 1972). This work is an excellent translation and source of Tibetan history and genealogy.

84. Snellgrove, Indo-Tibetan Buddhism, 386-92 passim.

85. Stein, Tibetan Civilization, 249.

86. Snellgrove, Indo-Tibetan Buddhism, 330-34 passim.

87. Ibid.

88. Thapar, A History of India, 74.

89. Snellgrove, Indo-Tibetan Buddhism, 332-34 passim.

90. Aurel M. Stein, Ruins of Desert Cathay, 2 vols. (London: MacMillan and Co., Limited, 1912), 1:271-77 passim, 280-91 passim, 293-95 passim, 379-86 passim, 458-59 passim. The pages listed contain descriptions of the Kharoshthi documents and the locations where they were found.

91. Snellgrove, Indo-Tibetan Buddhism, 332-34 passim.

92. Ibid.

93. Snellgrove, Indo-Tibetan Buddhism, 386-92 passim. Contained within the find are "scriptural canons" of the Bon which were first archived in the eight century and then rearranged in the fourteenth century by Putsön (Bu-ston) and others into two categories: the Kangyur (bKa'-'gyur) and the Tengyur (bsTan'-gyur). The works of the Kangyur contain the words of a buddha and consist of 108 volumes. The Tengyur consists of 225 volumes of commentaries on the Kangyur. Together they incorporate 4,569 works mostly relating to religious and philosophical themes. Another part of the find contains literature consisting of poems, hymns, prayers, plays, biographies, epics and collections of stories. Also existing are canonical texts, including adaptations of the Rāmāyana,

chronicles in epic style, songs, ancestral legends, Bonpo ritual texts, works of divination, medical drawings, administrative and commercial letters, judicial documents, aphorisms, adaptations of Chinese and Indian tales, Sino-Tibetan bilingual vocabularies and Chinese and Turkish foreign texts transcribed in Tibetan characters. See also Karmay, The Treasury of Good Sayings, xxxviii-xxxvix.

94. Karmay, The Treasury of Good Sayings, xxxiv.

95. Ancient Tibet Research Materials, (Berkeley, 1986), 119.

96. Ibid., 115.

97. Ibid.; See also Tucci, The Religions, 236-37. The twelve, the forty, and the twenty-five little states of the Tibetan pre-historic period fought among themselves, besides having constantly to fear invasion by outside groups. Each of the local rulers had power over a certain area and derived his given name from that area, with the blessing of the Bon. In these little states a number of powerful families ruled who traced their ancestry back to a heavenly ancestor who was often the god of a mountain. The power or the majesty (Tibetan: *mnga'thang*) of the ruler was indicated by the power or magnitude of the god. Each new king implemented a new government. He had his own Bonpo magician-priest who sat on his right, while another minister sat to his left, the left being of an inferior position.

98. Ancient Tibet Research Materials, (Berkeley, 1986): See the Bibliography of Ancient texts p.341: no pages cited and no dates of texts given.

99. Tucci, The Religions, 8-9. The new Buddhist monasteries posed a threat to the Bon hierarchy. They were financially independent from the civil government; they were supported by the king; Tucci asserts that the Tibetans invented these legends purely in order to establish themselves as a separate people with a distinct lineage from the Chinese during the time of first diplomatic contact in the seventh century A.D. (223).

100. Ancient Tibet Research Materials, (Berkeley, 1986), 145.

101. Ibid., 127.

102. Ibid., 129. A more complete listing may be obtained through a reading of 126-39 passim.

103. Ibid., 132.

104. Ibid., 133.

105. Ibid., 127-28.

106. Stein, Tibetan Civilization, 230-31. R.A. Stein identifies several stages in the growth of Bon power. He identifies the first influx with Nyatri (prior 150 B.C.E.), the first king, who "was welcomed by Bonpos of various clans and districts." He suggests that Nyatri actually entered as one who had subjugated a Bonpo of the Sumpa nation. At that period he asserts "the religion of the Gods," Bon had its beginnings; Bonpo and kingly ambitions became intertwined as each served the other in a rise to power. The next stage, Stein ascribes to the time of King Trigum and his three sons, especially Chatrī. During this time he suggests that Bonpo power increased to the point that the Bonpo's services became indispensable to the legitimization of power. It was under Trigum, that the Bonpos arrived from Tasik (Iran) and the Ashas (Turko-Mongols of Koko Nor) whose specialty was "to worship the gods for the living and subdue the demons for the dead." A second source states that a "heretic" (*mu-stegs*) Bonpo was invited at the time called Asha who was a native of Gurnawatra on the borders of India and Iran. These Bonpos were accorded various talents and were brought for the burial; one, a master of fire and earth, another a master of divination, and still another a master of funeral rites.

107. Tucci, The Religions, 126-39 passim. Tucci attempts at least a partial analysis.

108. See Karmay, The Treasury of Good Sayings, passim.; R.A. Stein, Tibetan Civilization, 230. Historians have assumed that the Bon religion is the indigenous religion of Tibet, but that assertion must remain questionable. Studies suggest that it came entirely from Central Asia and mixed with an ancient folklore. Much of what is known historically about the Bon religion itself, comes from Buddhist texts of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries C.E. and very little from the Tunhuang manuscripts of the ninth and tenth centuries. There are reasons to believe that Bon was only one of a handful of similar religions prior to Buddhism and that it gained ascendancy over others as a matter of course due to political relationships with the Royal family. From the earliest texts onward, Bon and the Bonpos (the priests) are tied up with legends and deities not found within the Buddhist religion. Either Bon or Bod is "quite consonant with the laws of the Tibetan language and such a form is found in the early manuscripts," states Stein. The Bonpo chronicles of the fifteenth century C.E. call Tibet Bon rather than Bod, the name assigned to the Tsangpo River Valley today; The

traditions and ceremonies may be associated with regions other than those of Tibet. The writers of the doctrine were very careful to include characteristics that could be identified with their land of origin. While the Bonpo religion has been coined as indigenous to Tibet, it must also be remembered that the area of the Bonpo religion extended past today's present borders. Zhang-zhung, today pertains to west Tibet, but in earlier times it referred to a region much larger extending from the west of the country to the north and north-east. Other influences of Iranian origin, may be seen. The Bon believe in an invisible ultimate God of all, while Gnostic elements of dualism may be found in the concepts of opposing forces of good and evil. Evidence supports the theory that Bonpo territory included areas of Iran and Afghanistan and as we have seen the Bonpo masters mentioned in the sources appeared to have previously arrived from various places, primarily from regions to the east of Tibet. Tucci, The Religions of Tibet, 214, 222; Dupree reports that at Batra (probably near modern Balkh), Alexander ordered the Zoroastrians to close down their "Towers of Silence (dakhmas)" on which the "Parsees exposed their dead to be devoured by carrion birds." This ritual is still practiced by some Tibetans. Dupree, Afghanistan, 279.

109. Stein, Tibetan Civilization, 54.

110. Tucci, The Religions, 3-4.

111. Ibid., 241. They dressed in white for their religious ceremonies and also included women in their rituals.

112. Ibid.

113. Ibid., 232.

114. Ancient Tibet Research Materials, (Berkeley, 1986), 105.

115. Ibid.; Tucci, The Religions, 236. Tucci says according to "Chinese sources," The old Tibetans "were objects of contempt, the mother had to greet the son and the son had pre-eminence over the father; when entering or leaving the young went first and the old followed." This idea in itself marks a cultural distinction between the Tibetans and the Chinese that is irrefutable, for the Confucian Chinese in the ideological sense would have rejected such a notion, since regard for age and wisdom is inherent within the Confucian philosophical system.

116. Tucci, The Religions, 3.

117. Ancient Tibet Research Materials, (Berkeley, 1986), 154.

118. *Ibid.*, 154-57 passim. According to Tibetan accounts, Drigum Tsenpo the last of the sky kings had his rope cut in a battle with his evil minister, Lo-ngam, who it said then usurped the throne and married the dead king's queen. The account continues, that Chatri, the heir, fled into exile with his brothers. The story asserts that he became the "White Prince of Kong-Po" (154). This legend establishes a linkage with the Mongols through the Bonpos which predates the era of the Mongol dynasty, and it is important to note, that a subsidiary relationship is established by the fact that it was the youngest brother of the Tibetan king that became the White Prince. This mythical story also tells us of a magical child, Ru-la-skyes (meaning Arisen From A Horn) who was born to Chatri's mother after his flight into exile(153). This child was said to have been conceived by a being of light, born in a lump of blood and raised in a yak horn by his mother and is credited with restoring Chatri to the throne. This story becomes the basis for justification of the rule of a hereditary line of earthly kings, with a hereditary line of Bonpos at their sides, for this king and his minister were both born of the same mother whose life became a sacrifice for the country. While the story is mythical in nature it is nevertheless filled with religious significance, specific to establishing the independence of the Tibetan peoples. Chatri's name is reported to have been received in a vision by his mother while she was in prayer; his name means "for the success of the kingdom," while the name sPu-de-gung-rgyal, taken by Chatri at the time of his enthronement, means "This Son Will Be the Best [king]" (154). Ru-la-skyes is the result of a magical conception; he is born of a the god Yar-lha-sham-po who came to the queen a dream in the form of a shining white man. The story confirms the Queen mother as worthy of bearing a kingly child by the fact that she sacrifices herself. When she finds herself pregnant again this time by Lo-gnam the evil minister, she kills herself to secure the throne, ending the hereditary earthly line of Lo-gnam, and securing the line of the magical Ru-la-skyes, who assists Chatri and becomes, the first of a line of six hereditary Bonpos who serve the next six Kings who are also descendants of Chatri. From that time forward the records show that all ministers and all kings and queens came from Bon families (*Ibid.*); See also Shakabpa, Tibet, 24. Tsepon Shakabpa, a Tibetan historian states that Ssanang Setzen, a Mongolian chronicler and author of Mongol Khadun Toghudji, traces the Mongol royal lineage to one of these sons, the youngest, who is said to have fled to the land of the Bede people, who lived near the Baikal Sea and the mountain Birchen Khalduna.

119. *Ibid.*, 155-58 passim. The installation of Chatri began a new era in Tibetan history, for thereafter, the kings came from earth and became bound to

the earth and therefore required burial. The first six kings and ministers are credited with a rapid advancement of Tibetan culture. According to the records, under their administration charcoal and the means of working with gold, silver, copper, and iron were developed and agriculture was improved through the introduction of yokes for harnessing horses combined with more efficient irrigation methods. "According to some accounts, sPu-de-gung-rgyal was a contemporary of Wu-ti, Emperor of the Former Han dynasty who reigned 140-85 B.C.E." (158). During this time the Bonpos became indispensable aides to the rulers. They forecasted events through divination and performed rituals to please the spirits of other realms. They officiated at special rites for the dead and institutionalized the rituals for enthronement, marriages and the installation of court members. Specific ceremonies were also created during this time for the yearly celebrations, the remnants of which may still be seen today. The formulation of such rituals and customs was accompanied by the development of a Bon philosophical system for the purpose of justifying their power whether oral or written. Portions of one doctrine in particular in the gShen-po-che "foreshadowed the Buddhist teachings of Vinyaya and Abhidharma," states Tulku (155).

120. Tucci, The Religions, 227.

121. Ancient Tibet Research Materials, (Berkeley, 1986), 158-60 passim. The kings following Pu-de-gung-rgyal, came to be called the "Six Legs" (ca.50 B.C.E.) and the "Eight IDe (ca.100.C.E.)." The Six Legs were called the "Six Good Ones of the Earth" (158). The Tibetan records attribute advances made in agriculture, water works and government to them. Upon their death they were buried in the middle of mountain slopes or on high rocky peaks. The next eight kings called the Eight IDe were the last kings to marry goddess-like women and were the last to be known as the Sons of Gods. Some sources say that they were buried in the rivers, but little information exists about them other than that mothers of these kings were said to have been deities who left no corpse at all. The following five kings, "The Five Btsan Kings" (ca.300 C.E.) were known as the "Powerful Ones" (159). Each was given the title of Mighty One and the mention of "many great ministers" is attributed to these early times. "The Tun-huang documents extol them as unusual and powerful men" with "sharp eyes . . . who knew men's hearts" (160).

122. Ancient Tibet Research Materials, (Berkeley, 1986), 146. By Tibetan accounts, The Six legs, the Eight IDe, and the Five bTsans appear to have ruled between the second centuries B.C.E. and the fifth centuries C.E.

123. Ibid., 147.

124. Ibid., 167. Eighteen generations after sPu-de-gung-rgyal, lHa-tho-tho-ri Nyantsen became the twenty-eighth king according to Buddhist tradition, and the first according to Tibetan histories to introduce Buddhism. At the age of sixty he is reported to have received a book of Buddhist scriptures in Sanskrit, that he could not read. On that day the sky was full of rainbows and beautiful heavenly music could be heard; a casket is said to have descended in a "rain of flowers" onto the roof of the castle at Yum-bu-bla-sgang. The text reportedly was written on golden leaves with lapis lazuli ink and the "OM MANI PADME HUM" carved on "precious stones twelve inches high." Although the date and details of this event is debatable, the Tibetans date their currency according to the appearance of the book, which they place at 233 C.E., a date relatively coincident with the advance of the Persians into Central Asia; See also, Shakabpa, Tibet, 25.

Chapter 5

The Tibetans, the Kushana and Han China: 200 B.C.E.-200 C.E.

The preceding chapters established that a proto-Tibetan civilization initially formed on the Tsinghai-Tibetan Plateau circa the third century before the common era. While the elements for such an assertion were drawn from a variety of studies, the premise was drawn primarily from the Chinese annals of the Han and the locations of the proto-Tibetans, as supplied by the descriptions of Ss-uma Ch'ien and Tibetan histories. The process of discovery required first, a suspension of belief in the orthodox premises, held by most Western and Chinese historians, that the Ch'in and Han Chinese empires dominated western China and that Han Chinese founded China. Secondly, an adoption of a Tibetan perspective was necessary; this entailed the possibility that early kingdoms, tribal republics and clan and tribal associations could have formed on the Tsinghai-Tibetan Plateau earlier than western historians believe.

The process of adopting this perspective revealed that the perseverance of the proto-Tibetans of the Tsinghai-Tibetan Plateau, especially at the periphery advanced the growth of the proto-Tibetan culture from 200 B.C.E. through the second century of the common era. While the lists of the kings and tribes may

be a partial fabrication, they do not rule out the existence of small kingdoms, tribal republics, and subcultures across the Tsinghai-Tibetan regions prior to the second century. In conjunction with the communities of the Plateau regions, Tibetan tribes and cultures built a trading network that connected the civilizations of the four corners of the Plateau. On the eastern and northern edges Ch'iang tribes blocked the way to Chinese expansion along the trade routes. Simultaneously they halted the advances of both the Chinese and the Hsiung-nu onto the Plateau and into the Western regions. The historical period documenting the events of the Han period begins with the founding of the Ch'in dynasty.

The Ch'in Empire located in the Wei River Valley set the stage for a new era, and offered great riches to its trading partners. At this time the proto-Tibetan Ch'o Ch'iang tribes living along the Kun Lun Mountains held alliances with the Yüeh-chih, who controlled the eastern end of the Takla Makan and the entrance to the northwest of China through the Kansu Corridor, while other proto-Tibetan Ch'iang tribes living on the eastern edge of the Tsinghai-Tibetan Plateau dominated access to the trade routes of western China and Southeast Asia. During the initial expansion of the Ch'in, Ch'iang tribes living furthest to the west of China became the new mediators of trade. As a result, the territories of the Ch'iang, through which flowed the Jade Route, became the main thoroughfare for the conveyance of trade goods between Central Asia and

China. Ultimately the Ch'iang became the primary trading link between the Eurasian community and the proto-Tibetan people living on the Tsinghai-Tibetan Plateau.

The ventures of the many tribes of proto-Tibetans can be partially traced through a closer examination of the events occurring during this period, primarily in the northwest and west of present day China. But the historical evidence of the participation of the proto-Tibetans in the trading community must be inferred, primarily through interpretation of the sporadic references in the Han annals. The annals note a continuous presence of the Ch'iang tribes along the western borders of China at key locations through which trade routes passed, including the southern Jade Route. They also note an expansion period, during which the proto-Tibetan populations, especially the Ch'iang tribes, exploded to dominate almost completely the northwest of China toward the end of the Han. The annals do not elaborate on the history of the proto-Tibetans on the Tsinghai-Tibetan Plateau except for one short reference regarding the Fa Ch'iang, a group with which, they state, the Chinese never had contact.¹

Meanwhile, the annals bear out the Ch'iang's reputation as traders. The larger Ch'iang tribes, as shall be seen, found the profits of trading more beneficial than the *ho-chin* system. This *ho-chin* system was established in ancient times as a means of satisfying the demands of nomadic tribes for lands, gold and trade goods; payments were normally made on a yearly basis. In many

instances, especially in the case of the Hsiung-nu, satisfaction also included the hand of a Chinese princess in marriage. While records exist of consistent payments made to the Hsiung-nu to obtain peace, only a very few records exist reporting such payments to the Ch'iang.² The annals claim the Han subdued the Ch'iang, but the viewpoint of the Ch'iang was assuredly different. It seems clear that the Ch'iang perceived Chinese territorial grants, titles and treaties as respectful honors accompanying trade agreements, rather than as subjection to the Chinese government. As the years progressed and as the Ch'iang came to understand the Chinese point of view, their cooperation became difficult to obtain. Proto-Tibetan tribes began moving into the Kansu Corridor after the Hsiung-nu ejected the Yüeh-chih in 165 B.C.E. Ultimately, proto-Tibetan occupation of the west prevented the advance of Chinese civilization and allowed the Tsinghai-Tibetan Plateau peoples to continue the process of melding together, both politically and culturally. An examination of the era suggests that while Former and Later Han Dynasties claimed that they had control of the west of China, they had only as much jurisdiction as the Ch'iang allowed them, with the exception of the period under the reign of Wu-ti (141-87 B.C.E.).

Difficulties with the tribes and trading relationships, as we have seen, had been a continuing theme in China throughout the period of the Chou states.³ In 221 B.C.E. the Ch'in established their capital at Hsien-yang and in a serious

attempt to become masters of the region, they dislodged the Ti and the Jung tribes from the northwest of China. By 214 B.C.E. the first continuous Great Wall was completed, firmly demarcating a line between Hsiung-nu territories and the Chinese Empire. This wall created a military barricade between the Ch'in and the Hsiung-nu, who resided to the north of the Ordos on the steppes, and also cleared a space between the Wei River Valley and the eastern Plateau regions. This expanse was an area below the Great Wall through which trade could pass easily without interference from the Hsiung-nu and encompassed generally the areas of present day Shansi and eastern Kansu. The annals report fortresses were also built along the Yellow River, while troops cleared the region of the ancient tribal peoples with whom the Chinese had traded for centuries.⁴

The new Ch'in capital was designed to be both the military and economic center around which the newly united Chinese states revolved.⁵ Evidence of the enormous amount of trade flowing into this region is noted in the Han shu. The Chinese historian Ssu-ma reports that in Ch'in times this area east of the Hanku Pass was noted to be ten times richer than the rest of the empire, while in Han times, he reveals, many of the generals who supported the first Han emperor Kao-tsi were merchants. Many of these merchants had been intermediaries between the ruling houses of the Chou states and the Ti tribes in the prior period.⁶ During this era, the Ch'iang entered the picture as a group of tribes

evidently preferred as trading partners to the Hsiung-nu.⁷ In the following years, trade entered China primarily through the Jade Route controlled by the Ch'o-Ch'iang tribes and the Yüeh-chih while the Hsiung-nu merely collected tribute.

Relatively few exploits against the Ch'iang are recorded in this early Han period, although the annals mention that they existed in great numbers. We can only assume the lack of reference is due to the existence of a comparatively peaceful relationship between the Chinese and the Ch'iang, which we may safely suppose included an alliance and agreements. While the building of the Great Wall has been portrayed as in the best interests of the Chinese, it should also be noted that it served the Ch'iang as well. The wall was a means of eliminating the tribes, who had posed barriers to direct contact between the merchant-generals of the Chinese and the Ch'iang tribes to the west. The presence of the Ch'iang in the region had prevented Hsiung-nu invasions into the Kansu-Tsinghai regions and Lanchou. Lanchou was a major center of trade whose dual routes stretched to both Hsien-yang to the east and Shu to the south. It is probable that the removal of the tribes from the Ordos was in the financial interest of both the Ch'in and the Ch'iang. But to whom did these lands now belong? While the Chinese patrolled this region and set up garrisons, these appear to have been no more than trading posts during both the Ch'in and Early Han period. Chinese military manpower appears to have been for the most part confined to the Wei River Valley and the barricades. The large

numbers of Ch'iang seemed to have roamed through these cleared territories at will even while the annals report that large numbers of Chinese people were relocated into the region from other parts of the empire. These imported people however, were mostly prisoners of war. They were kept under guard and put to work in specific locations, thus they did not settle willingly or freely, nor were their numbers spread out into the northwestern territories.⁸

Evidence for the assertion that Chinese possession of the lands was only tenuous begins with an examination of the location of the Great Wall, successive events in relationship to the building of it, and consideration of the location of peoples living along the trade routes in the region the wall protected. The Shih chi reports that the Ch'in General Meng T'ien focused on clearing the land in the regions of the Ordos. The major portion of the Great Wall essentially demarcated Chinese lands from the expanding Hsiung-nu territories and incorporated former Jung cities and tribal lands.⁹ Though the Wall extended to Lanchou, it did not cut off the southern trade routes of the Ch'iang. It extended in a northeastern direction from the Kansu Corridor across the Ordos, while a north-south extension reached to Min-hsien, only one-hundred miles to the south of Lanchou. While the wall created a protective barrier for Chinese land routes it did not cut off trade, or interfere with Ch'iang trade.¹⁰

Both Min-hsien and Lanchou could be reached through the Kansu Corridor or more safely along a route descending southwest from Miran through

the Tsaidam Basin within Ch'iang territory. The Tsaidam road lay protected behind the Ch'i Lien Mountains, which were occupied by the Yüeh-chih tribes on its northern face.¹¹ The Yüeh-chih were noted in the Chinese annals to have been both long-term allies of the Ch'iang and frequent travelers to the courts of the Chinese Empire as early as circa 1000 B.C.E.¹² The location of the Great Wall, cutting across the Kansu Corridor, prevented invasions of Hsiung-nu into ancient Ch'iang territory as much as it prevented invasions into Chinese lands. This allowed the Yüeh-chih, the Ch'ang, and the Chinese to cooperate with one another for the continuance of trade along the southern route with less interference from the Hsiung-nu. They could direct trade into the Tsaidam Basin at Miran and channel it to Lanchou at the southern mouth of the Kansu Corridor or choose to travel through the corridor.

The removal of the tribes from the Ordos brought the Ch'iang into direct contact with the Chinese, but possession of the former lands of Jung and the Ti was apparently still at issue. The wall formed a boundary to ward off the attacks of the Hsiung-nu and protected Lanchou, but hardly prevented association with the Ch'iang or the movement of trade into the region. It appears that the Ch'iang and the Ch'in had formed some sort of an alliance in order to fend off the Hsiung-nu, who were increasingly becoming more powerful, and that the alliance included the elimination of the Ti as an intermediary between them.¹³

At this time, the Yüeh-chih, located in western Kansu, held the Ch'i Lien

Mountains, west of Tunhuang, and the cities of Turfan, Kara Shahr and Kucha along the northern trade route of the Tarim Basin, while the Ch'iang controlled the Jade Route on the southern edge of the Takla Makan, incorporating the ancient cities of Yarkand, Khotan, Niya, and Miran, the town furthest to the east in the kingdom of Loulan. The principal territories of the Hsiung-nu, meanwhile, had been expanding since the third century. They had taken over a large area located between Lake Baikal stretching throughout inner and outer Mongolia to the northern borders of Hopei, Shensi, and Shansi, where they had begun the process of subjecting neighboring tribes. Thus, they were becoming a tangible threat to the Yüeh-chih as well as to the Ch'iang and the Chinese.

The Ch'in state and the Ch'iang were now face to face with a large Hsiung-nu nomadic state to the north that was intent upon taking over both Chinese territory and the Ordos in order to gain control of the trade.¹⁴ A Ch'iang alliance with the Yüeh-chih facilitated joint control by both tribes of the passage of trade from the whole of the eastern Takla Makan, while the Hsiung-nu and subject tribes, including the Wu-sun, controlled the northwest of the Takla Makan and the trade route on the northern side of the T'ien Shan.¹⁵ The tribes, cleared from the region by Meng T'ien had been located midway between the Ch'in and the Ch'iang and had access to the Kansu Corridor. Had they been large enough in number, they would have been able to control the flow of trade through the Kansu Corridor. As it was, they were squeezed between the new

Ch'in Empire, the Yüeh-chih, and the Ch'iang, who sought to protect their trading prerogatives from the rapidly expanding Hsiung-nu. A calculated takeover of the Kansu Corridor was unavoidable if these peoples living south of the steppes were to maintain control over the region, but whether or not the Chinese actually gained control over the area for any length of time is questionable. The region to the west had primarily belonged to the Ch'iang tribes. A complete takeover by the Chinese would have incited the Ch'iang to rebel, but no such rebellion is recorded at this time.

The capital of Hsien-yang built by Shih-Huang-ti, the first emperor of China (221 B.C.E.), probably exceeded in extravagance anything imaginable to the tribes of the Ch'iang, the Yüeh-chih or the Hsiung-nu living on the frontier.¹⁶ While the Ch'in solidified the core of the empire at Hsien-yang and expanded its boundaries to the north and south, the northwest beyond the Great Wall and to the west of Hsien-yang remained untouched except for an occasional military campaign against marauders.¹⁷ The fact that this region was not occupied totally by the Chinese, at a time when it was certainly appropriate, suggests that the area was still recognized by the Ch'in as land belonging to the proto-Tibetan peoples. That this territory was considered beyond the domain of the Ch'in is confirmed by the actions of Shih-Huang-ti. The Emperor made five "Imperial Progresses" during which it was usual to make sacrifices at specified locations of sanctity within the Empire.¹⁸

The first progression into the western borderlands was made in 220 B.C.E., "proceeding from Hsien-yang, three hundred miles west to modern Kansu (south of Lanchou)"¹⁹ and then northeast along the Great Wall and back to the capital. However, no record was made of a sacrifice in the regions between the Ch'in boundaries and the Plateau regions, the land of the proto-Tibetan tribes. In the emperor's four subsequent progressions sacrifices were made at a total of six places, including locations in the Shantung Peninsula and as far south as Yüeh, but again no sacrifices were made beyond the wall or in the vicinity of Lanchou or Kansu.²⁰ The lack of a sacrifice in this region, further suggests, that the Ch'iang were in possession of the northwest of China and indicates the probability that some kind of conciliatory arrangement existed between the Ch'in and the Ch'iang that did not exist between the Chinese and the Hsiung-nu. A sacrifice, had it been made, would have amounted to an imperial claim of the territory as part of the empire.²¹ Such a sacrifice occurred during the reign of Wu-ti in this very region.²² The event was immediately followed by an uprising of the Ch'iang tribes. Instead it would appear that while the Emperor was assuredly making a *tour de force* and surveying the territory, he probably had no wish to antagonize the Ch'iang at this time, nor lay permanent claim to their territories.²³

The establishment of the subsequent Han Dynasty in 195 B.C.E. did not significantly alter the state of affairs in this region either. In 210 B.C.E., the

death of the First Emperor of China also heralded the death of the Ch'in Empire and any control the Ch'in may have gained to the west of Hsien-yang.²⁴ The reign of Shih-Huang-ti's son, Erh-shih Huang-ti, lasted but a few years.²⁵ During the interim between the Ch'in and Han dynasties China had been divided and redivided into no less than eighteen kingdoms, while any organization in the Northwest had been almost completely abandoned and the lands resettled by two of the three major contenders for the region: the Ch'iang in the west and the Hsiung-nu tribes in the north. Liu Pang was successful in securing the Kuan-chung area within the Wei River Valley by 206 B.C.E. and he also organized commanderies extending to the north and northwest into Kansu, but as noted earlier, real authority hardly extended beyond garrison walls.

In the meantime the Chinese, the Ch'iang, and the Yüeh-chih were all feeling pressure from the Hsiung-nu, who apparently were relentless in their attacks. During the early Han period, the Hsiung-nu were able to force the Chinese into semi-submission through the institution of the *ho-chin* system, a situation that lasted until the Hsiung-nu civil war one hundred years later (60-54 B.C.E.).²⁶ The fact that the Chinese were forced into accepting these conditions at this early point reinforces the idea that the Hsiung-nu were not yet engaged in productive trading within the region and that the Ch'iang and the Yüeh-chih were the main purveyors of goods into China in this period. The *ho-chin* system hardly provided in tribute what could have been reaped through trade although

the amount apparently increased year by year.

The organization of the Early Han empire also supports the rationale that alliances were made between the Ch'iang and the Chinese. While by 195 B.C.E. the eastern two-thirds of the empire was under the rule of kings owing allegiance to Kao-ti (202-195 B.C.E.), the first emperor of the Early Han dynasty (202 B.C.E.-9 C.E.), the kingdoms were ultimately controlled by royal families of the ancient kingdoms of the Chou period who had been dissatisfied with the oppressive rule of the Ch'in. The governments of these kingdoms were redesigned to be replicas of the central imperial government. They were required to collect taxes, render homage annually and furnish troops when necessary; however, they were not allowed to mobilize troops without express orders from the Imperial government. They were under tight control, but this was not the case in the west.

In the west, sixteen commanderies were set up and populated, especially in the outer regions, by Ch'iang and Hsiung-nu peoples, many of whom had assisted Kao-ti in his rise to power. The sixteen commanderies formed the entire western portion of the empire and included the Ordos, the Kansu Corridor, the eastern Tsinghai regions, and the Ch'eng-tu Plain. The Han capital, Chang-an, was strategically located in the midst of these kingdoms and sixteen commanderies and was protected on all sides by loyalist troops in smaller commanderies under the control of central authorities with significant ties to the

court. The outer regions in the north and northwest held few Chinese people and were dominated primarily by the tribal peoples of the nomadic states.²⁷ In fact, imperial support was so negligible that some officials living in commanderies, even near the capital, lived in abject fear of assassination, while the commanderies to the north of the capital provided at most a negligible military buffer between Chang-an and the nomadic tribes. Apparently the nomadic tribes roamed through the northwest of China as freely as they had in the past while the government lived in constant fear of attack. With so little Chinese military protection on the northern border alliances were the only means for long-term survival, therefore the Chinese court again became reliant upon the method of using *barbarians to fight barbarians*.²⁸

Lack of court control in the majority of the commanderies beyond the military buffer was significant. These outer commanderies ultimately came under the control of military and civil administrative officials belonging to a hierarchy, graded according to meritorious military service earned during the formation of the empire, but not effectively controlled by the Han court. Many of these officials were "*barbarians*" of doubtful loyalties. The commanderies were subdivided into counties (*hsien*), including a number of "appanages" awarded to persons with the title of *hou*. These lands are sometimes called marquisates by Chinese historians. The marquises were second in rank only to the rulers of kingdoms in a series of twenty degrees of "peerage" awarded by the emperor to

his supporters. The marquises held predominant power within the commanderies and reigned over the court officials. By circa 195 B.C.E. the marquises numbered at least 150.²⁹ A list of entries shows that these marquises were hereditary, the title passing from generation to generation, from father to son, until the lines died out. Over time the titles became very important in establishing the holders' worthy place in the empire (the Later Han followed a similar policy).³⁰ In many cases gold and silk accompanied the bestowal of these ranks. Honorary titles such as king, marquis, and other such designations were frequently given to the chieftains of "*barbarian*" tribes in attempts to induce cooperation with the desires of the Chinese court. In such cases the historical record claims that chieftains *surrendered* to the empire, but the bestowal of these gifts and titles actually constituted the equivalent of payments for loyalty. Especially where the tribes were concerned, they were bribes and their recipients' loyalty to the empire remained suspicious.³¹

The tribes seemed to have maintained the upper hand, especially in the outer provinces, but Han control of the inner provinces closer to the capital was also limited.³² A voluntary reduction of control by the Chinese court, in an attempt to quell tribal pressures, occurred during eight general amnesties between 180-141 B.C.E. Only a few years after the establishment of the Former Han punishments involving mutilation were abolished and taxes were reduced.³³ Evidence of Han titles being awarded to Ch'iang tribesmen is provided by

Panku, who describes the Chief Commandant of the Ch'iang Calvary as leading "the Ch'iang King, marquises, baronets, chiefs, and their subordinates" into battle against "rebellious caitiffs of Yi Province (77 B.C.E.)."³⁴ The tribesmen who received such titles no doubt perceived them differently than did the court that bestowed them. It is hard to believe that the *barbarians* suddenly bent their knees to the emperors of China in light of the control they had in the region. While the court saw the titles and awards of land as a gift, it seems certain that the nomads perceived them to be an acknowledgment of their rightful standing in their own communities.

In later years, the Han were forced to acknowledge Ch'iang territories as *dependent states*. The earliest *dependent state* of the Ch'iang was recognized in Chin-ch'eng in 60 B.C.E. By the Later Han, Ch'iang *states* "existed in at least five" areas, through which flowed major trade routes into China (fig. 3). These states, as noted earlier, are listed in the Hou Han shu as Shang-chün (in the Ordos), Chang-l (Kansu), An-ting (Kansu), Kuang-han (in Szechuan), and Chien-wei (Szechuan).³⁵ Large numbers of Ch'iang also existed in other commanderies. In 94 C.E., the annals record that in Shu-chün the Great Ts'ang-l tribe, numbering half a million people, *surrendered* to the governor of I-Chou (Szechuan), as inner subjects (*nei-shu*). In 107 and 108 C.E., another 55,180 Ch'iang of fourteen different tribes of the Ts'an-lang became inner subjects in the Kuang-han commandery (north of I-Chou). This large scale

movement has been attributed to population pressures, but the Ch'iang had been gradually occupying the garrisoned lands since the beginning of the century.³⁶ Many of the more powerful chieftains paid tribute to the Han court; however, they were also bestowed with titles, gold and silks. The existence of *dependent states* in certain key areas where trade routes entered China seems to have occurred due to the need of the Chinese to maintain conciliatory relationships with the Ch'iang. They were major purveyors of the trade goods the state had become dependent upon, while they also provided the major buffer between the Chinese and the Hsiung-nu. And though these tribes were designated as having *surrendered*, and their states as *dependent* it does not appear that the terms accurately describe the situation.

These areas became designated as *dependent states* through various processes. At the beginning of the Han dynastic periods "the largest territories consisted of as many as five or six provinces, comprising twenty or thirty cities . . . [O]n their outer borders these provinces adjoined the lands of the northern and southern barbarians." The majority of the states on the northern borders were in the hands of various feudal lords.³⁷ While the cities themselves were well garrisoned from invaders, the open spaces outside the perimeters of the city walls remained under the control of the local tribes. It is unclear if any Ch'iang lords occupied these cities; however, we can be sure the Ch'iang had a personal stake in the maintenance and continuance of these cities as markets for trade,

that they controlled the territories surrounding them, and that they dominated the roads leading up to them.³⁸

That this trade was profitable and that the lands remained nomadic territory is partially demonstrated by the fact that during this early period agricultural concerns had not yet been established to any great degree in the northwest of China. The absence of a demand for farmland as late as 135 B.C.E. indicates that the acquisition of trade goods and food stuffs were still of paramount importance and preferred to formal land ownership. The Han Chinese devised several forms of political arrangements based on the premise that the tribes had surrendered, but as stated earlier, it is doubtful that the tribes perceived these as anything other than trade and treaty arrangements. Titles and material inducements were an age old means of negotiating peace with powerful tribes. "As for the common peoples, they were concerned primarily with whatever material gains they could get from China,"³⁹ thus Chinese officials were not above making offerings of foodstuffs and goods to wrest them away from their leaders. The annals also indicate that settling tribes in specific territories was difficult. One official suggested that China focus on agricultural production rather than commerce so that the court might have "full granaries and surplus cloths and silks to attract barbarians to surrender," but the tribes at that time were simply not interested in forming permanent agricultural communities.⁴⁰

Lack of consistent Han control over the tribes is also apparent by the fact

that tribes, when they did settle, settled where and when they wished. The sources indicate that many of the larger tribes were especially difficult to deal with. One Chinese official, T'ang Meng, was able to gain the cooperation of the Ch'iang Yeh-lang tribe of the Koko Nor region by "lavishing imperial gifts on them," but this note hardly suggests that the Yeh-lang tribe, who moved about their own ancestral lands at will, were conquered by the Chinese. Even though the sources describe the event as a *surrender*, there is no indication of Ch'iang subjection by force, rather the annals state they moved onto the land without the foreknowledge of the Chinese and against Chinese objection.⁴¹

The Chinese appear to have been at a disadvantage militarily and economically. An example of this Chinese lack of control over the region was demonstrated by the incident in which forty thousand Hsiung-nu were settled in five states in 121 B.C.E. They were extremely demanding and the emperor gave of his own apparently inadequate stores to secure the peace:

. . . all received liberal rewards, and they looked to the central government *hsien-kuan* for clothes and food. As the central government had not sufficient [for them], the Son of Heaven restricted [the cost of] imperial food; he left off use of the state equipage with four horses [of matched color]; and he gave from his own supplies . . . in order to provide for the deficiency.⁴²

Other examples of military and economic disadvantages may be noted by the fact that during the Han dynastic periods, the Chinese made a distinction between the lands that were completely Chinese, those that were extensively

populated by tribes, those closer to the capital where a Chinese majority lived, and those provinces at the periphery of the empire. Provinces in the interior of China were called *nei-chun (kuo)* or “inner provinces,” while those that lay on the perimeter were defined as *wai-chun (kuo)* or outer provinces.”⁴³ An-ting, Pei-ti, Shang-chün, Lung-hsi and Chin-ch’eng were all designated as outer provinces; however, only Chin-ch’eng lay outside the wall. All of these provinces held large numbers of Ch’iang. As mentioned earlier, the designations *dependent* or *surrendered* did not always identify the political status of the nomads either; nomads both inside and outside the frontier provinces could be peaceful or rebellious.⁴⁴

Those tribes that the Han designated as *surrendered*—*who had made peace with them*—were also called “*frontier guarding barbarians*.” They were defined as “those [nomads] who had already been *dependents* of Han and lived along the frontier to guard themselves.”⁴⁵ In reality these tribes were those who had been engaged in trade and living on the edges of the empire for centuries. At this time these tribes were actually extracting payment from the Chinese to keep invaders off their own ancestral lands.⁴⁶ The arrangements suggest that the Chinese garrisons were continually in a precarious position. A number of astute generals no doubt took advantage of their posts, as recorded in the annals, but many were unable to control their assigned territories, especially in the outer regions. While the Han called these regions their own, the tribes of the

northwest, primarily of proto-Tibetan ancestry, controlled these lands, apparently occupying them at will.

In the Later Han an increasingly greater number of the Ch'iang tribes were designated as frontier guarding tribes and in many cases "frontier barriers that had been previously established were removed." What this really meant was that garrisons were closed, the soldiers evacuated the region and the lands were given over completely to the Ch'iang; essentially the Chinese retreated and abandoned the territories to the Ch'iang. Chin-cheng and Lung-shi, bordering the Kansu Corridor and both Ch'iang strongholds, are significant examples of outer regions that remained under the dominion of Ch'iang tribes throughout the Han periods. Large populations of Ch'iang roamed over territory that had been their own since ancient times prior to the Ch'in. The traditional view that the Chinese used the Ch'iang as a means to fight other *barbarians* has its ring of truth; however, in reality the Ch'iang were evicting the Chinese and electing to control and protect their own lands.⁴⁷ While the annals suggest a Chinese superiority over the region, in context and in truth it was the Ch'iang who maintained both political and military superiority.

Evidence that the Ch'iang had the backing and the support of other tribes higher up on the Tsinghai-Tibetan Plateau is provided by a look at circumstances surrounding the "earliest recorded settlement of Ch'iang." During the reign of Ching-ti (157-141 B.C.E.), fifty years after the founding of the Former

Han dynasty, the Yen tribes moved from their mountain safety in the Koko Nor region and migrated further into the Kansu Corridor. Reportedly they asked *permission* to guard the Lung-hsi frontier. In actuality the Yen tribes moved into five of the counties of the Lung-hsi commandery just east and adjacent to Koko Nor, without consulting the Chinese.⁴⁸ It is doubtful they would have done so without significant backup and certainty that Chinese troops were insignificant to ward them off. The phrase to "*guard the frontier*" appears to have been a Chinese facade designed to save the court embarrassment. It is notable that this event took place only a few years after the Yüeh-chih (allies of the Ch'iang who lived in the Ch'i Lien Mountains) had been evicted from the Kansu Corridor in 165 B.C.E. by the Hsiung-nu.⁴⁹ The event suggests the Yen tribes were reestablishing power in the region.

Notably, the movement into the Kansu Corridor by the Ch'iang Yen tribe occurred at roughly the same time the Yüeh-chih were fighting their way across the northern route against the Hsiung-nu federation. The events of the preceding years demonstrate that the Yüeh-chih had been on unpleasant terms with the Hsiung-nu for a considerable period. At the end of the third century B.C.E., the Yüeh-chih had been in an uneasy alliance with the Hsiung-nu, even while they held a Hsiung-nu prince, named Mao-tun hostage, at court. In 209 B.C.E. Mao-tun escaped from the Yüeh-chih and returned to his homeland where he killed his father Tumen and took over rulership of the Hsiung-nu

nation. He then attacked the Yüeh-chih, but failed to eliminate them. From that point on Yüeh-chih and Hsiung-nu relationships became even more unstable. In 162 B.C.E., the *shan-yu* (the ruling chief of the Hsiung-nu), Lao-shang, after gaining control of "twenty-six adjoining countries," attacked the Yüeh-chih, killed their leader and turned his skull into a drinking cup.⁵⁰ This episode triggered the division of the Yüeh-chih into two groups. The Greater Yüeh-chih, moved westward and attempted to take over the northern Takla Makan and its trade routes; the Smaller Yüeh-chih moved up into the Nan Shan Mountains and joined with the Ch'iang tribes.⁵¹

The division of the Yüeh-chih into two forces, one moving toward the west while one was left in the east, may have been an attempt to outflank the Hsiung-nu and add enforcements to the Ch'iang tribes. After a short sojourn in the Dzungarian Basin where they warred with the resident Wu-sun (allies of the Hsiung-nu), the Greater Yüeh-chih pushed westward and drove the Sakas from Bactria. While they were unable to attain dominance over the northern trade routes during their westward journey, they attained an even more advantageous position upon their takeover of Bactria. From Bactria they could control the trade in the north of Central Asia before it entered the northern route of the Takla Makan controlled by the Hsiung-nu. This decided advantage allowed the Greater Yüeh-chih to funnel trade through the territories of the Ch'iang along the southern Jade Route, known to have been the busiest during this period.⁵²

It is not out of the realm of probability that the leaving behind of the Smaller Yüeh-chih was the purposeful addition of a significant force of Yüeh-chih to the Ch'iang; in other words, the occupation of the region appears to have been a calculated move by the two allies to strengthen their position in the region against the advance of both the Hsiung-nu and the Chinese into the eastern Takla Makan Desert. Ostensibly the westward march of the Greater Yüeh-chih across the north of the desert, although a failure, was an attempt to secure the whole of the trade routes in the Takla Makan and rid themselves of the Hsiung-nu once and for all.

Though the Yüeh-chih lost control of the cities at the eastern end of the Takla Makan and the Tunhuang area and failed to gain control in the north, they did gain dominance over the major western cities through which trade passed into the desert from Bactria, while the Smaller Yüeh-chih, no doubt, had a part in controlling the trade along the Southern Jade Route in conjunction with the Ch'iang.⁵³ Command of the western end of the Takla Makan also allowed the Greater Yüeh-chih to control a certain amount of the trade coming over the Hindu Kush from India. They were able to divert trade through the Hindu Kush and the Pamir mountain passes either to Kashgar and to the north, or to the southern Silk route through Ch'iang lands. The main roads from Greece and Rome to the Takla Makan ran through Gandhara, ancient Persia and Bactria from the Black Sea.⁵⁴ Any trade passing to the east from Central Asia and India

had to flow through Greater Yüeh-chih lands. From their prime location they could direct the trade at will.

Within only a short period the Greater Yüeh-chih also gained control of the southern region of Central Asia and the remainder of the trade routes of that area when they again drove out the Sakas (ca.88 B.C.E.).⁵⁵ The Sakas had fled to India after being evicted previously from the Oxus Region by these same Greater Yüeh-chih. The conquerors took over the northwestern and north of India, including the Indus River Valley regions and the Gangetic Plain. Thus began the rule of the Greater Yüeh-chih under the title of the Kushan Empire until the second century C.E. These events had significant consequences for Tibet and the Ch'iang tribes associated with Tsinghai-Tibetan Plateau. From that time forward, the Kushana heavily influenced the development of Tibetan civilization, especially under the great King Kanishka, who became a patron saint of Buddhism. It was during this period that proto-Tibetans probably experienced the first Buddhist influences.⁵⁶

During this entire period trading connections with the Roman Empire were in the constant process of expanding, while silk had become a medium of currency between China and foreign courts. The value of silk during this era, almost equaled that of gold and jewels although it was not as easily transportable.⁵⁷ Silk flowed to the west; gold (from Rome via India) and jewels, which held a more permanent value, flowed to the east, accompanied by such

other commodities as "rhinoceros horn, tortoise shell, pearls, coral, amber, spices, damasks, rugs, asbestos cloth, storax (a fragrant ointment), spices, incense, fine steel and copper, hunting dogs, elephants, lions, and curiosities like camel-bird (ostrich) eggs, bluebird feathers, dwarfs, and dancers."⁵⁸ Though the Greater Yüeh-chih had lost their hold on the eastern end of the trade routes into China, the initial movement to the western end of the Takla Makan placed them in a much more advantageous position. Due to their position, all trade flowing into and out of China passed through their newly acquired territory in Central Asia and Northern India.

The Hsiung-nu, in spite of their numbers were unable to dampen this trade or even interrupt it, especially along the Jade Route.⁵⁹ Though the Hsiung-nu controlled the northern string of city-states in the Takla Makan during this era, there is no mention that they ever ventured far into the south of the desert, except for the area at Tunhuang where the Yümen pass was located. The desert sands lying between the northern and southern routes created a natural and uncrossable barrier, while the Salt Desert, lying between the Tsaidam Basin and the Kansu Corridor, made large invasions along the Jade Route difficult. Only an army with access to food and water at a reasonable distance, such as the Ch'iang tribes had access to in the Kun Lun and Ch'i Lien mountains, could survive in this region. The Jade Route and the Tsaidam Basin behind the Ch'i Lien Mountains apparently remained under the control of the Ch'iang until at

least the time of Wu-ti, and except for a short period later, when Pan Ch'ao (74-94 C.E.) was able to capture Khotan by circling to the west along the northern route. It is a safe assumption that since the Greater Yüeh-chih controlled the entrance of trade into the northern string of oases, through Hsiung-nu lands and thus into China, that once the Kushana rose to power the peoples of these regions and China were forced to negotiate new trade agreements. Chang Ch'ien's journey to Bactria at the behest of Wu-ti is but one example. Assuredly these new agreements with the Greater Yüeh-chih, who later became the Kushana, included consideration of the Ch'iang along the Jade Route as their long-term allies and no doubt were in the best interests of both parties.⁶⁰ To understand the consequences of these negotiations, it is necessary to return to the discussion of settlements in the northwest of China.

In the case of the Ch'iang, negotiations with the Chinese often included the establishment of settlements supposedly to the advantage of both peoples: the *shu-kuo*, mentioned earlier and another form called *chun-hsien*. The *shu-kuo*, or *dependent* states, really designated tribes living in the outer provinces who were unwilling to adopt the Chinese way of life or adhere to its rules and regulations. The Yen tribe mentioned earlier provides only one such example. In the *shu-kuo* the tribes followed their own social customs and led their usual way of life without interference from the Chinese.⁶¹ At most, these territories formed a peaceful *transitional zone* between the garrisons and the outer frontier

regions and between the Chinese and neighboring tribal territories.⁶² In these regions trading activities were of paramount importance. The *shu-kuo* designation was employed as early as the Ch'in dynasty, but in the Han, especially during the reign of Wu-ti, it was used most extensively to identify the rapidly increasing number of tribes who chose to occupy their ancestral lands by setting up camps in particular locations and their demands expanded commensurately with their population and military might. Thus, the *shu-kuo* were a continual problem.⁶³ In later years, by 140 C.E., the upper portion of the Kuang-han commandery of the Min River region, the southern portion of the Shu-chün commandery, and the Chien-wei commandery bordering the Yellow River on the south, all homelands to Ch'iang tribes and all at one time or another designated as *shu-kuo*, were given the status of *independent* kingdoms by the Chinese. However, they had been primarily occupied and controlled by Ch'iang tribes throughout their existence.⁶⁴

The other type of territories, designated as *chün-hsien*, held Chinese garrisons and were located primarily within the interior provinces, but these also failed as a means to incorporate the tribes into the empire and the creation of *chun-hsien*, as well, had long term consequences. During the first century B.C.E., a number of Ch'iang tribes settled in agricultural communities south of the wall in Ningsia and Pei-ti, but they were never sinicized and when their demands were not met, they rebelled. They became a constant threat to the

Han court, who often had to mobilized troops against them. They were so numerous in these provinces that they were noted to be even stronger militarily than some other Ch'iang groups living on the western borders.⁶⁵ In these areas suitable for both agriculture and pasturage, the Ch'iang maintained a mixed economy of both farming and herding. These people attempted to live in peace with the Chinese, but once they came to understand that the Chinese intended to subjugate them, many tribes revolted. In some cases the Ch'iang allied with other tribes, including the Hsiung-nu. One such revolt occurred in 45 C.E., due to "excessive corvée levies," among the tribes of An-ting (in Ch'iang territory).⁶⁶ In other cases, some Ch'iang tribes allied with the empire against peoples of their own nation, especially in hard times when food was scarce, but ultimately the Ch'iang maintained primary loyalty to their own tribes. In spite of the many measures taken, the Chinese government was unable to maintain a consistent peace with any of the communities, especially the *shu kuo*.⁶⁷

We can assume that when the Ch'iang allied with the Chinese to deflect the continued advances of the Hsiung-nu, it was not out of a desire to adopt Chinese culture. Increasing numbers of Ch'iang people moved into the Northwest, but most maintained their culture and assuredly their connections to the Tsinghai-Tibetan Plateau peoples to the west. Citing the Han shu and the Hou Han shu, Michael Loewe notes that during Ch'in and Han times, while there had always been populations of Ch'iang "scattered throughout the Western

regions, Kansu, Yunnan and Szechaun,” and there was a notable increase of tribes in numbers in later years.⁶⁸ Other Ch’iang tribes migrated into the region, reinforcing the numbers who had been there.

In an attempt to counteract this migration of even greater numbers of Ch’iang, Wu-ti took advantage of a fortuitous event when, “In the autumn [of 121 B.C.E.] the King of Kun-hsieh killed the King of Hsiu-t’u,” both of whom controlled major portions of land in the Kansu Corridor.⁶⁹ Wu-ti immediately took over the area and established two commanderies, Wu-wei and Chiu-chüan, but the gains were only short term. In the following years famine and flood reduced the number of troops in the garrisons in half, while to the east of the Hanku Pass so many soldiers died that Wu-ti was forced to move the customs barrier approximately a hundred miles to the empire’s detriment (115 B.C.E.). The loss of the area made it difficult to dispatch troops into the Northwest and strengthened the positions of both the Hsiung-nu and the Ch’iang.⁷⁰

In 114 B.C.E., another famine weakened the north and “those who died of starvation were counted by the thousands.” Conditions were so difficult that people resorted to cannibalism.⁷¹ In the following year, however, Wu-ti regrouped, reoccupied Wu-wei and Chiu-chüan and felt confident enough finally to make the imperial sacrifice in Kansu. By doing so he claimed the ancient Ch’iang territories as part of the Chinese empire and, in effect, asserted lordship over the rulers of the region.⁷² That this was an unacceptable act to the Ch’iang

is evident; their reaction was swift and expedient. Two tribes of Ch'iang, the Hsien-ling and the tribe of Feng-yang-lao-tzu joined together, forming a military unit of Western Ch'iang 100,000 strong. They allied themselves with the Hsiung-nu against the Chinese and "attacked An-ku and besieged Fu-Han. The Hsiung-nu entered Wu-yuan [commandery] and killed its Grand Administrator."⁷³

The intensity of their assault was such that the Han were required to bring troops from beyond the pass to quell the rebellion.⁷⁴ This campaign was only one in a war that lasted three years (112-110 B.C.E.). In the end Han forces to the east and the west of the pass firmly established their positions, but in fear of another Hsiung-nu and Ch'iang alliance Wu-ti was forced to establish two more garrisons in the former territories of the Hsiung-nu kings.⁷⁵ The Wu-wei and Chiu-chüan commanderies were reduced in size and parts of them were used in the creation of two more: Chang-yi and Tunhuang. Wu-ti added more troops, and for the first time during the Han dynasty designated an administrator, a person whom he called the Colonel Protecting the Ch'iang, to oversee them. When more rebellions occurred and in an attempt to establish a permanent Chinese presence in the region, Wu-ti "moved common people [into these places]" and again increased the army.⁷⁶

In a move to gain further control over the Takla Makan, Wu-ti sent Chang Ch'ien (ca. 115 B.C.E.) on a second expedition to Ta-hsia (Bactria), during which he finally established alliances with the Greater Yüeh-chih and along the

northern route, the ruler of the Wu-sun in Dzungaria, (to whom he also sent an imperial princess). The mountain passes through Dzungaria had been a major point through which the Hsiung-nu had repeatedly attacked Chinese caravans. While the expansion and alliances gave Wu-ti some limited control over trade in the north, they turned out to be of little consequence in the south of the desert and in the Ch'eng-tu Plain. Undaunted, Wu-ti attempted to gain control on all fronts. He systematically pushed the northern border of Han China to the Mongolian Steppe and east to the Pacific. With the Ch'iang and the Hsiung-nu temporarily separated, weakened and in a state of submission, he launched assaults for the complete subjugation of the east and the south, successfully incorporating the whole of the region from the edge of the Tsinghai-Tibetan Plateau to the Pacific Ocean and to the south, the Ch'eng-tu Plain. In 108 B.C.E. he also added the Kingdoms of Loulan in Lob Nor in the mideastern desert of the Takla Makan, and Kiu-shih (Turfan), situated at the beginning of the Northern Silk Route where the road branched toward Dzungaria, a Hsiung-nu stronghold.⁷⁷ The acquisition of these particular desert kingdoms was an important achievement, since this gave the Chinese absolute control over trade at the eastern end of the Takla Makan and significantly weakened the Ch'iang, who had trading relationships with the small kingdoms of the southern desert. These states, prior to that time, had remained comparatively independent in spite of the Hsiung-nu.⁷⁸

In the southwest, Wu-ti redivided the commanderies of the Shu region into more manageable parts and added "the commanderies of Wu-tu, Tsang-k'o, Yüeh-sui, Shen-li, and Wen-shan."⁷⁹ He mobilized the troops of the Ch'eng-tu Plain and sent them against the King of Tien and "the southwestern barbarians who had not yet submitted," many of whom were Ch'iang.⁸⁰ To the south of the Ch'eng-tu Plain he added the I-Chou and Chien-Wei Commanderies (108 B.C.E.). This was an attempt to gain control over routes leading to the Burma-Yunnan Road and India; however, Wu-ti encountered many of the difficulties of his predecessors.⁸¹ He was mainly confined to the plains since the mountainous regions held long seasoned guerilla fighters including many Ch'iang who easily overcame Chinese troops. Nevertheless, this endeavor did provide some access to the southern trade routes leading to the Burma-Yunnan Road.⁸² The strength of his assaults and strict controls temporarily gave the Han control of territories through which trade entered China, but this did not last for long.

The death of Wu-ti inaugurated a period of Chinese political decline in which the Chinese were forced into border warfare with the Ch'iang tribes and the Hsiung-nu repeatedly.⁸³ In 80 B.C.E., during the reign of Hsüan-ti (74-49 B.C.E.), the Ch'iang tribes began to reoccupy the areas from which they had so recently been evicted. The Hsien-ling Ch'iang "crossed the Yellow River (in Kansu) and settled in Han territory in spite of the emperor's attempts to prevent

them from doing so.”⁸⁴ During this period the court was forced to consolidate power and fell back on negotiations, titles and gifts as the main means of control. Between 65-62 B.C.E. “a search was made for the descendants of marquises” dating back to the time of Kao-ti (195 B.C.E.).⁸⁵ About one hundred and twenty persons were found and territories were awarded. In order to further reduce the power of individuals considered disloyal to the court, some lands were taken from the numerous kingdoms and commanderies that had been in existence since before Wu-ti’s time. These were reduced in size and split up. Ancestral titles and lands were awarded, and gifts were given to the newly found descendants. These people were also released from many of the obligations of state service still required by others less favored. This situation disturbed the Ch’iang since some of these awards apportioned sections of their own lands.⁸⁶

In reaction (63 B.C.E.), the Han shu reports, the Ch’iang formed a tribal confederacy and again began negotiations with the Hsiung-nu. Further steps by the court were necessary to maintain control. In 61 B.C.E. the Chinese, fearing another Hsiung-nu and Ch’iang military alliance would cut off the Kansu Corridor, sent more troops and launched an assault, but were defeated.⁸⁷ In the following period, trying a new tactic, the Chinese set up agricultural colonies around Koko Nor, the major center of Ch’iang strength in the Northwest and lured some of the Ch’iang into the settlements. These tribes were incorporated

into a vassal state, but other tribes in the region and along the Jade Route continued to maintain their independence. It is difficult to say how much control the court had over the settled tribes, but if the past was any measure, it was not much. The court established the Protector of the Western Regions, with the intended purpose of "coordinat[ing] colonial activities and secur[ing] peaceful relationships with the petty kingdoms of the west," but the officer had very little military power, while the court supplied an insufficient number of troops. They were unable to maintain mastery over the region.⁸⁸

Only twenty years later the Ch'iang rebounded and rose again in protest over famine conditions. The Chinese court sent twelve thousand troops, but they were not enough. General Feng-shi returned to the court with a map reporting accurately the large numbers of Ch'iang and requested another thirty-six thousand troops. The obvious lack of knowledge concerning the number of Ch'iang in the west can only mean that the court had lost sight and control over the region. Reinforced with 60,000 troops, General Feng-shi subdued the rebels, cut off the heads of Ch'iang captives and again reinforced the agricultural colonies with more Chinese military personnel.⁸⁹ This is the incident mentioned earlier in which the Hou Han shu states, the defeated Ch'iang escaped "deep into the Tibetan interior where they took refuge with another Ch'iang group called Fa."⁹⁰ It is also the first time that we hear of other Ch'iang tribes living on the Tsinghai-Tibetan Plateau from the Chinese annals and it is the first clear

evidence of alliances between the tribes of the Tsinghai-Tibetan Plateau and those living to the northwest of China. The context also suggests, since there is no expression of surprise, that the Chinese had knowledge of other tribes of Ch'iang even though they had never mentioned this in earlier annals.

After a few years, civil wars and famine amongst the Hsiung-nu all but destroyed their power.⁹¹ The Chinese again temporarily ruled as the removal of the Hsiung-nu and the weakened state of the Ch'iang allowed for the installation of the office of Protector General of the Western Regions and a military presence in the east of the Takla Makan between 67 and 48 B.C.E. The relative peace increased the amount of trade along the northern Silk Route at a time when silk was in greater demand in the west. It is probable that all parties involved in trade benefitted from this increased flow in trade. But by the middle of the first century B.C.E. the Greater Yüeh-chih had founded the Kushan Empire with their capital at Kabul. Their position gave them complete control of the great trading cities of Central Asia, the Indus Five Rivers Region, the Hindu Kush, and most of Afghanistan.⁹² As a result, they also exerted a stronger influence over the cities along the Jade Route, including Kashgar, Yarkand and Khotan,⁹³ all Ch'iang centers.⁹⁴

The Kushan Empire, which divided Eastern Asia from the West, now had control over all of the trade passing through Central Asia. Command of the Hindu Kush and the countries of Swat, Gilgit, and Balsitan and the western

areas of Tibet, including Ladakh and Kashmir, gave the Kushana a decided advantage over their predecessors; there was no escaping paying tribute to the Kushan Empire as they diverted and regulated the flow of trade. The successors of Kanishka, the most famous of the Khadphises kings, ruled for a hundred and fifty years before Kushana power began to decline and they were overthrown by the Persian Ardashir in 226 C.E.⁹⁵ Their vast kingdom had held sway over not only the political, but also the cultural development of the whole of Central Asia, including the Tibetan Plateau, for almost three centuries.

The fall of the Hsiung-nu, a weak Chinese court, and the establishment of the Kushan Empire allowed for the incorporation of the Tsinghai-Tibetan Plateau people as intermediaries of trade to a greater degree than ever before. During this period the cities of the Takla Makan Desert became great cosmopolitan centers of trade, learning and wealth and their cultural and political ideas of independence spread along the trade routes and amongst the tribes. By the time of Wang Mang the Han court had all but lost control of the Northwest of China, the Western Regions, and the Ch'eng-tu Plain. In the Shu region, the Wen-Shan and Shen-li commanderies were absorbed back into the Kuang-han commandery by the year 2 C.E. As Chinese military power diminished, power could only have flowed back into the hands of Ch'iang tribes who were entrenched in the surrounding regions. Shü-chun remained as a commandery for a time, but whether or not the garrison had jurisdiction over the southern

route from the Kham region of Tibet is debatable; by the year 25 C.E. this commandery was also an independent entity again.⁹⁶ From this time forward, Shu was relatively free to conduct business without interference from the court and remained so until the end of the Later Han. During this entire time, the power of the Hsiung-nu was in decline, while the Kushana and the proto-Tibetans shared an advantageous position in the center of Eurasia. The Kushana controlled northern India, Central Asia and cities of the Takla Makan, while the proto-Tibetans acted as intermediaries between them, China, and the Ch'eng-tu Plain.

During the period between 59 B.C.E. and 9 C.E., the Chinese apparently used the northern Silk Route as their major caravan route. Historians assert that this route became the main road through the Western Regions, but it is difficult to say exactly how much of the traffic actually flowed through the north. While it was most suitable for caravans traveling to the west, the flow of gold from India into China was increasing. The routes over the Tsinghai-Tibetan Plateau and along the Jade Route, controlled by the Kushana, would have been the safest and shortest means of transport.⁹⁷

During the period between 27 B.C.E. and 14 C.E. large quantities of silk were exported to the west and Romans were importing larger quantities of goods from India. Pliny estimated that at the lowest a hundred million sesterces (over five-million dollars) in trade annually passed from the Roman Empire into India,

Seres and Arabia, and that more than half of that went into India. While the chief route for caravans traveling west may have been the northern route, whether this route allowed for the conveyance of trade items, especially of large bulk, from the Roman Empire is doubtful. Only items of small bulk with high value would have been profitable, while the return trade appears to have been largely in gold. It was during the time of Wang Mang that Roman gold reserves were depleted by payments for trade goods, but it appears that most of the gold went to India and to the Kushana, with whom Rome had direct trading arrangements, rather than to China and the middlemen in Central Asia. A considerable amount probably ended up in the Ch'eng-tu Plain. It seems that trade continued in this region without a major interruption until at least the period of the Three Kingdoms (220-280 C.E.).⁹⁸

With the increase of trade running through Yarkand and Khotan on the southern route, Buddhism, fostered by the Kushana, flourished. The first evidence of the influence of the Kushana may be found in the Buddhist sculpture and bas-reliefs made at Taxila and in the Peshawar vale in the first century C.E. By the middle of the second century C.E., Buddhist images appeared on the coins of the Kushan Emperor Kanishka,⁹⁹ while painted frescoes found at Miran, near Lop Nor in the south-central desert, and at Kucha, on the northern route, show that penetration had extended to the Tarim Basin and the eastern gate of the Silk Route.¹⁰⁰ The Kharòshthi political documents, mentioned earlier, found

as far east as Miran and Tunhuang suggesting that Kushana influence had spread to the eastern end of the southern route as well by this time.¹⁰¹ During this period the control of trade by the Kushana no doubt affected the Chinese. While the Han court initially became rich, as the Kushana gained greater control over trade, the Kushana could only have reaped the greater percentage of the profits. Wang Mang's quick rise and fall to power over the issue of a failing economy provides evidence of the severity of the fiscal problems within the empire.¹⁰²

Wang Mang attempted to counteract the loss in profits by establishing the Hsin Dynasty (9-23 C.E.) and instituting reforms geared to manipulate the market and increase taxes throughout China and in the city-states of the Tarim. However, these taxes also affected the Ch'iang and the Hsiung-nu by reducing profits. As a result the Ch'iang in the Kansu-Tsinghai regions rebelled again. Simultaneously Wang Mang lost control of the Hsiung-nu. In the endeavor to reinstate dominance, Wang Mang attempted to enlist the Ch'iang tribes as allies against the Hsiung-nu through bribery. One small group of Ch'iang responded with the conditions that:

- (1) they would surrender to China as a tribe of about 12,000 people, (2) they would present all their fertile lands to the Chinese, and (3) they themselves would take residence in the strategic points along the border to guard the frontier, presumably from inside.¹⁰³

In effect the deal would have allowed this particular tribe of Ch'iang to regain

control over trade entering China from the Kansu Corridor.¹⁰⁴ But after winning their confidence, Wang Mang redivided the region into commanderies in the tradition of the sage kings who "fixed the principles of geographic [arrangements]" according to the location of the "mountains, the streams, and the customs of the people." He also sent administrators to the northwest of China and the Western Regions and "changed all the kings there to be marquises." After this event the annals report, that the nobles "all revolted because of this change of titles."¹⁰⁵ While the Ch'iang and the kingdoms of the Takla Makan initially welcomed intervention from the Chinese, who offered troops to fight against the growing threat of the Western Hsiung-nu, the change in titles compounded by the division of the land into new administrative units amounted to the imposition of Chinese suzerainty over the region, a condition they obviously found intolerable.

The Western Ch'iang attacked and were initially defeated by the Chinese, but immediately following this success Wang Mang made another serious error.¹⁰⁶ In an attempt to protect the inner provinces from the growing threat of the Western Hsiung-nu, he made another new alliance with the Ch'iang and imported greater numbers of their tribes into the Northwest. "A large scale migration" of Ch'iang into the frontier provinces followed that was soon to have negative consequences. Meanwhile Wang Mang also sent fresh Chinese soldiers into the region. With three hundred thousand troops allied with the

Ch'iang, Wang Mang waged war against the Western Hsiung-nu, but in the end lost the Western Regions.¹⁰⁷ In 23 C.E. Wang Mang was hacked to pieces by an assassin and civil war broke out. Blocked by the Ch'iang tribes who had reestablished themselves in the corridor, China lost its hold over the Takla Makan region for the next seventy years. During this period, the Ch'iang continued to expand across the Northwest and almost fully occupied their ancient nomadic territories, this time many of them in settled communities.

Following these events, a Ch'iang population explosion, probably due to the availability of food in the agricultural settlements of the Northwest, resulted in a nearly complete takeover of the majority of the counties of Chin-ch'eng just east of Koko Nor by the Ch'iang in the year 34 C.E. The court again attempted to absorb the Ch'iang into the empire by designating specific areas as *shu-kuo* and *chun-hsien*; however, the tribes continued to be dissatisfied. In 35 C.E., after a rebellion of Hsien-ling tribes in Lung-shi, general Ma Yuan attempted new resettlements, no doubt accompanied by bribes, as a solution. He divided up the tribes in the T'ien-shui and Lung-shi commanderies and sent one group to Fu-feng in the metropolitan area immediately adjacent to the capital. At this time the Chinese court greatly feared an invasion by the Western Hsiung-nu. This western branch of the Hsiung-nu were remnants of the former confederacy, who had located their center of power on the steppes to the north of the Takla Makan. They had taken over the northern portion of the desert and forced the

city-states to pay a heavy tribute. While the city-states enjoyed a relative independence from the Chinese, tribute demands continued to increase and soon, the city-states,¹⁰⁸ suffering under the extreme demands made by the Western Hsiung-nu, again looked to China for aid and requested the reinstatement of a Protector General in 33 C.E.

The seriousness of the Western Hsiung-nu threat was such that the Chinese, in spite of problems in the past, thought another infusion of Ch'iang into the Northwest was necessary to ward them off. In the year 50 C.E., another group of so-called *surrendered* Ch'iang (seven thousand) were divided and this time settled in all three divisions of the metropolitan area. But the settlement of these tribes so near the capital proved to be the most fatal of mistakes. By 102 C.E. thirty-four agricultural garrisons had been established in Chin-ch'eng alone. Their populations expanded so quickly into adjoining regions that by the early decades of the fourth century it was estimated that of one million people "in the Kuan-chung area [the capital region], half were barbarians."¹⁰⁹ The court justified the move of the tribes closer to the capital since the Ch'iang would relieve pressure on the frontier and provide a first line of defense against the Hsiung-nu.¹¹⁰ They also believed that since these tribes were adopting an agricultural life, they would assimilate into Chinese culture once they were settled in the interior. In order to insure that these changes would be carried out, the Han court created a new military position. The officer they assigned was

designated as the Colonel Protector of the Ch'iang, a position similar to that of the Protector of the Western Regions, but he was specifically assigned to deal with the Ch'iang and to maintain the peace. He was also given a staff to assist him in the coordination of affairs.¹¹¹

Next in importance to the Colonel Protector of the Ch'iang was the Commandant of Dependent States, "who had specific responsibility for the *barbarians who had submitted* (italics mine)."¹¹² These tribes often included other tribes besides the Ch'iang, including some of the Hsiung-nu. With the expansion of these states in the Later Han, the authority of the commandant also widened, giving him power comparable to that of a commandery governor. His authority extended over a number of counties and, since Chinese people were included in these counties, he ruled over Chinese subjects as well, but his authority seems to have been negligible. The people of the *dependent* states were allowed to live according to their own customs and the commandant's responsibility was supervisory only. In the following years, during the reign of An-ti (106-125 C.E.) widespread rebellions occurred among the Ch'iang in response to the unjust treatment of military personnel.¹¹³ Many of these rebellions were caused directly by the corruption of officials under the authority of the commandant. Chang Huan, appointed Commandant of the *Dependent* States in 55 C.E., found that "all eight of his predecessors had been corrupt and had pressed the Ch'iang for personal gain." In an attempt to regain their trust,

he refused the offers of both gold and horses from the Hsien-ling chief.

Apparently, he was able to gain the chief's respect and loyalty. Still, China's renewed efforts to control the Northwest and the Western Regions failed. By 105 C.E., Chinese rule came to an end. First, northern Kashgaria rebelled; soon afterwards the Ch'iang staged a full scale uprising. As a result, command of both regions was lost completely.

Relations between the Chinese and the proto-Tibetan tribes of Ch'iang disintegrated so greatly that between 107-112 C.E. the proto-Tibetans declared one of their chieftains emperor and attacked the Western Provinces. While the Chinese were able to turn them back, the Hsiung-nu seized the opportunity to reinstate themselves in the Western Regions. They allied themselves with the Wuhuan of southern Manchuria and the Hsien-pi, who had taken over the territory to the north of China, and attacked the Chinese on their northern borders.¹¹⁴ Meanwhile, Ch'iang tribes continued to move into Liang-chou, as the northwestern frontier regions came to be called in this era. Even more *dependent* states were created in an attempt to "accommodate them." During An-ti's reign another two commandants were added to look after the Ch'iang, one assigned to the Ching-chao commandery just east of Ch'ang-an and one to the Fu-feng commandery on the western side of the city. During this period, according to the annals, Ch'iang tribes of the southwest (Shu) "*asked* (italics mine) to be included in the Han empire."¹¹⁵ At this point, however, we can only

conclude that the petition was in reality a peaceful means of notifying the empire that the tribe was formally joining its comrades who by now populated almost the entire northwest of China.

The presence of the Ch'iang was so overwhelming to the Chinese by this time, that when the rebellions broke out in 110 C.E., the Chinese considered abandoning the entire northwestern frontier regions "on the grounds of financial and logistical difficulties."¹¹⁶ Military operations in the Northwest had drained the court treasury and the court owed money to the landowners of Liang-chou who had fronted "hundreds of millions of cash in loans for defense."¹¹⁷ In the next year the court ordered Han Chinese occupants to abandon their homes in Lung-shi, An-ting, Pei-ti, and Shang-chün and withdraw toward the interior. Many of the Chinese objected to the withdrawal; they did not want to leave their homes and farmlands. In an attempt to force Han Chinese settlers out, local governments burned crops and a number of dwellings, but in reaction a significant number whose homes and crops had been burned revolted and joined the Ch'iang.¹¹⁸

During An-ti's reign the defense of Liang-chou required the "astronomical sum of 24,000,000,000 wu-shu coins."¹¹⁹ In the following period, from 123 to 150 C.E., repeated battles with the Western Hsiung-nu again prevented Chinese occupation of the Takla Makan for any length of time, although they had managed to retain Hami and Tunhuang. In the following period the Western

Hsiung-nu power began a process of rapid decay due to factional disputes, but China was also dealing with a new enemy, the Hsien-pi.¹²⁰ In 129 C.E., the court reestablished the An-ting, Pei-ti and Shang-chün commanderies, but Lung-shi (adjacent to Koko Nor in ancient Ch'iang territory) was left to the Ch'iang. From 140 C.E. on, the Ch'iang began raiding even into the Kuan-chung capital region. By 168 C.E., the Chinese were forced to abandon the frontier commanderies, most of the territory beyond the Great Wall where the Hsien-pi were located, and Kansu except for the southwestern corner; the area was completely lost.¹²¹

The end result of settling the Ch'iang tribes in the Northwest had been the opposite of what the Chinese had expected. By the late second century Liang-chou was again, as in the past, culturally, ethnically, and politically distinct from the rest of China. The importation of a Chinese population into the frontier regions had been nullified by the constant increase in Ch'iang populations, while the harsh conditions of the region had forced the adoption by the Chinese immigrants of the way of life of the Ch'iang *barbarian*. Ultimately the region had created a mixture of people more barbarized than sinicized, "where even Chinese women had been transformed into fierce warriors under the influence of the Ch'iang."¹²² The importation of officials from the sinicized regions also had its effect. These officials neither identified with the culture nor wished to be a part of it; in fact, wherever possible they used their power to exploit the population, creating the condition in which the people of Liang-chou, both

Chinese and Ch'iang, grew ever more suspicious of the Chinese court's motives. Again, in 185 C.E., it was suggested that the Han court abandon what was left of Liang-chou, but this suggestion was opposed by the court advisor, a resident of Pei-ti on the frontier.¹²³

The events of the following years left the court little choice but to retreat, however, and the Ch'iang regained total control of the Northwest as the Han fell from power. Tung Cho, a native of Lung-hsi, dominated the Han court from 189-192 C.E. and Ch'iang troops formed the major portion of his army while he maintained friendships with the major chieftains of the Ch'iang in the region. It is probable that the Chinese relied on him and his associations for the first line of defense for in 190 C.E., Tung Cho managed to have the capital moved from Loyang westward to Ch'ang-an, closer to his command center in Liang-chou. But, in 192 C.E., Tung Cho was assassinated and the hostilities between the court and the people of Liang-chou erupted into an armed confrontation lost by the Chinese.¹²⁴ By the year 200 C.E. the proto-Tibetans had fully recovered their ancient lands.

The occupation of the Northwest by the proto-Tibetan Ch'iang tribes ultimately resulted in the fall of the Han Empire. Michael Loewe asserts,

Liang-chou played a key role in the decline and fall of the Han empire. . . . [I]n the final analysis, it resulted directly from the cultural and social transformation of the region following the migration of the Ch'iang. Viewed in this way, Han relations with the Ch'iang produced more immediate consequences of historical

importance for China than with the Hsiung-nu, in spite of the latter's more conspicuous place in the history of the period.¹²⁵

While, toward the end of the Later Han, the Ch'iang, "still bearing the honorary titles of kings and marquises . . . had been actually degraded to no more than commoners" in the eyes of the Chinese, these kings and marquises no doubt held the respect of their own peoples.¹²⁶ Persistently holding on to their own way of life and their lands, the proto-Tibetan people of the Northwest had maintained their own culture and thus their identity. Their continued presence in the region had also repelled the advance of both the Chinese and the Hsiung-nu, while proto-Tibetan tenacity and strength had also insulated the peoples of the Tsinghai-Tibetan Plateau.

By the end of the second century, the Kushana were also falling from power, nevertheless, the southern route along the Takla Makan, the ancient Jade Route, was once again the busiest, and by this period Buddhism had made inroads into the East. During the following era, the aspirations of a growing Buddhist priesthood would rule the transmission of culture and trade across the vast Takla Makan Desert and the Tsinghai-Tibetan Plateau. Lodged between India and China and constantly inundated by its culture and ideas, the Tsinghai-Tibetan Plateau Region would complete the transformation begun in the previous centuries. Trade route connections with the cities along the Jade Route, especially Khoton, Miran and Niya, and the ancient land of Zhang chung

on the Tibetan Plateau, to the east of the Hindu Kush, insured the transition of Tibet into a Buddhist state as monks and travelers from the cultural centers below brought new religious ideas to the proto-Tibetans. These ideas, and the power structures that supported them, would further unite the proto-Tibetan peoples into the First Tibetan Empire in the seventh century. Throughout this metamorphosis, Tibet would continue to maintain independence and its people's individuality and character would continue to develop. Later Tibet's uniqueness of character, its isolated location, and its Buddhism would foster myths of a heavenly civilization of compassionate people living on the roof of the world in the twentieth century.¹²⁷

Endnotes

1. Christopher I. Beckwith, The Tibetan Empire in Central Asia: A History of the Struggle for Great Power among Tibetans, Turks, Arabs, and Chinese during the Early Middle Ages (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), 7. Beckwith reports the annals state it was a Ch'iang group whose name is today pronounced Fa, but was probably in the ancient period pronounced something like Puat. "The later was undoubtedly intended to represent Baut, the name that became pronounced by the seventh century Tibetans as Bod." Beckwith quotes the Hou Han shu, 87:2884-2885, "The Fa Ch'iang, T'ang-mo, and so forth are very distant (from China); there has never been any communication (between the two nations)" (7n.10).

2. Ying-shih Yu, Trade and Expansion in Han China: A Study in the Structure of Sino-Barbarian Economic Relations (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), 61.

3. Denis Sinor, ed., The Cambridge History of Early Inner Asia. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 119-22 passim.

4. Arthur Waldron, The Great Wall of China: From History to Myth (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 22-24 passim.

5. Burton Watson, Records of the Grand Historian of China, trans. from the Shih chih of Ssu-ma Ch'ien (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961), 2:484-85.

6. Watson, Records, I:91.

7. Yu, Trade in Han China, 52.

8. Ibid., 52. The Yüeh-chih successfully guarded the entrance of trade into the Kansu Corridor during this period. Ying-shih Yü believes that the Hsiung-nu forced the Ch'iang into submission around 200 B.C.E., but the Yüeh-chih were still located in the Ch'i Lien Mountains at this time, a people to whom the Hsiung-nu prince Mao-tun was sent as a hostage, therefore I find this improbable. Subjugation of the Ch'iang by Hsiung-nu would have weakened Yüeh-chih power, a hostage Hsiung-nu prince in this case would have been out of order.

9. Waldron, The Great Wall, 22-24 passim.

10. Ibid., xiv, 20.

11. Ibid., 23.

12. Yu, Trade in Han China, 52.

13. Waldron, The Great Wall, 23.

14. Rene Grousset, Naomi Walford, translator, The Empire of the Steppes: A History of Central Asia (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University, 1991), 20-29 passim. The Sarmatian or Saka people are also known as the Alans, the Asianoï and the Asioi. At the beginning of the second century B.C.E., on both sides of the Tien Shan Mountains from Ferghana to Kashgar the city-states along the trade routes were inhabited by the Indo European tribes of the Saka. Along the Tarim River between Kashgar and Kucha the Wusun, a people with red hair and blue eyes dominated. In the north of Eurasia, by the mid-third century, the Hsiung-nu were already a strong united nation, headquartered in the area of the later capital of Jenghiz Khan, Karakorum in the Upper Orkhon region. A Hsiung-nu king and heir to the throne, resided on the high Kerulen and ruled in the east while a Hsiung-nu king of the west held court somewhere in the Khangai Mountains.

15. Michael Loewe, The Cambridge History of China, vol.1, The Ch'in and Han Empires, 221 B.C. to A.D. 220, ed. Denis Twitchett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 435. It appears that the Yüeh-chih held a particularly close association with the peoples of these cities of the northwestern Takla Makan and that they may even have been members of the same group of peoples, known to present day historians as the Tocharians.

16. Ibid., 123. The northern frontier regions of the Ch'in Empire were filled by populations from within the empire that were deemed unsavory by the ruling house. The Ch'in had reorganized their conquered territories inside the wall into a number of commanderies holding thirty-four counties by 214 B.C.E.

17. Ibid., 66. Loewe reports, in 214 B.C.E. the Ch'in populated the area largely with convicts transported from other areas to work on the Great Wall. The first group was an unruly lot who could hardly be called sinicized. Illiterate and of the lower classes they assuredly bore no loyalty to the Ch'in government who had forced them into abject slavery. At least two other large movements of people are recorded. In 213, a secondary population of recruits were made up

of legal representatives who had not handled court cases to the satisfaction of administrative government. In 212, there was a third transportation of 80,000. These were brought to the capital: 30,000 were assigned to work near the capitol at Mt. Li, the First Emperor's mausoleum, and 50,000 were sent to the summer residence of the Ch'in court. The second group while not criminals (they were merchants, bakers, servants, slaves) had been brought for the express purpose of serving the Ch'in court. They too were without loyalties to their Ch'in oppressors, although many of the merchant class no doubt made a profitable living. Collectively the northern frontier had been planted with the seeds of its demise by the Ch'in court itself. By the end of the Han it was those of barbarian extraction who took over the Northwest.

18. Ibid., 68; Imperial Progresses were a traditional precedent established during the Chou period and continued throughout the reigns of following emperors. The act of a sacrifice constituted the inclusion of that region or territory within the bounds of the Chinese Empire. The Emperor traveled throughout his domains sacrificing at specific locations within and along the boundaries of the Chinese Empire at regular intervals especially after a major war in which territory was gained. In 112 B.C.E. the Ch'iang rebelled due to the fact that the emperor made such a sacrifice on their ancestral lands.; Evidence of the impact of a sacrifice made in a region is supplied by Pan Ku. "In the fifth year, in the winter, in the tenth month, [the Emperor] traveled and favored Yung [by a visit, where he] sacrificed at the altars to the Five [Lords on High]. He thereupon crossed the Lung [Mountain], climbed K'ung-t'ung [Mountain], went westwards to the Chia-lai River, and returned [to the capital]. . . . He was making a trip into the present eastern Kansu. Pan Ku, The History of the Former Han Dynasty, A Critical Translation with Annotations by Homer H. Dubs (U.S.A.: The American Council of Learned Societies, 1944), 2:76; Meng K'ang (c.180-260) explains, "When the achievements of [true] kings are complete and their rule has been established, they inform Heaven that they have completed their work. To feng . . . is to elevate. [This sacrifice] is to assist [in showing] the greatness of heaven. . . . Ying Shao wrote, "[For the sacrifice] feng, the altar was 120 feet wide and 20 feet high, with three flights of steps [to ascend it]. [The sacrifice] feng [was performed] on top of it, to show [that the Emperor] had increased in greatness. . . (Ibid., n. 20.3, n.25.1).

19. Ibid., 68.

20. Ibid. During the reign of Emperor Hui-ti (195-188 B.C.E.) Ch'ang-an was fortified and shrines were established throughout the empire honoring Kao-ti's memory, setting a precedent that was followed at later times.

21. Pan Ku, The Former Han Dynasty, 2:77. Pan Ku reports, an imperial edict said, "With Our significant person [We] have been entrusted [with a position] above that of kings and marquises, [but Our] virtue has not been able to tranquilize the common people. Some of the common people [have suffered from] hunger and cold, hence [We] have toured about and have sacrificed to Sovereign Earth in order to pray for a prosperous year.; It appears that the Ch'iang rebelled only when they perceived that they were being encroached upon or when promised goods and foodstuffs were not delivered. During the Later Han, Huang-fu Kuei came to the conclusion that "all Ch'iang rebellions resulted from the fact that the frontier officials, as a rule, ceaselessly encroached upon the properties of the Ch'iang." Yu, Trade in Han China, 53. Yu cites the Hou Han shu, 95:1a. Cf., also, the commentary of Hu San-hsing, *Tzu-chih t'ung-chien*, 4:1690.

22. Pan Ku, The Former Han Dynasty, 2:81.

23. Ibid.

24. Ibid., 13.

25. Loewe, History of China, 85-86. Rebellions broke out beginning in 209 B.C.E. and lasted until 202 B.C.E. In 206 B.C.E. Liu Pang, one of the rebel leaders and the future Han ruler sacked and burned Hsien-yang, but he did not ascend the throne until 202 B.C.E. after four more years of fighting. The period of years from Meng Tien's wars against the Hsiung-nu and through the building of the Great Wall in 221 B.C.E. to the collapse of the Ch'in Empire at the death of the First Emperor in 210 B.C.E. constitutes no more than 11 years. During these eleven years the Ch'in were unable to maintain control over the empire. Numerous rebellions and defections of merchant-generals especially towards the end of Ch'in rule assisted Liu Pang in the rise to power (117-124). In 202 B.C.E., upon rising to the position of Emperor he declared a general amnesty and allowed people to return to their homes and begin life again. Kao-ti, as Liu Pang came to be called, instituted a government based on the same principles of the Ch'in; however, he developed a compromise system of dividing the state into administrative units. During the course of the civil wars the entire eastern half of China had been divided into ten kingdoms; each fell under the rule of one of Kao-ti's supporters. In order to maintain their loyalties Kao-ti confirmed their kingships to gain their support and gradually over a period of only 6 years, replaced each one with either one of his sons or brothers except for one. Some defected to the Hsiung-nu, some were demoted to the rank of marquis and one who revolted was executed. The king of Changsha in the extreme south, managed to keep his throne for the family. His last descendent died in 157

B.C.E. at which point an emperor's son was placed on the throne and the domain became a part of China. By 170 B.C.E., only three of Kao-ti's sons remained as kings.

26. Yu, Trade in Han China, 42. The Great Wall and the fortresses along the Yellow River had failed to hold back the Hsiung-nu. While the Hsiung-nu had assisted Liu Pang in his rise to power, in 202 B.C.E., when Liu Pang ascended the throne as Kao-ti, the Hsiung-nu attacked and kidnaped him. After making a narrow escape Kao-ti immediately instituted the *ho-chin* system wherein a fixed amount of gifts were designated to be made in annual payments from that time forth. An Imperial princess was also sent to the Hsiung-nu, an event which was repeated in those successive years when a new *shan-yu* (greatest chief of the Hsiung-nu) rose to power. In the early years, annual payments included silk, wine, rice and other kinds of food. Under Emperor Wen-ti (180-157) pressure from the Hsiung-nu increased. Payments escalated and from that time on also included gold and copper coins and the establishment of border markets at the demand of the Hsiung-nu.

27. Watson, Records, 1:290.

28. Ibid., 462. "Meng T'ien, too, was a general of Ch'in. In the north he drove out the barbarians and opened up thousands of miles of borderland. But in the end his head was cut off at Yang-chou. Why was this? Because these men had won great merit and Ch'in could not reward them sufficiently with lands and fiefs of land. So it invented some legal excuse to condemn and execute them instead"; Mao-tun had "a powerful force of troops, including three hundred thousand crossbow-stretchers, and several times attacked the frontier. . . . (289-290); Chou P'o, the marquis of Chiang in Ho-tung province to the north of the capital, "terrified that he would be punished for some offense, wore armor wherever he went. . . ." (432). In the outer regions, less favored officials with tenuous ties to the court made their homes among barbarian peoples with little loyalty to the empire and had little help from the Imperial court in maintain order, therefore they were dependent upon their ability to negotiate and make peace with the barbarians. The lack of support from the court forced them to adapt to the barbarian way of life and to adopt their customs. In the beginning feudal lords were allowed to appoint their own administrations, but after the revolts of Wu and Ch'u feudal lords were permitted nothing more than tax revenue from their lands. . . ." (Ibid). In later years some of them grew so poor that they were obliged to ride about in ox carts. The land grants became meaningless pieces of paper since they were not backed by the Chinese court. The lands nebulously belonging to them in the beginning never really became a part of the Chinese Empire (Ibid).

29. Loewe, History of China, 126-27. The entries cite the circumstances under which the original titleholder of the lineage received his rank and "specified the extent of their material benefits." These benefits were measured by the number of households in the appanage from which the marquises "were entitled and obliged to raise taxation, part of which they retained." The remainder of any monies or goods were given over to the central government. The titles were "derived from the regions where those households from which they collected taxes lay"(135-139 passim). Empress Lü (188-180 B.C.E.), acting in the stead of two child emperors, managed to establish four members of her own families as kings, elevated six kinsmen to the position of marquis and appointed numerous other family members to a variety of posts within the court. However, she was unable to control the Hsiung-nu who invaded Lun-hsi Commandery and carried off two thousand. At her death three descendants of Kao-ti managed to gather support and wrest the kingdom away from the Lü family. After some family warfare among these descendants they finally installed the King of Tai who became Wen-ti (180-157 B.C.E.). Upon his death the throne was passed to his son who became Ching-ti (157-141 B.C.E.). During this period of almost forty years, the authority of the central government increased, but the principle changes occurred in 164 B.C.E. and 154 B.C.E. By 179 B.C.E., after the death of Empress Lü, the central government again controlled the metropolitan area, surrounded by nineteen commanderies and eleven kingdoms. In 163 B.C.E., five additional kingdoms had been set up. In 154 B.C.E., the king of Wu with six other kings of the east stage a revolt which was immediately quelled, but the kingdoms were reduced and commanderies extended from Ch'ang-an to the Pacific. But at this time the area south of the Szechuan Basin had yet to be incorporated. By 143 B.C.E. the metropolitan area was surrounded by forty commanderies and twenty-five kingdoms (Ibid.).

30. Yu, Trade in Han China, 142. Yu tells us, toward the end of the Former Han dynasty, a list shows that "376 official titles, ranging from interpreters to generals and marquises," were awarded to the rulers of "fifty states" of the Western Regions.

31. Ibid., 144.

32. Watson, Records, 1:491. There were five degrees of merit: loyalty for those who had established ancestral temples; exertion for those who had given "sound advice"; achievement, for those who had distinguished themselves in battle; eminence for leadership; and longevity for length of service.

33. Loewe, History of China, 149. The marquissettes may have owned land of their own but they did not necessarily own the land from which they

derived their income.

34. Pan Ku, The Former Han Dynasty, 2:171.

35. Loewe, History of China, 428.

36. Ibid., 429.

37. Watson, Records, 1:488.

38. Ibid., 489.

39. Yu, Trade in Han China, 78.

40. Ibid., 79.

41. Ibid.

42. Ibid.

43. Ibid., 67.

44. Ibid.

45. Ibid., 68.

46. Ibid., 69. However, there were exceptions. For example, the Wu-huan, a Mongol tribe, were detached from their lands within the Ordos, inside the wall, and asked to live outside the northern barrier on Hsiung-nu lands to guard from invasion by the Hsiung-nu in Wu-ti's time. No doubt they were paid a significant stipend.

47. Ibid., 70.

48. Loewe, History of China, 426.

49. Sinor, History of Early Inner Asia, 155. The Yüeh-chih, so far designated as of Indo-European extraction, are first mentioned in the I Chou Shu as tribute bearers ca.1000 B.C.E. The Chou report that they were settled in the Ch'i Lien Mountains between the Koko Nor Lake and Tunhuang already before the beginning of the 3rd century B.C.E. No doubt they controlled the Tunhuang area which was the eastern distribution point of the trade route into China. Their neighbors consisted of the Hsiung-nu to the north, the Ch'iang to the south and the Chinese to the west.

50. Ibid.

51. William Montgomery McGovern, The Early Empires of Central Asia (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1939), 127.

52. Ibid., 128. The Yüeh-chih attempted to take over control of city-states on the northern trade route of the Tarim, but constant battles with the Wusun in the Ili River who were allied to the Hsiung-nu, prevented them from settling down; control was never really established over the northern city-states of the Silk Route for any real period of time. The Wu-sun disappeared within the next 30 years, but the Yüeh-chih continued to expand and move westwards. At this point that the Sakas were forced southwards where they founded the Parthian Kingdom, while the Yüeh-chih immediately established their power structure in the greater part of Bactria. The Yüeh-chih settled in the Oxus Valley, became the neighbors of the Kang-gu living in the Ferghana Region, a people with whom they at first formed an alliance, but whom within a short period they subjugated.

53. Ibid.

54. Romila Thapar, A History of India, 2 vols. (New York: Viking Penguin, 1966), 1:94.

55. Ibid., 93-96 passim.

56. Francis Watson, India: A Concise History (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1979), 56.

57. Pan Ku, The Former Han Dynasty, 2:511. See Dub's summary.

58. Jack Chen, The Sinkiang Story (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, Inc., 1977), 61. Chang Ch'ien and other envoys returned from the east bringing with them grapevines, alfalfa grass, clover, cucumbers, figs and sesame, pomegranates and walnuts.

59. Grousset, The Empire of the Steppes, 28; Up until that time the southern trade route had always been the busiest, that route located along the Kun Lun Mountains on the southern edge of the Tarim Basin.; Chen, The Sinkiang Story, 21, 44.

60. Watson, Records, 1:265.

61. Yu, Trade in Han China, 72-73.

62. Ibid., 74.

63. Ibid., 76-77.

64. Loewe, History of China, 252-53. Shü-chun *shu kuo* became a small kingdom of the same original size that it was during the time of the Ch'in. The northern part of Kuang-han became Kuang-han *shu kuo* holding the southern most Min Mountains and the major roads from Amdo and Koko Nor south into the Ch'eng-tu Plain.

65. Yu, Trade in Han China, 88.

66. Ibid., 83.

67. Ibid., 80-83 passim.

68. Loewe, History of China, 422, 422 n.134. Loewe states population figures for the Ch'iang may be found in the Hou Han shu 87:2898-99.; for locations of the Ch'iang see Watson, Records, 2:163, 185, 265, 267, 270, 291.

69. Pan Ku, The Former Han Dynasty, 2:62, 62 n.15.3.

70. Ibid., 62-63.

71. Ibid., 74.

72. Ibid., 76 -77.

73. Ibid., 81.

74. Ibid., n.22.5

75. Ibid., 83.

76. Ibid.

77. Ibid., 242-43.

78. Grousset, The Empire of the Steppes, 35.

79. Pan Ku, The Former Han Dynasty, 2:82.

80. Watson, Records, 2:100-101.

81. Loewe, History of China, 167-68; Watson, Records, 2:296, 485.

82. Loewe, History of China, 294; The region containing the ancient territories of Shu and Pa were also significantly difficult to control. Kao-ti had divided the area into three commanderies in 195 B.C.E. in an attempt to gain control of the entrance of trade into the Ch'eng-tu Plain. He created the small commandery of Shu-chün in the southwestern mountains through which passed the major thoroughfare from the Kham region of southern Tibet. In the immediate west he created Kuang-han, a large commandery containing Ch'eng-tu, the Ch'eng-tu Plain and portion of the Yangtze providing passage to southern China. In the north he created Pa-chün, holding the Min Mountain region and the passage of trade from Amdo and the Koko Nor region. Due to the fact that the Ch'eng-tu Plain was largely inhabited by Ch'in peoples who had migrated there in earlier years and surrounded by primarily Ch'iang tribes, Kao-ti was never really able to control these mountain territories. They remained relatively independent until the end of the Later Han. Shu was isolated and self-sufficient. Thus administrators and independent merchants could amass fortunes without major interference from the imperial due to the fact that it was so highly inaccessible. Watson, Records, 2:56, 291.

83. Pan Ku, The Former Han Dynasty, 2:163.

84. Loewe, History of China, 426.

85. Ibid., 193.

86. Ibid., 193-96 passim.

87. Pan Ku, The Former Han Dynasty, 2:241-42.

88. McGovern, The Early Empires, 184.

89. Ibid., 210.

90. Beckwith, The Tibetan Empire, 7. Beckwith cites the Hou Han shu, 87:2284-2885; cf. Hou Han shu, 87:2898. During the second to fifth centuries the Ch'iang established several ephemeral states on Chinese territory. Beckwith asserts they had no relationship with those Tibetan-speaking peoples who founded the later Tibetan Empire in the seventh century.

91. Pan Ku, The Former Han Dynasty, 2:249-60 passim, 281-83 passim.

92. Thapar, A History of India, 1:96-97.

93. Thapar, A History of India, 1:107-108.; David Snellgrove, Indo-Tibetan Buddhism: Indian Buddhists and Their Successors (Boston: Shambhala, 1987), 329.

94. Loewe, History of China, 425.; Snellgrove, Indo-Tibetan Buddhism, 333-36 passim.

95. Thapar, A History of India, 1:98.

96. Loewe, History of China, 194.

97. Sinor, History of Early Inner Asia, 160.

98. Pan Ku, The Former Han Dynasty, 3:513-16 passim.

99. Gavin Hambly, editor, Central Asia (New York: Delacorte Press, 1966), 49.

100. Ibid., 52.

101. For a detailed discussion of this matter see chapter 4 above.

102. Watson, India, 56; Sir Aurel Stein, On Central-Asian Tracks: Brief Narrative of Three Expeditions in Innermost Asia and Northwestern China, in two vols. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1964), 1:271-77 passim, 280-91 passim, 293-95 passim, 379-86 passim, 458-59 passim.

103. Yu, Trade in Han China, 71.

104. Pan Ku, The Former Han Dynasty, 3:213.

105. Ibid., 215-16, 295.

106. Ibid., 234.

107. McGovern, The Early Empires, 220.

108. Ibid.

109. Loewe, History of China, 426-76 passim.

110. Ibid., 426.

111. Ibid., 27.

Conclusion

In this thesis I have investigated evidence for some of the assertions made by Tibetan and Chinese historians about ancient Tibet. Space does not allow for a complete appraisal; however, an attempt of at least a brief overview of the standard positions taken in both Eastern and Western schools must precede my own conclusions.

"Tibet is a vast country in Central Asia with a history of over three thousand years," states Lobsang Lhalungpa, authoritatively.¹ Born and raised in Lhasa, Lhalungpa, received both a secular and religious education and studied under the lamas of various Tibetan Buddhist orders. He has also taught Buddhism at several Western institutions, written four books related to Tibetan Buddhism, written numerous articles for national journals, and served the Tibetan government-in-exile in India in various official capacities. As an authority of Tibetan scholarship, he has also assisted the Dalai Lama in the setting up of the educational system for the Tibetan refugees living in Dharamsala.² His assertion of a three thousand year old Tibetan history is representative of the viewpoint of most historians of Tibetan training and education.

Tibetan and Chinese historians of Western training remain more conservative. Generally, the historians of Western educational backgrounds, such as Christopher I. Beckwith, Giuseppe Tucci, and R.A. Stein begin the history of Tibet with the seventh century, the time of the first Tibetan Empire and the beginning of the historical period. Any allusions to an earlier period are approached with caution. Owen Lattimore is an exception to the rule. He presents the view that Tibetan cultures were forming on the Tsinghai-Tibetan Plateau circa 1000 B.C.E. and includes an assessment of the linguistic findings, but as a Chinese historian, he discusses the Tibetans in terms of the history of China. Meanwhile, archaeological findings provide firm evidence of communities across the Tsinghai-Tibetan Plateau, prior to 1400 B.C.E., at the beginning of recorded Chinese history and a significant gap exists in Tibetan history between the dating of the archaeological finds and the seventh century. This thesis has tried to fill that gap.

The seventh century was the era in which *Srong btsan sgam* (d.649 or 650 C.E.) rose to power and Tibet became a united political entity, one that was recognized by other civilizations of Eurasia as the First Tibetan Empire. This period is emphasized, first of all, because Tibetan history may be firmly dated from this time forward—a historical record exists—and secondly, because during this era Buddhist monastic powers and ideology transformed and overcame the traditional Bon hierarchical system that had provided the framework for both

secular and religious life. In the following period, the Tibetans gained control over the entire Tsinghai-Tibetan Plateau and the Takla Makan Desert (which includes the present day Chinese provinces of Sinkiang and Tsinghai) and asserted political dominance over neighboring states for a period of almost three hundred years.³

Linguists and some historians, such as Owen Lattimore, have attempted to ascertain the earlier history of the Tibetans through what Christopher I. Beckwith calls back-projections. He objects to such a pursuit, although his objections appear to be confined to the discipline of linguistics. But back-projections used in a general way have been found useful in the reconstruction of history when specific empirical evidence is lacking, especially in an area of prehistory where material evidence is rare. A certain amount of intuitive cognizance must be applied, albeit in a reasonable fashion. Beckwith calls this conjecture,⁴ however conjecture seems to be a harsh word. The term inference seems to more appropriately apply. Broadly based assumptions are often made using material evidence, although the materials found do not, as often as supposed, provide concrete factual evidence. Much of what is found at archeological sites, for example, is subject to conclusions based on inferences and these are often colored by the opinions of the finder.

Regarding the study of linguistics, also an inferential discipline, a certain amount of postulation is required in order to make sense of the information, and

certainly, the conclusions of linguists must remain inside the realm of reason. While regional variations in speech forms may not define a particular ethnicity or concrete dates, as in the case of the Tibetans, speech patterns combined with archeological and historical knowledge of the locations of the proto-Tibetan Ch'iang and the Chinese from 1400 B.C.E. forward, indicate the general area through which the prehistoric Tibetans spread into northern China. They also suggest when the Tibetans probably developed a self-identity and culture separate from the Chinese. As explained in chapter one, the period of division identified by linguists corresponds roughly to archaeological discoveries that assert a division of culture took place between east and west in northern China by at least the second millennium B.C.E.

Linguists of the STEDT: Sino-Tibetan Etymological Dictionary and Thesaurus Research Project, assert that the proto-Sino-Tibetan homeland was somewhere on the Himalayan Plateau, where the Great Rivers of the East and Southeast Asia (including the Yellow, Yangzte, Mekong, Brahmaputra, Salween, and Irrawaddy) have their source. The time of hypothetical Sino-Tibetan unity, when the proto-Han (proto-Chinese) and proto-Tibeto-Burman (proto-Tibetan) peoples formed a relatively undifferentiated linguistic community in north China and then divided, they believe, must have been at least as remote as the proto-Indo-European period, perhaps around 4000 B.C.E. The archaeological data supports this assertion with material evidence that indicates the emergence of

hunting and gathering cultures and agricultural centers during this same time period.

While we may not be able to determine the exact ethnicity of the Tibetans, given this information, studies in archeology also seem to back up a division of the Sino-Tibetans into at least two distinct language groups in the east and west of northern China by the fourth millennium B.C.E. As we have seen, the archeological evidence confirms that the Ch'i-chia culture of the west were proto-Tibetans who lived in the Kansu-Tsinghai region from the third to second millenniums forward. Successive layers of archaeological finds indicate that later cultures in this region may also be defined as proto-Tibetan.

By circa 1500-500 B.C.E., the Ssu-wa culture (non-Chinese),⁵ showed definite affinities with the Ch'iang tribes and also bore influences connected with the Western Chou, with whom many intermarriages took place. While one may still not assume a certain ethnicity, a continuity of culture dating from the third millennium to the first is indicated by the archaeological findings. The combined evidence and a reasonable assessment reflect that the Ch'iang probably were a distinct group from others of the west by at least the second millennium. As anthropological studies have shown (see chapter one), during the period in question, cultures isolated and differentiated themselves. While some of the Ch'iang culture intermarried with the Chou culture, that the two cultures were distinguishable, one from another, is clear; they were of two distinct cultures that

had evolved in separate locations who formed an alliance.

While historians argue about racial ethnicity, racial ethnicity as we commonly perceive it may not be the crucial factor in seeking proto-Tibetan origins. It is certain, that by the Shang period, the proto-Tibetan Ch'iang were very different from the Chinese culturally. And though racial characteristics may have been discernible we have no absolute evidence archaeologically, although as mentioned above, anthropological studies indicate that racial characteristics became distinguishable over time as cultures isolated and people intermarried within their own locality. It seems probable at this early stage that cultural ethnicity was more crucial than racial ethnicity, but that racial ethnicity became more important as time wore on. Although no doubt, languages also changed over time, historically, the languages were probably distinguishable, one from another, by the third millennium B.C.E., due to the division of culture into the eastern and western portions, just as they were one thousand years later.

Owen Lattimore proposes that there was a multiple language frontier of four dominant languages in northern China, "those of the loess peoples, the peoples of the China Plain, the oasis peoples, and those of the Siberian, North Mongolian, and Manchurian forests."⁶ Were these people all *Chinese*? I doubt any historian would assert that they were. But to date, the practice of assigning names to cultures has been determined through the defining of subcultures in certain localities within the confines of present day China. The degree to which

a historian accepts that a particular culture may be called Chinese or Tibetan seems to correspond to the degree to which a historian is satisfied that his or her conclusions are reasonable discernments based on archaeological material evidence considered in the light of Chinese developments. In the case of Eastern Eurasia, the nomenclature has revolved around the study of Chinese history and civilization thus, all of the subcultures within the region of present day China for the most part have been called Chinese.

Kwang-chih Chang seems to have defined the crux of the historiographical problem of writing about Tibetan and Chinese history, but in relationship to the viewpoint of Chinese historians. He points out that the designations used in linguistic and in historical studies regarding China have caused confusion in discussing the history of the Chinese and the region. The Chinese sphere of interaction could be called a "proto-Chinese sphere of interaction," but to differentiate between geographical and linguistic categories, he asserts, the term Chinese should be used as the geographical label (it should refer to a sphere of interaction, not to a culture); Han Chinese should be used as the linguistic label.⁷ The adoption of this practice would certainly assist in clearing up the confusion regarding the history of the ancient Tibetans; as noted in the introduction, a profusion of terms have been applied to them. A universal adoption of designations, akin to proto-Chou, such as proto-Han Chinese, proto-Tibetans, proto-Hsiung-nu, etc. would effect the broader interpretations of the

whole of Chinese history. But, the Tibetans as well as other groups would have to be reassigned their own places in the sun, and the emphasis on the Han Chinese would have to diminish to some degree.

In the following, Lattimore de-emphasizes the importance of ethnicity in regards to China, but his perspective as a Chinese historian has also contributed (unwittingly) to the minimization of the importance of non-Chinese cultures and the part they have played in the larger historical picture. Lattimore declares, for example:

It would be interesting to know whether two or more races, or a mixture of peoples, took part in the founding of China; but the matter is not of decisive importance, because the major interest at this level of history is not the blood that ran in people's veins but rather the question of the way of life— its capacity for elaboration within the original landscape and its adaptation to a wider range of territory.⁸

The arguments regarding race seem to have diminished the importance of culture, as Lattimore states. In the case of Tibet, however, culture has not been the defining factor in identifying the Tibetans and the lack of a distinguishment of a separate culture from that of the Chinese has distorted the historical picture. In this picture, it is not the Chinese who have suffered; it is the Tibetans, for their proto-culture and people had a role, not only in the formation of Chinese civilization, but also in the formation of Tibetan civilization. In this case ethnicity becomes important, not as an identifier of race, but as an element in the identification of culture, for the proto-Tibetans remained culturally and

apparently racially separate from the Chinese throughout the centuries even though some of them left the Tibetan fold and melded with the Chinese.

Therefore, if we are to obtain a more accurate picture of the past, some effort must be made to distinguish the proto-Tibetan from the proto-Chinese cultures categorically.

The attention paid to the north of China as the cradle of Eastern Eurasian civilization has inadvertently resulted in the historical eclipse of other participants who developed separate cultures. It is my perception that this attitude is one inherited, generally speaking, from the Western School of Chinese historians. Innate in this perception is a non-recognition of the contributions made by other cultures during the formation not only of Chinese civilization, but also of neighboring peoples, especially the Tibetans. Regardless of traditional historiographical limitations, however, a few historians have shown an interest in shedding light on the Tibetans in this earlier period such as the Tibetan historians Giuseppe Tucci, R.A. Stein and, notably the Chinese historian Owen Lattimore.

Tucci, in The Religions of Tibet, makes a qualified assertion that Tibet must have been in a process of development during a period more ancient than the seventh century. He discusses the fact that, given the Bon and Buddhist entrenchment within the political structure, surrounding the rise to power of *Srong btsan sgam po*, an earlier penetration of both Bon and Buddhism into

Tibet must have taken place.⁹ He further asserts that the Bon religion is the “indigenous religion of Tibet,” but makes it clear that he believes the Bon “had to undergo a a vast process of evolution to become able to compete with the incomparably more solid doctrine of Buddhism.”¹⁰ Since it is a fact that Bon preceded Buddhism and was a well established theocracy by the time Buddhism took over, the time for development must have covered hundreds of years. Since the Buddhists were a well established theocracy and able to compete with the Bon for political control, they also must have been in a process of development for a considerable amount of time after the Bon were well established.¹¹

Regarding the accuracy of the lists of Tibetan kings, Tucci declares, “Since this order of succession was certainly not compiled until after *Srong btsan sgam po* [ca.634 B.C.E.] had unified Tibet, this genealogical tree is naturally to be examined carefully rather than accepted literally as true.”¹² He adds that the equation of an Indian king with the establishment of a remote ancestor is “clearly concerned with a fiction established after the triumph of a Buddhist doctrine.”¹³ However, he also states, that the practice of the Tibetans “suggests the possibility of an infiltration of ideas, carried perhaps by immigrants coming from the countries to the west of Tibet.”¹⁴ He also notes the Indian influences prevalent in the Zhang zhung region that are known to have been a product of an earlier age.¹⁵ In concluding passages, Tucci’s writings express certainty

about "importations [into Tibet] that can unambiguously . . . [be] traced from Iran, Central Asia, and China, as well as . . . from the northwest of modern Pakistan through to Badakshan."¹⁶ Thus, while remaining respectfully amorphous in asserting a date for the entrance of Bon onto the Plateau, and while denying the accuracy of Tibetan histories, due to a "lack of scientific data," his conclusions suggest, "the existence of a very ancient relationship between the culture of Tibet and that of peoples under Iranian influence" at least hundreds of years prior to the entrance of Buddhism.¹⁷

The Iranian influences he alludes to but does not date, Zurvanism and Saivism, may be traced to currents of the fifth to the third centuries B.C.E. in ancient Persia. During this period Zoroastrian priests fled the region in fear of Alexander the Great who according to legend burned their books at Persepolis,¹⁸ banned exposure of corpses¹⁹ and slaughtered many of them.²⁰ In the following period, the Seleucids ruled Persia and the Trans-Indus region included parts of present day Afghanistan.²¹ By 305 B.C.E., this region was ceded to the Mauryans and the area essentially became "a Buddhist state" under Ashoka's rule.²² The occupation of these regions by two successive empires bent upon destroying the old power structure of the Persians, and hence the influence of the Iranian religious factions who held great political power in favor of their own, pushes the date of the entrance of Indo-Aryan influences into the upper regions of the Himalayas to at least circa the third

century B.C.E. Tucci asserts that the proto-Bon probably advanced much earlier, however, in the company of pastoral nomads and traders along the trade routes.²³

While Stein expresses concerns similar to those of Tucci about attempting to date Tibetan events according to the Tibetan histories, he also gives some support to a conservative statement regarding earlier Indo-Aryan developments. Stein asserts regarding the Bon, "one cannot but be struck by the stress both Buddhist and Bonpo tradition lays on foreign origins, which they locate to the southwest of Tibet where India meets the fringes of Iran."²⁴ Regarding the probable entry point of the Bonpos, he also sites the region of Zhang zhung. He remarks "Mt. Kailāśa, sacred mount of the Hindus and an ancient center of pilgrimage, may once have had a religion largely borrowed from Hinduism."²⁵ In regard to the intellectual astuteness of the Tibetans at the time of unification, which of course would have taken some time to develop, he expresses amazement. "It is staggering to realize that, in a couple of decades, not only was the Tibetan alphabet invented, but the script had been adapted to the Tibetan language by a highly complicated orthography."²⁶ The script chosen was the same as that of Kashmir, he tells us.

The context of these statements leads us to an understanding that the educated classes must have already been relatively learned by this period. Notably, Tibetan requests for literature in the seventh century included 730

Chinese classics (among them the *Shih ching*, *Tso chuan* and *Wên hsüan*). He also notes that Tibetan pupils were sent both to India and China and that those pupils sent to China seemed to have been as brilliant as those sent to India. Other references suggest that “Manichaeism through the Turks(Uighurs), Sogdians and Chinese; Nestorianism by the way of Iran; and Islam through the Arabs,” had also made their way to the Plateau by the seventh century. Again, he does not assert dates, but his ideas seem to indicate that he also holds a belief that Tibetan culture was probably in the formative process at least hundreds of years earlier than the seventh century. The variety of religions which made their way into the Tibetan regions by the seventh century is illustrative of the openness of the academics of Tibet to the learning of other civilizations in earlier times and suggests they possessed a relative intellectual astuteness obtained over a process of time.

As we have seen in chapter one, Owen Lattimore, a renowned Chinese historian, stretches assertions regarding the formative period of Tibetan culture much further back in time. He declares that the present day Tibetan peoples are a result of a retreat of “fragmentary peoples” of peripheral valley populations. He assures us that this is proven by several indications. First, that old forms of polyandry and matriarchy still exist beside an ancient hierarchical social structure of secular nobles and ecclesiastical dignitaries over subjects and clients.²⁷ Secondly, the primitive form of agriculture and the “use of practices

that were once more developed," he suggests, were the practices of people who came from a more civilized region.²⁸ He also respectfully declines an opportunity to assert dates; however, he alludes to a period well before the advent of the First Tibetan Empire. He refers to the Ch'iang tribes to subordinate his assertions of an ancient social system. "It appears probable," he states, "that out of the early barbarians of this region [Kansu-Tsinghai] . . . some were incorporated . . . and some were crowded over to the north and northwest, up to the Kansu-Tibetan border." The general name Ch'iang, he states, was applied to those who withdrew into the uplands of Tibet.²⁹

Lattimore also tells us he believes three regions of Tibet contributed to the development of the Tibetan culture in the prehistoric era. He links the peoples in the northeast of the Plateau with the substeppe of Kansu. As we have seen archeologically the cultures of the Ch'i-chia and the Ssu-wa are the likely candidates for such ancestral cultures. The east, he associates with the prehistoric cultures of Yangtze T'ai peoples (Szechuan and Yunnan). In the south and southwest, he associates the Tibetan people with ancient cultures of Bhutan, Nepal, Ladakh, and Balistan. He also asserts, "Tibet probably did not begin at Lhasa . . . but probably was the work of a conqueror coming from Ladakh."³⁰ Throughout his assertions, no supportive material evidence or explanation for many of his beliefs is offered, other than linguistic, but his conclusions certainly indicate a time prior to the period of the Han annals by at

least a thousand years.³¹

This thesis has established that logically, the defining features of the later Tibetan civilization must have been established in the prehistoric era. As we have seen in chapter one, by the fourth millennium, archaeology has shown that the roots of a proto-Tibetan culture had been established in western, mid-central and the northeastern Tsinghai-Tibetan Plateau regions. Linguistic experts believe that this population spawned the larger Sino-Tibetan linguistic group in the river valleys of the Yangtze, Yellow, Salween, and Mekong, the sources of which emanate from the upper regions of the Tibetan Plateau and that this Sino-Tibetan population spread throughout northern China into the river valleys of forested areas where the people maintained themselves in hunting and gathering societies.

Eventually some of the Sino-Tibetans migrated into the areas of what later became the agricultural plain and associated river valleys of north China, where they mixed with an indigenous people and began the practice of slash and burn farming. This type of agriculture, employed persistently in a region where climate and topography permitted rapid growth and eventually led to the deforestation of the region and permanent agricultural settlements, especially in the plains to the east. Archaeological evidence suggests a separation into two groups occurred between the Yang-shao and Lung-shan periods when these cultures differentiated into western and eastern divisions respectively. The

division of these two cultures appears to have been caused by adaptations dictated of necessity by topographical, geographical, and climatic determinants; these apparently fostered the development of different lifestyles in the respective regions. Some of the early Tsinghai-Tibetan Plateau immigrants apparently remained in the mountainous regions of the west with a climate and conditions very different from the agricultural plain. These conditions were conducive to the development of a semi-nomadic society with an emphasis on pastoralism. These pastoral cultures became attached to settlements where limited farming was possible and an interdependent relationship evolved wherein each of the parties became reliant on the products of the others.

In the plains to the east and in certain fertile river valleys of the west, especially the Wei River and its associated tributaries, conditions were conducive to the pursuit of agriculture on a larger scale and life revolved primarily around farming. As agricultural settlements expanded, villages and towns grew up characterized by the emergence of specialized industries suited to the resources of particular locales. This led to the development of occupational classes, trading among communities and later, a stratified society. Clan and tribal associations evolved into a hierarchical arrangement in which heredity rights and the worship of ancestors played a large part. These occurrences led to the keeping of records, organized government and religion, ruling families, and armies, served by a host of slaves and servants, by the

second millennium.

In the west, lifestyle was also adapted to the terrain, and as populations grew and the necessity for organization developed, clan and tribal divisions also emerged. But the type of government was geared to the fair distribution of pasturelands seasonally to nomadic tribes only semi-attached to agricultural centers (these were smaller and less efficient than those of the east). The people of the west were limited by higher altitudes and intermittent valleys of respite, suited for only minimal agriculture. At the upper elevations, the agricultural centers and nomads were dispersed amongst the valleys of the highest mountains of the world. All of these western regions were subject to seasonal and even daily extremes in climate. These factors had a significant effect upon the differentiation of these cultures from that of the evolving Chinese civilization to the east. They also prospered, but in keeping with their need and ability to roam, when the tribes developed into larger entities, they divided, maintaining linkages through clan and tribal associations led by chieftains. As populations grew, they expanded further into the Ordos and into the Tsinghai-Tibetan Plateau regions. On the Plateau this society began to mix with populations which had in the even more ancient past given birth to these tribes. The tribes developed and maintained small agricultural centers to which they seasonally returned and to which they remained regionally attached.

In the Kansu-Tsinghai regions, in the second millennium, the Ch'i-chia

culture took form. It stretched from the edge of the Tsinghai-Tibetan Plateau northwards to the Mongolian Steppes. They appear to have been the first manifestation of a semi-nomadic, pastoral culture from which those that may be defined as proto-Tibetans emerged. Artifacts found in the Ssu-wa (ca. 1500 B.C.E.) cultural layers immediately above the Ch'i-chia may be directly connected to the proto-Tibetan Ch'iang. The Ssu-wa culture particularly also shows evidence of affiliations with the proto-Chou, while both Shang and Chou inscriptions reveal not only a Ch'iang presence in the steppe regions of Shensi, but also intermarriage and clan associations with the Chou in Kansu.

In the remainder of the thesis (chapters two through five), we saw evidence that in the north and east by at least 1400 B.C.E., the proto-Tibetan Ch'iang culture continued to develop. While the proto-Tibetans did not found a particular dynasty in this early period, they played a major role in the development of both Tibetan and Chinese civilizations. In the following millennium, during the period of the Western Chou, certain tribes apparently established states. It also seems probable, that a descendent of Ch'iang chieftains was the founder of the Ch'in dynasty, since a Ch'iang duke founded the principality of Ch'in at the end of the Western Chou. The proto-Tibetans, during the Han period, are firmly associated historically with the northeastern Tsinghai-Tibetan Plateau regions. Throughout this period these tribes maintained the barrier between the proto-Tibetans of the Plateau and the

Chinese, and kept the northwest of China unsincized from the beginning of the third millennium to the end of the Han dynasties. As they continued to expand and migrate into the Plateau regions, some of them eventually melded with proto-Tibetan populations from the southern reaches of the Plateau who had also been evolving into larger entities commensurately. These entities included agricultural centers that evolved into small kingdoms and, as in the northeastern regions, were also connected to semi-nomadic tribes through clan and tribal associations.

At about the same time the tribes of both the northern and southern regions of the Tsinghai-Tibetan Plateau were involved in a common sphere of interaction; one that may be called proto-Tibetan.³² In the beginning they were only loosely united by trade routes over the Plateau. Over time they became cemented together through intermarriage, clan and tribal associations and a shamanist priesthood that may be described as proto-Bon. This priesthood evolved into a hierarchical brotherhood and gradually gained sole authority to determine and confirm the rights to rule of the proto-Tibetan kings over settlements and the chieftains over tribes. While some of those who fostered the emergence of the Bon were probably of indigenous origins, it seems apparent that shamanists of Iranian, or more broadly, of Indo-Aryan background, established themselves at first in Zhang chung in western Tibet and later in the Tsangpo River Valley in south-central Tibet circa 300 B.C.E. It also seems

probable that during this time period these Indo-Aryan shamanists may have been accompanied by Indo-Aryan princes escaping the rule of the Persian, Seleucid, and Mauryan Empires in Central Asia and Northern India, and that in Tibet they asserted themselves through the proto-Bon power structure over an already existing population.

Commensurately, trade expanded across Eurasia and alternate routes to those of Central Asia were frequented leading directly over the Hindu Kush to the Takla Makan Desert and the cities along the Jade Route from India. Other routes developed leading over the Tsinghai-Tibetan Plateau to Shu in the Ch'engt'u Plain. The Sakas were well entrenched in Bactria and at that time presented a significant barrier to the flow of free trade in the Central Asian region. The Persians, Seleucids, and Mauryans are known historically to have conquered the Punjab and to have controlled the routes in the Northwest of India and Afghanistan leading over the Hindu Kush both into the Takla Makan Desert and into Bactria. These routes passed through Kashmir and Zhang chung in western Tibet. In addition, the proto-Tibetans controlled trade in areas west and northwest of China during the Chou, Ch'in, and Han periods. Proto-Tibetan dominance of the Jade Route and routes leading into Shu is well documented in the Han annals of the first century B.C.E. Their former use may as well be assumed given the size and wealth of the Mauryan Empire and the record of its trade connections with Shu.

While exact dates may not be assigned to the formation of a congruent proto-Tibetan culture across the Tsinghai-Tibetan Plateau, the existence of subcultures loosely united in one sphere of interaction around the Plateau suggests that Tibetans were engaged in the initial stages of coalescence at least a thousand years prior to Tibetan unification in the seventh century. While remaining uncommitted to certain dates, it is probable that a broader proto-Tibetan culture existed in the west and in the south of the Tsinghai-Tibetan Plateau as early as 300 B.C.E. The influx of proto-Bon and Indo-Aryan influences perhaps also dates to this early era (ca. 300 B.C.E.).

During the third century in East Asia, Shu had become a major economic locus. The archaeological evidence combined with the reports of Ssu-ma Ch'ien indicates that Shu was a large center of trade engaged in trade with India and coveted by China. Repeated attempts to dominate the region from the period of the Ch'in throughout the Han dynasties ended in a failure to capture the region for any significant length of time. The major difficulty in controlling the region physically was due to the obstacle of mountainous terrain, occupied by native tribes surrounding the Cheng-tu Plain. These tribes included many Ch'iang both from the Min Mountains and the Kham regions of the Tsinghai-Tibetan Plateau. Moreover, these tribes controlled the trade routes into these regions of China from at least the third century B.C.E. forward. In the northwest, Ssu-ma Ch'ien reported that the Ch'iang dominated the trade routes of the southern Takla

Makan Desert in conjunction with the Yüeh-chih (who became the Kushana). In the northwest of China, Ch'iang populations proliferated and kept these regions unsinized well into the early centuries of the common era and beyond.

Combined with our knowledge of India and Central Asia, the evidence from Chinese history has allowed us a glimpse into early Tibetan culture. In conjunction with the factual archaeological and linguistic evidence about the Tibetans, we have also considered the assertions of both liberal and conservative Tibetan historians. The assertions of Western historians, since they are more conservative and empirically based, have been used as a measure against which to gauge conclusions. As a result, at the very least, this thesis has provided a basic framework for further research and an impetus to redefine the way in which we view Eurasian history as a whole especially in regard to the Tibetans and China. As Kwang-chih Chang declared regarding the states of Eastern China in the Chou period, "To refer to the cultures of various states . . . as 'local cultures' without at the same time making clear that these were local variants of a larger cultural tradition is to take the trees from the forest."³³ Applying this perspective to Tibetan developments, we can speak of local cultures in the north of present day China that were proto-Tibetan and not Chinese. These proto-Tibetan cultures shared cultural unity with others extending across the Tsinghai-Tibetan Plateau long before the political unification of the Tibetan Dynasty in the seventh century.

Endnotes

1. Carole Elchert, ed., White Lotus: An Introduction to Tibetan Culture, with a forward by His Holiness the Dalai Lama, (New York: Snow Lion Publications, 1990), 31.
2. *Ibid.*, 194.
3. R.A. Stein, Tibetan Civilization, trans. by J.E. Stapleton Driver (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1972), 69. In the mid-ninth century, circa 866 C.E. Tibetan power came to an end under the Turks, Uighurs, and Qarluqs.
4. Christopher I. Beckwith, The Tibetan Empire in Central Asia: A History of the Struggle for Great Power among Tibetans, Turks, Arabs, and Chinese During the Early Middle Ages (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), 3.
5. Kwang-chih Chang, The Archaeology of Ancient China, 4th rev. ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), 384.
6. Owen Lattimore, Inner Asian Frontiers of China (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 457.
7. *Ibid.*, 242.
8. *Ibid.*, 32.
9. Giuseppe Tucci, The Religions of Tibet, trans. from German and Italian by Geoffrey Samuel, (Berkeley: University of California, 1970), 1-3.
10. *Ibid.*, 213.
11. *Ibid.*, 223.
12. *Ibid.*
13. *Ibid.*
14. *Ibid.*
15. *Ibid.*, 214.

16. Ibid., 248.

17. Ibid., 245; Mary Boyce informs us Zurvanism was a product of the Persian empire in circa 550-330 B.C.E. The practice of the Zurvanism brand of Zoroastrianism, while indicated in the Bon traditions declined in stages, first during the conquest by Alexander the Great, when he slaughtered many Zoroastrian priests (ca. 334-326 B.C.E.) and secondly during the Mauryan Empire when Buddhism took hold. Mary Boyce, ed. and trans., Textual Sources for the Study of Zoroastrianism, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1984), 23.

18. Robin Fox, The Search for Alexander, (Boston: Little Brown and Company, 1980), 42; Mary Boyce, Zoroastrianism: Its Antiquity and Constant Vigor, (Costa Mesa: Mazda Publishers, 1992), 7, 16.

19. Ibid., 292.

20. Boyce, Textual Sources, 23.

21. Romila Thapar, A History of India, 2 vols. (New York: Viking Penguin, 1966), 1:70.

22. Stanley Wolpert, India (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 37.

23. Tucci, Religions, 245-48; Boyce, Zoroastrianism, 22.

24. Ibid., 236.

25. Ibid.

26. Ibid., 60.

27. Lattimore, Inner Asian, 210.

28. Ibid., 216.

29. Ibid.

30. Ibid., 214.

31. Ibid., 454-59 passim.

32. Chang, The Archaeology, 4th ed., 242.
33. Kwang-chih Chang, The Archaeology of Ancient China, 3rd ed., revised and enlarged (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977), 475-77n.1.

LOCATION OF TIBETAN TRIBES PRE-HISTORIC AND PRESENT

FIG. 1. THE LOCATIONS OF THE TIBETAN PEOPLES ARE TAKEN FROM THE INFORMATION PRESENTED IN BURTON WATSON'S *RECORDS OF THE GRAND HISTORIAN*, ACCORDING TO CHANG CH'EN'S DESCRIPTIONS AND OTHER TEXTS AS LISTED IN THE BIBLIOGRAPHY. THE LOCATIONS OF THE PRESENT DAY TIBETANS ARE TAKEN FROM *THE TIMES ATLAS OF CHINA* AND FROM *THE NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC*: SEE BIBLIOGRAPHY

The Growth of Asian Trade Routes

Circa 300 B.C.E.-200

Legend:

Land Form	Elevation in Feet
Lowlands & Basins	0 - 500
Steppe & Desert	500 - 3,000
Plateau	13,000 - 16,000
Mountains	2,000 - 25,000

Scale: Approximately 3500 Miles West to East

FIG. 2. THIS MAP IS NOT TO SCALE AND THE ROUTES ARE ONLY APPROXIMATIONS: SEE BIBLIOGRAPHY FOR A LIST OF ATLASES USED.

FIG. 2. THIS MAP IS NOT TO SCALE AND THE ROUTES ARE ONLY APPROXIMATIONS: SEE BIBLIOGRAPHY FOR A LIST OF ATLASES USED.

Fig. 5 Major Archeological Sites and Cultures to 2,600 BCE All boundaries and locations are approximations: See Bibliography for Other Sources

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