

The insurrection of Northwest China during the 270s: the chaos due to the inappropriate political system

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Abstract. The war of Qinliang area (located in today's Gansu Province, China) was an important historical event of the Western Jin Dynasty (265-317). In Chinese history, it was called the insurrection of Qinliang area. The insurgency of Hexi Sumbe's leader named Tufa Shujineng (?-279) greatly delayed the end of Three Kingdoms Period (220-280). From 270 to 279, more than one hundred thousand soldiers of Western Jin Dynasty were sent to the battle field. Four generals were killed by the army of Tufa. However, the mutiny was finally end by general Ma Long (?-?) and his little army (consisted of 3500 soldiers).

1 Introduction

In Chinese history, there was a war that was usually ignored. Chinese historians called it the insurrection of Qinliang area because it happened in Qin prefecture (its political center located in today's Eastern Gangu, Gansu Province, China) and Liang prefecture (its political center located in today's Wuwei, Gansu Province, China). This war happened in the last decade of Three Kingdoms Period. Because the two belligerent parties were not the three kingdoms Wei, Han and Wu, this war did not bring much attention. When researching about the history of this period, most of the researchers would pay attention to the war between Western Jin Dynasty and the Wu Kingdom. Some books about Chinese war history directly omit the part of the insurrection of Qinliang area. However, the insurrection of Qinliang area is also worth researching because it offers us a perfect reference when researching about the Northwest China's problem of nationality. Until today, the Northwest China's problem of nationality is still a hot topic.

More importantly, the politicians and scholars can draw the wrong lesson of dealing with their own countries' problem of nationality. At the same time, in the process of putting down the rebellion, general Ma Long adopted a special kind of tactic which perfectly exemplified an important military concept. This concept is also of great use when building a modern army. The aim of this thesis is to analyse this war in detail, summarizing the experience from Western Jin Dynasty's political and military figures.

However, the materials of this war are very few because it haven't caused widespread concern. It is the largest difficulty of this research. Fortunately, two history books of ancient China named *The Book of Jin* (648) and *Comprehensive Mirror for Aid in Government* (1085) recorded this war in detail, offering us a good way to

understand the whole process of this war. This research is based on the records of these two books.

2 Historical Background

2.1 The process of China's reunify

2.1.1 The demise of the Han Kingdom

In 220, Cao Pi (187-226) dethroned the last emperor of the Eastern Han Dynasty (25-220), building the Wei Kingdom (220-266) [1]. It symbolized that China entered a new period. In 221, Liu Bei (161-223) built the Han Kingdom (221-263). In 229, Sun Quan (182-252) built the Wu Kingdom. The war between the Wei and Han Kingdoms was the theme of this period's war history.

In 263, the Han Kingdom was finally captured by Deng Ai (197-264) and Zhong Hui (225-264), two generals of the Wei army. After annexing the Han Kingdom, the Wei Kingdom got its large army (about one hundred thousand soldiers) [2]. After that, the result of the war between the Wei and Wu Kingdoms would decide the real master of the whole China. However, the rise of the Sima family changed everything.

2.1.2 The build of the Western Jin Dynasty

The Sima family was the largest powerful minister family of the Wei Kingdom. It consolidated its political power through a series of coups and civil wars. In 266, under the lead of Sima Yan (236-290), the Sima family take the place of the Cao family, becoming the governor of the north China [3]. After becoming the emperor, Sima started to prepare for the war with the Wu Kingdom. In this process, he ignored many problems of the Western Jin Dynasty itself which caused a lot of trouble. The insurrection of Qinliang area also happened in this

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period. Finally, it took the Western Jin army nine years to defeat the rebel army of Tufa Shujineng. Until the end of 279, the plan of demising the Wu Kingdom was finally carried out.

2.2 The immigration problem during the 3th century's China

2.2.1 *The needs of import immigrants*

During late Eastern Han Dynasty (184-220), the Three Kingdoms Period and early Western Jin Dynasty, because of the frequent war, the number of the Han people experienced a steep decline. Therefore, the governor of these regimes started to use the people of barbarians to fill the vacancies of their troops and labor. For example, in late Eastern Han Dynasty, a famous warlord named Cao Cao (155-220) was the enthusiast of this policy, having many Wuhuan cavalymen enlisted in his army. Wuhuan was a nomadic people living in Northeast China, famous for its cavalry. This nationality finally demised after the battle of White Wolf Mountain (207). The rest of its people were relocated in the inner China by Cao Cao.

This policy was not the monopoly of the northern regimes. The Han and Wu Kingdoms, the armies of southern regimes also included many soldiers coming from barbarians. For example, Zhuge Liang, the prime minister of the Han Kingdom built an elite army named Wudang Feijun (translated as unstoppable army) with more than ten thousand barbarian soldiers of Nanzhong area (located in today's Yunnan Province, Guizhou Province and Southwest Sichuan Province, China) [6]. In 234, forty thousand of surrendered soldiers from Shanyue (living in the mountain area of Southeast China) were enlisted in the Wu army by Zhuge Ke (202-253), the nephew of Zhuge Liang, a general of the Wu Kingdom [1].

Importing immigrants with these methods could be seen as the regimes of the Han Nationality plundering the people of minority nationalities. These immigrants usually had another identity- prisoner of war. As a matter of fact, there was another kind of immigrant in this process, the nomads who surrendered to the northern regimes voluntarily. This phenomenon was called the migrating southward of the nomads.

2.2.2 *The particularity of barbarian army*

As a matter of fact, the barbarian army had its own advantage which came from their own life style. For example, the nomads were excellent cavalymen because they were natural riders. The people from Shanyue were famous mountain infantrymen because their living environment required them grasping the skill of climbing mountains and hiding themselves in the forests. Under the cover of mountains and forests, they even created their own guerrilla tactics [1]. The similar tactics even appeared in the battlefield of the 20th century's Vietnam.

Because of this advantage, the army consisted of barbarian soldiers could form combat effectiveness in a

short time, which perfectly met the needs of the 3th century's Chinese battlefield.

2.2.3 *The migrating southward of the nomads*

In Eastern Han Dynasty, the people from Xiongnu were relocated in inner China by the government of Han Dynasty after surrendering. In Western Jin Dynasty, they still lived in the territory of the Han people. For example, the people from southern Xiongnu were relocated in Bing prefecture (located in today's Taiyuan and Datong of Shanxi Province, Baoding of Heibei Province and the Hetao area of Inner Mongolia) [4]. Some of these people worked as farm laborers, working for the local families of upper class [4].

The Wei Kingdom and Western Jin Dynasty continued adopting the policy of the Eastern Han Dynasty, taking in many nomads from the nomadic tribes living in the north of China. The nomads were relocated in the inner China, living together with the people of the Han Nationality. In peacetime, these nomads would work as farmers and herdsman, filling the gap of labor. When the war started, they would be enlisted in the army because many of them were excellent cavalymen. At the same time, some officers of the Han people would be appointed as the superintendents of these nomads. General Deng Ai (197-264), the man who relocated the people of Sumbe in Hexi area was one of them.

However, it was a dangerous policy, built on the basis of a powerful army of the Han people. Once the regime of the Han Nationality started its decline, these nomads would rise in rebellion as soon as possible.

2.2.4 *The formation of Hexi Sumbe*

At the very beginning, the people of Sumbe lived in Mongolian Plateau. Because of many reasons, some of them started the process of migrating southward. The Tufa family was one of these tribes.

Finally, these people of Sumbe were relocated in Heixi area (located in today's Hexi Corridor of Gansu Province and Qinghai Huangshui River Basin of Qinghai Province, China) by general Deng Ai [4]. That's why these people were called Hexi Sumbe. This name first appeared in *Records of the Three Kingdoms* (finished in the 280s) [1]. The Tufa family was not the only one tribe who finally arrived in Hexi area. But it was the most powerful one. This tribe finally became the leading role of the insurrection of Qinliang area.

As a matter of fact, Sumbe was not the only nomadic tribe who lived in Hexi area. Many tribes of the Qiang people were also the residents of this area. Therefore, the military officer of this area was called Hu Qiang Xiaowei, translated as the officer who guarded the area of the Qiang people. Objectively, Deng's importing immigrants of Sumbe greatly complicated the situation of this area, bringing a hidden trouble to the government of the Han people.

2.3 The political situation of Western Jin Dynasty

2.3.1 Family politics

When reading the history books of ancient China, there are a few words such as Shijia Dazu, Haozu and Menfa appearing frequently. It is about a special social phenomenon: family politics. The phenomenon of a few families controlling the politics, economy and army was called family politics. In China, the influential family of the Han Nationality first appeared in Han Dynasty and greatly influenced the whole country for a few centuries. Even the emperors from minority nationalities also needed to rely on them to sustain their own regimes. This mode was not only popular in central government but also was accepted by local government. In the Three Kingdoms period, many famous politicians such as Zhuge Liang and Sima Yi (179-251) were from these influential families. Of course, the influential families of different areas had different names. For example, the Han influential families of Nanzhong area were called Daxing, translated as the large family name. This name first appeared in *Book of later Han* (432-445) [5].

What's more, the 3th century's North China was full of the atmosphere of family politics, greatly influencing the army. The generals of the Wei Kingdom could be divided into two parts: Zongshi generals (the generals came from imperial family) and Waixing generals (the generals didn't come from imperial family). This tradition came from Cao Cao, the father of the Wei Kingdom. Only the Zongshi generals had the chance to lead Tiger and Leopard cavalry, the best cavalry of the Cao family [1].

As the successor of the Wei Kingdom, the Western Jin was built under such political atmosphere, paying much attention to family politics. However, since it was a newly built Dynasty during the 270s, the own talent system of imperial family was not totally built. As a matter of fact, most of the juniors of the Sima family performed worse in history. It finally became the largest disadvantage of Western Jin Dynasty, bringing the whole country into a huge disaster. Unsurprisingly, during the insurrection of Qinliang area, the performance of Western Jin's generals of the royal family had little to commend.

2.3.2 The wrong personnel tactics of Western Jin Dynasty

Under the influence of family politics, Sima Yan couldn't give enough trust to the generals who didn't come from his own family. What's worse, because the Sima family got the throne through coups, accompanied by political cleansing, many excellent commanders were killed during this process which let Sima's personnel tactics become very conservative. It directly led to a series of failed military actions in Northwest China.

3 A series of failed military action of the Western Jin Dynasty

3.1 The introduction of the Western Jin Dynasty's three failed military actions

3.1.1 The situation of the three military actions from 270 to 271

The situation of the three military actions of the Western Jin army is as shown in table 1.

Table 1. The situation of the three military actions of the Western Jin army

Time	Commander (s)	Result
270	Hu Lie (220-270)	Failed
270	Shi Jian (?-294) and Du Yu (222-285)	Failed
271	Qian Hong (?-271)	Failed

3.1.2 The death of Hu Lie

When reading the history of the Three Kingdoms, you will find that Hu was an important military figure during the late Wei Kingdom. He not only took part in the battle of demising the Han Kingdom but also defeated the Wu army for a few times [1].

In the 260s, Sima Yan noticed the unusual behavior of Sumbe tribes. Therefore, Hu Lie was appointed as Qinzhou Cishi (the top leader of Qin prefecture), guarding the tribe of Tufa. In mid 270, Hu's army started to attack Tufa's rebel army. However, he was finally defeated by the rebel army in Wanhu Dui (located in today's Jingyuan, Gansu Province, China), becoming the first victim of the Western Jin army's general during the the insurrection of Qinliang area [3] [4].

During this process, Sima Liang, the uncle of the emperor, the top leader of Qinliang area's station troop's asked one of his officers named Liu Qi to save Hu with his own army. However, because of Liu's timidity, the reinforcements finally didn't arrive. After the battle, Sima even tried to shield his subordinate. Finally, he lost his own government post. However, Sima staged a comeback to the political circles before long [3].

3.1.3 The largest scandal during the war

After Hu's death, Du Yu, a famous military genius of the Western Jin Dynasty was appointed as the new top leader of the Qin prefecture. He went to the front line with three hundred soldiers and one hundred warhorses, under the lead of Shi Jian, his political opponent [3]. Unsurprisingly, a violent conflict broke out between the two commanders of the Western Jin army. Du refused to start the military action because he thought that the army was not well prepared [3] [4]. At the same time, he summarized nine suggestions, submitting them to Shi [3]. Finally, Du was unseated and sent to law-enforcing departments by Shi. Because of his marriage with the princess, Du finally escaped from being sentenced [3].

Without the help of Du, Shi's military action finally ended with failure.

3.1.4 *The death of Qian Hong*

In 271, because of the consecutive failure of Western Jin Dynasty's government army, some other nomadic tribes also started join in the rebel army. One of the tribes was called Beidi Hu, the nomads living in Beidi County (located in today's Yao County and Fuping County, Shaanxi Province, China), starting to attack Jincheng (located today's Lanzhou, Gansu Province, China). Qian Hong, the top leader of Liang Prefecture started to fight against them. However, there were some soldiers in Qian's army also came from nomadic tribes. They finally betrayed and besieged Qian [3] [4]. Qian finally died after being defeated. Before long, the next top leader of Liang prefecture named Su Yu (223-271) was also killed by the rebel army. The death of Su Yu was not recorded in *The Book of Jin* or *Comprehensive Mirror for Aid in Government*. The relative record appeared in *The Book of Song* (488) [7].

3.2 The analysis of the three failed military action

3.2.1 *The analysis of Hu Lie's military action*

The failure of Hu mainly because of Sima Yan's incorrect personnel tactics. As mentioned before, the Sima family got the throne through coups. Therefore, loyalty was the most important character when they appointed officials. From this angle, Hu was an excellent subordinate. Hu once fought for the Sima family, defeating the rebel army of Zhong Hui [1]. At the same time, Hu did well in frontier defence, defeating the Wu army for a few times. In Sima's eyes, a loyal and brave general was the most suitable candidate of the top leader of Qin prefecture.

However, Sima ignored a problem. Hu was a career soldier, having no experience to deal with the problem of nationality. As a matter of fact, this problem once caused disputes in Western Jin's government. A general named Chen Qian (201-281) thought that Hu Lie and Qian Hong were not suitable for the situations of the border area [3]. Because they were brave but not intelligent enough [3]. An official named Fu Xuan (217-278) thought that the nomads were capricious but Hu could managed them well [3]. Finally, Fu's advice was accepted by the emperor.

Fu's view was all of the problems came from the nomads. Appointing a career soldier as the top leader of Qin prefecture showed that Sima wanted to deal with the problem through violence.

What's worse, most of Hu's military career was facing the armies of the Han and Wu Kingdoms, famous for infantry tactics, having no enough experience to face the nomadic troops. All the reasons above finally led to his death. The situation of Northwest started to become out of control.

At the same time, Sima Liang's inability also led to the tragedy. A commander in chief who covered up his subordinate without bottom line could keep staying in the situation of senior official. This phenomenon showed that the high class of the Western Jin Dynasty had started to deprave.

3.2.2 *The analysis of Shi Jian's military action*

The reason of Shi Jian's failure was really clear. As a commander in chief, he had serious personality problems. When facing the enemy, he could not accept the advice of professional (Du Yu). What's worse, he thought that it was a chance of abusing public power to retaliate against his personal enemy. After being defeated, he also made a false report [3]. Such a person could keep staying in political circles, the maladministration of the Western Jin Dynasty was evident.

3.2.3 *The analysis of Qian Hong's military action*

The mistake that Qian Hong made was much bigger than Hu and Shi. He even did not pay attention to the problem of nationality. His aim was to suppress the nomads. In this process, he needed to avoid letting the barbarian soldiers stay in his army. However, he just did nothing and finally led to the failure.

3.2.4 *The summary of the Western Jin army's military action from 270 to 271*

In these two years, the reasons of a series of failed military action of the Western Jin army came from the sponsors and executors. The government just saw the insurrection as common revolt, ignoring the element of nationality problem. As a matter of fact, during this period, just a few tribes join in the rebel army. If appointed an officer who was familiar with nationalities affairs, the insurrection would be put down in a short time. However, the Western Jin army just wanted to deal with the problem with violence. At the same time, the emperor cared more about the insurrection itself when deciding the choice of persons.

Besides, the quality of the Western Jin army's officers was not as high as commonly seen. Indeed, they performed well in Southern battlefield. However, most of them such as Hu Lie and Qian Hong were just the commanders of auxiliary force. When needed to take complete charge, their ability started to fall short of the wishes. Cause they were career soldiers, without the ability of judging the overall situation.

4 The political struggle of Western Jin's central government

4.1 War is the continuation of politics

4.1.1 Murdering a person with a borrowed knife

In 277, the war between Western Jin Dynasty and Tufa Shujineng appeared a turning point because Wen Chu (238-291), the bravest general of the Western Jin army was sent to the battle field by Sima Yan. However, before introducing general Wen's heroism, we need to pay attention an important political event which clearly reflecting the political environment of Western Jin Dynasty.

Jia Chong (217-282) was a favourite of the Sima family because he did well in the process of Sima's coup. Because of his villainous personality, many officials wanted to put him to death. Some of them suggested Sima Yan appointing Jia as the top leader of Qinliang area's army, wanting Tufa's cavalry to kill Jia on the battlefield [3]. Without hesitation, the emperor accepted their suggestions.

4.1.2 A political marriage which saved Jia's life

After getting the certificate of appointment, Jia tried everything he could to delay coming to Qin Liang area. Xun Xu (?-289), an official who came from the same political camp advice him to marry his daughter to Sima Yan's son which will help him avoid leaving the capital [3]. Jia followed his advice and finally avoid being sent to the battlefield.

4.2 The analysis of the political scandals

4.2.1 The angle of Jia Chong

As a matter of fact, it was not the first time that Jia took part in military actions. In the Wei Kingdom period, he performed well in a few civil wars [3]. He also acted as the top leader of army when attacking Zhong Hui's (225-264) rebel army though the war came to an end before he arrived the battle field.

However, Jia clearly knew that it was his political opponent's plot. Tufa would become the knife that impaled his heart. As a matter if fact, Jia was a good staff officer but not a good commander in chief. The most important tool of him to become the favourite was his loyalty because he once instigated Cheng Ji (?-206) to kill the emperor of the Wei Kingdom during the coup, helping the Sima family control the government [3]. In a word, he was just a hound of the Sima family, having no ability to undertake the task alone. But, there was a bottom line of Jia's loyalty: his benefit must be guaranteed.

4.2.2 The angle of Xun Xu

As a matter of fact, saving Jia's life was not the real aim of Xun. Xun was a mere politician, knowing that Jia was the best tool of his political camp. Once Jia left the power center, his political camp would lose power at the same time.

4.2.3 The angle of Sima Yan

From the event, we could easily see that Sima's gold standard of choosing the top leader of Qinliang area's army was loyalty. Because his family became the emperor through coup, he was afraid that other generals would do the same thing. Once they concluded with Tufa, the dynasty of the Sima family might probably come to an end. Therefore, he worried to much when choosing the generals. Unfortunately, the generals he trusted didn't have sufficient processing power to defeat Tufa's rebel army.

5 The turning point of the insurrection

5.1 The victory of Wen Chu

5.1.1 Tufa Shujineng's pretending surrender

From 274 to 276, Sima Yan's uncle named Sima Jun (232-286) defeated Tufa's army in a series of counterattacks. After being defeated, Tufa chose to surrender to the Western Jin government. When the Western Jin army stopped attacking, Tufa and his army would rebel again.

5.1.2 Wen Chu's military action

As a matter of fact, according to the *Book of Jin*, the description of Wen's military action was really simple. Wen defeated Tufa in a short time [3]. After that, more than 200,000 people of Sumbe surrendered to Western Jin Dynasty [3].

5.2 The analysis of Wen's military action

After reading the history records, it usually appears a question. Now that general Wen was such an excellent commander, why the emperor did not send him to the battlefield before the situation was out of control. If Wen could led the army in 271, many officers and soldiers would not die in vain.

As a matter of fact, the Wen family was the political opponent of the Sima family during the Wei Kingdom period. Wen Chu's father was called Wen Qin (?-258). In a civil war, Wen Qin's army fought fiercely against the army of Sima Shi (208-255), the uncle of Sima Yan. During the battle, Sima Shi even lost one of his eyes under the attack of Wen Chu [4]. Therefore, Sima Yan was wary of Wen Chu. After the war, he even removed Wen from office.

From Sima's behavior, we could see that he was not a qualified emperor because he let hatred defeat his reason. As a governor, the stability of his country is a matter of primary importance. His emotional decision finally led to enormous losses.

In a word, the belated successful military action greatly weakened the force of Hexi Sumbe, laying a foundation of Ma Long's final victory.

6 The final battle of the insurrection

6.1 Another failure of the Western Jin Dynasty

6.1.1 The death of Yang Xin

In 277, the Western Jin army got a great victory under the lead of Wen Chu, greatly weakening the force of Tufa Shujineng. However, the governor of Western Jin Dynasty undervalued the perseverance of Tufa. In 278, he rose in rebellion again, defeating the army of Yang Xin (?-278), the top leader of Liang prefecture (located in today's Gansu Province, China). Yang was killed by Ruoluo Baneng (?-305), a famous general of Hexi Sumbe [3]. By the way, Ruoluo was a talented general. He not only escaped from being killed by Ma Long's army during the final battle in 279 but also trained another army to fight against the Western Jin army twenty seven years later. Unfortunately, he met another military genius named Zhang Gui (254-314) and finally defeated by him [3]. This time, he could meet his old leader Tufa Shujineng.

6.1.2 Ma Long becoming the liberator of the Western Jin Dynasty

After hearing the news of Yang's failure, Sima Yan finally started to pay attention to the situation of Western Jin Dynasty's northwest territory. At the moment, Ma Long, a junior officer volunteered to defeat the rebel force of Tufa Shujineng. This decision not only saved the Western Jin Dynasty but also let Ma's name live in history.

6.2 The strategy of Ma Long

6.2.1 Penetrated behind the enemy line with a little army

Those generals who fought against Tufa Shujineng usually adopted a traditional tactic. They kept searching for the main force of Tufa, hoping to have a decisive battle against these Sumbe cavalymen. However, because of the home court advantage and the motility of cavalry, Tufa could be defeated easily. After researching the tactic of Tufa, Ma found the best way to deal with the problem. He built a little army consisted of 3,500 elite infantrymen, equipped with special weapons [3]. These soldiers would become the nightmare of Tufa Shujineng.

6.2.2 Defeating Sumbe with Sumbe

As a matter of fact, Ma had predicted the failure of Yang before he died in the battle [3]. Ma thought that it was a big mistake that Yang did not have a good relationship with those Sumbe tribes who maintained a neutral stance. After coming to the battle field, in order to offset the home court advantage of Tufa, Ma tried to gain the support of some local nomadic tribes. Finally, many nomadic tribes responded to his call, joining the Western Jin army to fight against Tufa Shujineng.

6.3 The army of Ma Long

6.3.1 Elite crossbowmen of Ma's army

After analyzing the rebel army, Ma decided to defeat these cavalymen with elite crossbowmen. Therefore, the skill of using crossbow and bow was the only standard when he chose the soldiers. Under the high standard, he finally got 3,500 soldiers [3].

6.3.2 The crossbowmen of the Han nationality

Because of some incorrect interpretation of modern Chinese historians, many people think that the cavalry of nomads was invincible in ancient Chinese history. As a matter of fact, it is a view of reserve nationalism which contains political purposes. As a matter of fact, no matter for the regimes of the Han Nationality and minority nationalities, the army consisted of the officers and the soldiers from the Han Nationality were the most important force during the whole Chinese war history. This theory is still established until today. Therefore, the cavalry of nomads was invincible was a fable. As a matter of fact, as early as Western Han dynasty (206 B.C.-24), Wei Qing (?-106 B.C.), a strategist of the Han nationality had created a tactic of defeating the cavalymen with crossbowmen and chariots. In the battle of Mobei (119 B.C.), he became the first commander who put this tactic into practice [8].

Under this military thought, Ma also adopted this tactic during the war. The result of the war proved that it was an effective tactic.

6.3.3 The chariot

The system created by general Wei had two cores: crossbowmen and war chariots. Pay attention, Wei's chariots were totally different from the traditional ones (as shown in figure 1) which was a kind of special transport (as shown in figure 2). When fighting, these chariots could act as the soldiers' shield. On this basis, Ma Long invented a new kind of chariot named Pianxiang Che, including a chariot and a small wooden house (as shown in figure 3). The Sumbe cavalymen who got closed to the chariots would be easily shot by the crossbowmen hiding in the wooden house [3]. By the way, a kind of chariot which had the same name as Ma's appeared in the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644). This kind of weapon was recorded in Qi Jiguang's (1528-1588)

military works (as shown in figure 4) [11].



Fig.1 The traditional Chinese war chariot [9]



Fig.2 The scene of Wei Qing defeating the Xiongnu cavalry with chariots [9]

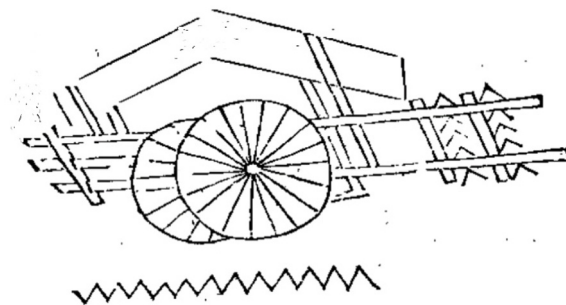


Fig.3 The war chariots invented by Ma Long [10]

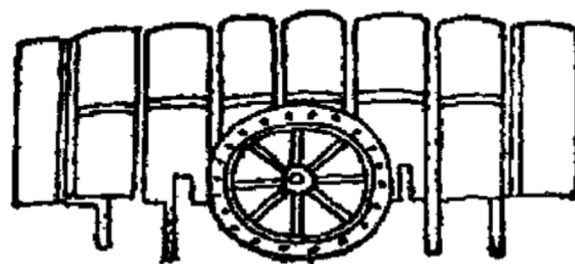


Fig.4 The chariot recorded in Qi Jiguang's military works [11]

6.4 The process of Ma's military action

6.4.1 Defeating the ambush

At the beginning of 279, Ma and his soldiers started their western expedition. In order to stop them, more than 10,000 soldiers of Tufa were arranged in the places with dangerous terrain [3]. However, relying on the tactic of chariot, Ma and his soldiers finally arrived in Wuwei (located in today's Gansu Province, China). After that, many people of Sumbe chose to surrender to Ma.

6.4.2 The death of Tufa Shujineng

From leaving the capital to arriving in Wuwei, Ma's army had greatly weakened the force of Tufa. During this process, Tufa totally lost tens of thousands of soldiers [3]. Some of them were killed by Ma's army. Some of them chose to surrender. Finally, Ma built coalition forces with Mo Guneng (?-?), a chief of some local Sumbe tribes. Under the attack of them, Tufa's rebel army was finally eliminated. Tufa was also killed during this process.

6.5 The analysis of Ma Long's military action

6.5.1 The utilizing of the thought of Bing Jiqiao

Bing Jiqiao is a military vocabulary of China which first appeared in *Hanshu*. It describes the importance of martial arts and weapons for an army [8]. Qi Jiguang, the general who was mentioned before, was one of the most famous figures of this thought.

Before started the expedition, Ma designed and produced many new chariots in order to defeat the Sumbe cavalry with a high efficiency. As a matter of fact, the chariots of Ma's style were of great use during the process of war. Defeating the enemy with new-type weapons is actually an effective way during the war. As a matter of fact, the invention of many new weapons such as tank and machine gun was the embodiment of this military thought.

However, the practice of this thought is not an easy thing. It requires the officers or researchers have enough knowledge of war. At the same time, the atmosphere is also of great importance. As a matter of fact, the Three Kingdoms period was a nonnegligible period during the whole Chinese war history. Because of the unstoppable wars, this period's technology of war experienced a rapid development. In this process, the achievements of two weapon's experts were really bright. Ma Long was one of them. Another one was Zhuge Liang, a strategist who is famous all around the world.

6.5.2 Making full use of enemies' internal contradictions

As mentioned before, Ma thought that defeating the people of Sumbe with some other people of their same

nationality was an important tactic. Under this guiding ideology, Ma kept trying to seek cooperation with some Sumbe tribes who had contradiction with Tufa Shujineng. After that, some chiefs such as Mo Guneng became his aim. Managing these people by alternating kindness with cruelty, Ma got their support in a short time. As a matter of fact, Sumbe was just a loose tribal alliances having huge contradictions among different tribes. At the same time, in some chiefs' opinion, the support of Western Jin Dynasty could help them better overpowering other tribes, letting Ma had the opportunity to divide them. As a matter of fact, the victory of Wen Chu was also of great importance. The great power of the Western Jin army successfully disintegrated the alliance of Hexi Sumbe.

More importantly, with some Sumbe tribes affiliating, Ma's army got a powerful mounted troop which would offset Tufa's advantage of motility. After that, the failure of Tufa's rebel army was just a matter of time.

7 The problems of Western Jin Dynasty during the 270s

7.1 The political problems of Western Jin Dynasty during the 270s

7.1.1 The adverse effects of family politics

In Sui Dynasty, imperial examination system started to become the most important way of talent selection [12]. Before that, in China, family background was the most important factor for a man who wanted to enter the political arena. In Han Dynasty, there appeared a special class named Shizu (the families of power and influence) which kept influencing China for a few centuries. During this period, even the regimes built by the nomads also had to look for the support of them. Western Jin Dynasty was a regime of Shizu. The Sima family built Western Jin Dynasty through allying with these influential families [13]. As a matter of fact, the Sima family were also one of these families.

This system led to a bad phenomenon that the most important positions of Western Jin's government and army were controlled by these families which led to the infighting of different families. Every family wanted to look for the maximum benefit. During this process, the emperors also needed to think about the importance of balance. In peaceful time, this system would not cause many questions. However, at that time, peace was not the theme.

What's worse, as mentioned before, the Sima family got the power through coups. Building a regime through this way usually cause the regime being congenitally deficient. In this situation, the emperors could not give enough trust to the official, especially the generals. Therefore, most of the generals that Sima Yan trusted were from the families that followed him during the way he got the throne. It bungled many military opportunities at the beginning of the insurrection.

7.1.2 *The infighting of Western Jin Dynasty's officials*

When the war started, the officials of Western Jin Dynasty still kept fighting. As an old saying goes, war is nothing but the continuation of politics [14]. However, as the officials of Western Jin Dynasty see, war is nothing but their weapon of politics. In this process, they still thought about killing their enemies through letting the emperor sent their enemies to the battlefield.

What's worse, the contradiction between civil officials and military officials broke out during the war. Some civil officials even wanted to stop Ma Long from starting the expedition. After analyzing, we could found out the real reason. Ma didn't come from a family of Shizu. If he defeated Tufa, he might become an important official, sharing the power with vests interests. It was what they did not want to see.

As a matter of fact, Ma did not have the chance enter the power center. He even lost his position because some dignitaries made a false charge against him. Fortunately, because Ma was the only one who had the ability to frighten the nomads, he finally preserved his official position. It reflected the dark side of Western Jin Dynasty.

8 The nationality problems of Western Jin Dynasty

8.1 The wrong attitude towards the barbarian army

8.1.1 *The expansion of private army*

As a matter of fact, compared with that of the Wu Kingdom (229-280), the cavalry of Western Jin Dynasty was excellent enough. However, the officers of the Western Jin army still chose to absorb the soldiers of the nomads into the army. Here, we need to talk about Buqu system, a special military system from Western Han Dynasty to Northern and Southern Dynasties (420-589). In late Han Dynasty, Buqu had become the private army of influential family [15]. In Wei Kingdom period, this system became a legal system, used as a way to expend national defense capabilities [15]. The Han and Wu Kingdoms were of the same situation [15]. As, mentioned before, in Western Jin Dynasty, influential families controlled the country. Therefore, they need more private armies to show their honorable status. However, because of the wars in the Three Kingdoms period, the population of Han nationality experienced a sharp depress. Having difficulty to expend the private army through recruiting the Han people, the people from minority nationality became their new aim. There the most famous example of this phenomenon was the military action of Zhuge Ke. After the war between him and Shan Yue, more than ten thousand barbarian soldiers joined in his army.

In this background, the government of the Wei Kingdom usually accepted the nomads surrender because

it conformed to the interest of those influential families. Therefore, more and more people from Wuhuan, Sumbe and Xiongnu started to live in the territory of Western Jin Dynasty. The government of Western Jin Dynasty also adopted the same policy.

8.1.2 *The dissenting voices*

Facing the phenomenon, some officials had different views. Deng Ai was the most famous one. He thought that the nomads were capricious [1]. When the regime of Han people was powerful enough, they would surrender [1]. When it started to become weak, they would betray [1]. Deng advised that the government should let the nomads migrate to the grassland, separating from the civilians of Han people [1]. After a few centuries, Li Shimin, one of the most famous emperors also had the same remark. Angrily, he compared the nomads to the beasts, just knowing to submit to force [3]. As a matter of fact, the same story between the Han people and minority nationality had happened many times. The built of the Qing Dynasty (1636-1912) was the most famous example. However, as an old saying goes, the only lesson humans learn from history is that they will not learn any lessons from history.

For the Wei Kingdom and Western Jin Dynasty, the death of general Deng was a great loss. The man who saw the problem died before he started to deal with the problem. The happen of the insurrection of Northwest China during the 270s was the best evidence of his theory. Unfortunately, though the rebel army was finally defeated by Ma Long, the ruling class of Western Jin Dynasty still could not pay attention to this problem which finally led to a cataclysm.

8.2 The bad ethnic policy of Western Jin Dynasty

8.2.1 *The interest brought by the migrant of the nomads*

Except working as the soldiers, the nomads who lived in the territory of Western Jin Dynasty would also act as farmers [3]. As a matter of fact, this phenomenon also appeared in the period of the Wei Kingdom [3]. Of course, their employers were the influential families.

As a matter of, in peaceful time, it could be just seen as a kind of dealing with the labor shortage by importing people. However, peace was not the main stream of that period. What's worse, the way of importing people was not war of conquest. It led to a hidden danger that these nomads did not fear the government of Western Jin enough. These armed refugees would easily become the tools of schemers.

8.2.2 *The cataclysm led by schemers*

From 291 to 306, Western Jin experienced a civil strife named the Rebellion by the Eight Kings. In this process, the cavalymen of Sumbe and Wuhuan were used as the

shock brigade of the rebel army. In this process, a schemer who was born into the Wang family (a famous influential family) named Wang Jun (252-314) occupied the capital of Western Jin Dynasty with the help of the Sumbe cavalry [3]. As a matter of fact, before the rebellion, he had married off two of his daughters to two leaders of Sumbe [3]. So that the Sumbe cavalry would act as his mobile force.

What's worse, during the war, the Sumbe cavalry learned the tactic of charge [16]. Finally, they became a huge threat of Western Jin Dynasty. These nomadic tribes finally let China enter a chaotic period which lasted for more than a few centuries. Western Jin Dynasty should undertake certain responsibilities.

9 Conclusion

The insurrection of Northwest China during the 270s was the prelude of trouble times. It not only weakened the force of Western Jin Dynasty but also delayed the end of the Three Kingdoms. In this process, many problems of nationality were exposed. However, because of the outdated system, the governors could not deal with the problems promptly. What's worse, because of the ongoing war of the Three Kingdoms, high level military talents were fewer and fewer. All the problems were ignored since the upper class of Western Jin Dynasty was busy with internal strife. At the same time, the emperor was not strong enough to suppress the influential families, letting them get too much power. The government of Jin just saw the nomads as their servants and mercenaries, ignoring the importance of assimilation education which led to the barrier between the Han people and the nomadic tribes. As a matter of fact, the rebel army was not so powerful. The largest enemy of Western Jin Dynasty was the ruling class itself.

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