Son of Heaven and Son of God: Interactions among Ancient Asiatic Cultures regarding Sacral Kingship and Theophoric Names

SANPING CHEN

This article examines the interrelationship and interactions between the notions of ''son of heaven'' and ''son of god'' with respect to sacral kingship in Inner Asia and East Asia by first uncovering a previously unnoticed synthesis of the two in ancient Inner Asia. In the end, we reveal yet another example of the perennial three-way interactions between the Sinitic, Iranic and Altaic cultures. The standard historiography and much of modern scholarship tend to concentrate on the conflicts between these three cultures, or rather between the native Chinese and the Hu 胡 Barbarians. Yet it is gradually being recognized that the blossoming of the Chinese civilization actually represented a symbiosis of these seemingly conflicting cultural forces. This study can then be regarded as a small contribution to this thesis.

Preliminary Notes on the ''Son of Heaven''

A major shortcoming of Julia Ching's otherwise detailed exposition of the ''son of heaven'' in ancient China[1] is that it fails to mention, let alone to discuss, a basic fact that the very concept of ''heaven'', much less the ''son of heaven'' and the ''mandate of heaven'', was not quite a ''native'' Chinese notion. In a nutshell, Tian 天 or ''Heaven'' started as a ''Barbarian'' deity, imposed by the victorious Zhou 周 tribes who conquered the Shang 商, the first verifiable Chinese dynasty.

As far as I am aware, Herrlee Creel in a 1935 essay written in elegant Chinese was the first to make this important discovery, followed independently by the oracle bone authority Guo Moruo 郭沫若.[2] This conclusion is heartedly agreed upon by other oracle bone specialists like Dong Zuobin 董作賓, Hu Houxuan 胡厚宣 and Chen Mengjia 陳夢家.[3]

The author thanks Professor Phillipe Gignoux for communications regarding ancient Iranian theophoric names, and an anonymous reader for his thoughtful corrections.

[1] ''Son of Heaven: sacral kingship in ancient China'', *TP* LXXXIII (1997), pp. 2–41, despite the author's statement (p. 4) that her study focused on ''mainly the Shang (c.1766–c.1122 B.C.) and the Chou (c.1122–256)''.

[2] Gu Liya 顧立雅 (H.G. Creel), ''Shi Tian'' 釋天, *Yanjing xuebao* 燕京學報, XVIII (1935), pp. 59–71. and Guo, *Xian-Qin tiandaoguan zhi jinzhan* 先秦天道觀之進展 (Shanghai: Shangwu, 1936). Guo's book was published under the penname Guo Dingtang 郭鼎堂 because at the time Guo was a political exile living in Japan. From the date (December 1935) of his supplementary notes, Guo made the discovery no later than Creel. Later in his *The Origins of Statecraft in China* (Chicago, 1970), i, pp. 493–506, Creel gave another extensive exposition of this issue with more data.

[3] Hu, *Jiagu Shangshi luncong chuji* 甲骨商史論叢初集 (Qi-Lu University Press, 1944; reprint Taipei, 1972), p. 328 and Chen, *Yinxu buci zongshu* 殷墟卜辭綜述 (Beijing, 1988), p. 531. For Dong's opinion, see Creel, p. 496.

The finding is that the character *tian* appeared only rarely in oracle bones, and can always be interpreted a variant of *da* 大 "large, great".[4] Only in Western Zhou bronze inscriptions did *tian* emerge to clearly denote a deity, followed, naturally, by the appearance of *tianming* 天命 "mandate of heaven" and finally *tianzi* 天子 "son of heaven".[5] I may add that Creel's and Guo's conclusion is also supported by the discovery of the early Zhou oracle bones in recent years.[6]

Nevertheless, it is often assumed that Tian, the Zhou people's "Yahweh", was the equivalent of the Shang high god Di 帝 or Shangdi 上帝.[7] There are, however, many problems with this presumption, based largely on Zhou and post-Zhou documents and political concepts. The simple fact that the character *di* was used foremost in oracle bones as an honorific for royal fathers and forefathers has forced Guo Moruo (p. 17) to state that Di "was both supreme god and ancestor god(s) in one 至上神而兼宗祖神". This interpretation, however awkward as it is, can certainly never be applied to Tian. This distinction is also amply demonstrated by the Chinese terms *tianzi* "son of heaven" and later *huangdi* 皇帝 "emperor". In simple words, Di could, from the very beginning, represent a (deceased) human or demigod. But Tian, at least initially, had always been a deity. Robert Eno went as far as to question whether there existed a single supreme deity in the Shang pantheon.[8] While this may be a contention impossible to resolve clearly based on available Shang inscription data, Eno's general conclusion that Di was employed as a generic or corporate term, and was derived from a root meaning of "father" is certainly convincing and amply substantiated by the oracle bone inscriptions.

Sifting through the existing historical political documents composed almost entirely after the Zhou conquest of the Shang, one can indeed find internal proof that the Zhou heaven deity could not, at least initially, be taken as an equivalent of the Shang "Lord-on-high", the latter's questionable existence notwithstanding. One of the fundamental aspects of Zhou religious practice, as Allen Chun has quoted prominently in his study of kinship and kingship in the Zhou era, is that: [9]

> The gods do not accept sacrifices from persons who are not of their own race, while men do not worship those who are not of their own lineage 神不歆非類, 民不祀非族.

[4] Compare this with the ancient Greeks' transcribing the Indo-Iranian *bayа* "god" as Μαγα and Μεγα, thus confusing it with μεγα "groβ". See for instance Ferdinand Justi, *Iranisches Namenbuch* (reprint of 1895 edition: Hildesheim, 1963), p. 56.

[5] See for instance Chen *Yinxu buci* p. 531 for the specific bronze inscriptions.

[6] Wang Yuxin 王宇信, *Xizhou jiagu tanlun* 西周甲骨探論 (Beijing, 1984), pp. 102, 311.

[7] For example, in Julia Ching's study of the "son of heaven", no clear distinction was made between the alleged Shang "Lord-on-high" and the Zhou "heaven god".

[8] Robert Eno, "Was there a High God *Ti* in Shang religion?", *Early China* XV (1990), pp. 1–26. It is rather unfortunate that Julia Ching's 1997 article did not seem to have consulted Eno's enlightening study of her presumed Shang "Lord-on-high".

[9] Allen J. Chun, "Conceptions of kinship and kingship in classical Chou China", *TP* LXXVI (1990), pp. 16–48. My translation is adapted from that of Sybille van der Sprenkel, *Legal Institutions in Manchu China* (London, 1962), p. 152, translated from a Song dynasty source, which Chun quoted without recognizing the much older origin of this principle. The sentence not merely, as van der Sprenkel claims, "echoes a passage in", but is literally lifted from, *Zuozhuan* 左傳, Xigong 僖公 Year 10 (650 BC). See *Chunqiu jingzhuan jijie* 春秋經傳集解 (Shanghai: Shanghai Guji, 1988 – hereafter quoted as *Zuozhuan*), 5.276.

Among other things, this image of the gods jealously looking after the interests of only their ''chosen people'' is certainly consistent with other ancient religious traditions, the ancient Semitic/Jewish god Yahweh in particular.

Even if we accept the murky existence of a supreme Shang ''Lord-on-high'', then as summarized by Chen Mengjia, ''there was no blood relationship between the supreme god and [Shang] kings.''[10] Despite the broad meaning of Di, which often meant royal patriarchs and forefathers, a Shang king was never called a ''son of Di''.[11] In contrast, the Zhou not only was the first concrete case of heaven worship, or one may say a ''heaven cult'', but it also established for the first time in Chinese history the concept that the king was a ''son of heaven''. Furthermore, this change was implemented through the equally important political notion that a king's right to rule came from a ''mandate of heaven''. The latter, as many authors have observed, originally was undoubtedly part of Zhou propaganda in legitimizing their conquest of the apparently more advanced Shang civilization.[12] But it represented perhaps also the Zhou's single most important contribution to the Chinese political beliefs ever since. Hsu, Cho-yun and Kathryn Linduff even hailed it as having ''opened the course for the long Chinese tradition of humanism and rationalism.''[13] This is, however, beyond the scope of this article.

On the etymology of *tian*, as observed by Creel, the ''top'' interpretation given by *Shuowen jiezi* 說文解字 does not reconcile with the character's bronze inscription forms, which clearly show *tian* to be a variant of *da* 大, ''a big man''. The projection of a human image on god is nothing unusual, as vouched by Genesis. What is worth noting is that the Zhou heaven deity is also known as Haotian 昊天. The bronze inscription form of the character *hao* 昊, again a Zhou creation, shows unmistakable resemblance to *tian*, or yet another variant of *da*. Based on recent progress in reconstructing archaic Chinese pronunciations,[14] I have suggested in another study that the original Zhou heaven deity had a multisyllabic name **gh?klien*, which may have been a cognate to what later became the Xiongnu 匈奴 word Qilian/Helian 祁連/赫連 for ''heaven''.[15]

At issue here is the little noted fact that despite its extraordinary long reign and its largely successful and utterly one-sided propaganda in depicting itself as a legitimate successor to the Shang, the Zhou was clearly the first example of conquest by ''Barbarians'' of a more advanced civilization in East Asia. Even after three millennia, traces of the Zhou's ''Barbarism'' still remain. It is well-known that Mencius had referred to King Wen of the Zhou as a *xiyi zhiren* 西夷之人 ''Western Barbarian''. Edwin Pulleyblank also noted the many ''Barbarian'' tribes with which the Zhou had allied itself.[16] Further evidence of theZhou's ''Barbarian'' traits will be presented later. I shall also demonstrate that the

[10] Chen, *Yinxu buci*, p. 580.

[11] Much later, the great Chu 楚 poet Qu Yuan 屈原 (c.340–c.278 BC) in his poem *Xiang furen* 湘夫人 used the term *dizi* 帝子 to mean ''daughter of a sage/god-king'', where the sage-king was the legendary Emperor Yao 帝堯.

[12] Read for example Creel, *The Origins*, p. 44.

[13] Hsu, Cho-yun and Kathryn Linduff, *Western Chou Civilization* (New Haven, 1988), p. 111.

[14] William H. Baxter, *A Handbook of Old Chinese Phonology* (Berlin, 1992). The archaic pronunciation of the character *tian* has been reconstructed by Baxter as **hlin* (p. 792).

[15] Sanping Chen, ''Sino-Tokharico-Altaica – two linguistic notes'', *Central Asiatic Journal*, XLII (1998), pp. 24–43.

[16] Edwin G. Pulleyblank, ''The Chinese and their neighbors in prehistoric and early historic times'', in *The Origins of Chinese civilization*, ed. David N. Keightley (Berkeley 1983), pp. 411–466, especially pp. 421–422.

Zhou's heaven worship and the related "mandate of heaven" and "son of heaven" notions had striking parallels in ancient Inner Asia. The traditional sinocentric views in historiography would naturally ascribe this similarity to Chinese cultural influence. However, given the "conquest" nature of the Zhou dynasty and the aforementioned sharp contrast between Shang and Zhou religious beliefs, in my view it is no less plausible that the so-called Chinese influences may well have a common origin with that of the later Steppe civilizations.

An intriguing case of possible non-Chinese elements in the Zhou polity is the recent discovery at an early Zhou site of two Caucasoid figurines, one of which had been marked as *wu* 巫, generally translated as "shaman". Victor Mair has presented some linguistic and paleographical data suggesting not only the existence of early East-West cultural exchanges in this regard, but also the possibility of the Chinese character *wu* being a cognate of the Old Persian *maguš* referring to the Magi. The role of the magicians and shamans in ancient kingship is well-known and will not be repeated here.[17]

Finally some additional etymological notes on ancient kingship names in China. I have already quoted Eno's conclusion that *di* was derived from a root meaning of "father". It can be observed that the other two old names for "king" namely *huang* 皇 and *wang* 王 had similar etymologies. Despite the fact that *huang* later became part of the official name *huangdi* 皇帝 for "emperor", the character kept being used for a very long time (until the end of the Northern Song[18]) as an honorific for any (diseased) father, as a cursory look of any collection of ancient Chinese tomb inscriptions will tell. The character *wang*, being both the phonetic and radical of the character *huang*, naturally had similar meanings.[19] Other old names like *jun* 君 for both 'king" and "lord" and *gong* 公 for "lord, duke" had the same "father" meaning. This patriarchal origin of kingship in China is certainly not unique, as can be seen in, *inter alia*, Yahweh's words to Abraham (Gen. 17:4–5).

After centuries of the Zhou's promulgation of its "heaven-given" right to rule, *tian* "heaven" was gradually used as a metaphor for "king". For examples, Confucius frequently used the appellation Tianwang 天王 "heaven-king" to denote the Zhou "son of heaven" whose prestige and authority were rapidly diminishing.[20] Even the broad term *jun* for "lord" was explicitly equated in *Zuozhuan* (10.544) to "heaven". Given the "father" etymology of many old kingship terms, it is only natural that in the post-Zhou era, even the notion *fu* 父 "father" can be equated to "heaven".[21] This metaphor is again nothing unique, as exemplified by the Lord's Prayer (Matt. 6:9–13).

[17] Victor H. Mair, "Old Sinitic **M^{y}ag*, Old Persian *Maguš*, and English 'magician'", *Early China* XV (1990), pp. 27–48. Julia Ching for example has discussed this in detail regarding kingship in ancient China, though she missed Mair's interesting study on the relationship between China's *wu* and ancient Iranian Magi.

[18] For the disappearance of the usage, see Qian Daxin 錢大昕, *Shijiazhai yangxin lu* 十駕齋養新錄 (Shanghai: Shanghai shudian, 1983 – reprint of Shangwu 1937 edition), 16.397.

[19] See also Léon Vandermeersch, *Wangdao ou la Voie Royale: recherches sur l'esprit des institutions de la Chine archaïque* (Paris, 1977), ii, pp. 13–18.

[20] *Zuozhuan* 1.3, 1.40, 2.80, 2.116, 5.265, 8.461, etc.

[21] From the famous Han-dynasty *Shijing* 詩經 commentaries by Mao Heng 毛亨. See for instance *Cihai* 辭海 (Shanghai: Shanghai Cishu,1988), p. 369.

The Spread of "Son of Heaven" – The Indo-Iranian Cases

The Chinese conception that a sovereign was a "son of heaven" with a god-given mandate to rule, once established and entrenched by the Zhou conquest and long reign, certainly did not manifest itself only within the Central Kingdom. The most interesting case of its spread is the ancient Kushan kingdom in Central Asia, established by one of the five *xihou*s 翕侯 of the Great Yuezhi 大月氏.[22] Among the many titles of the Kushan king we find *devaputra*, the Sanskrit rendition of "son of heaven". Because the Kushan kingdom soon became a bastion of Buddhism, the term also found its way into Buddhist literature. Sylvain Lévi, in what Pelliot called "a learned monograph", gave a detailed exposition of this title, especially in regard to the Buddhist sutra *Suvarnaprabhāsa*, which was composed under the Kushan rule.[23] Lévi convincingly demonstrated why the term, otherwise rarely seen in Sanskrit documents, must be a translation of the Chinese "son of heaven".

Lévi's case is much strengthened by the widespread legend of the "Four Sons of Heaven" found in Buddhist and Arabic literatures.[24] When referring to the Chinese emperor, as Pelliot showed, the Buddhist records always use the term *devaputra*. This point is further confirmed by a Kharoththi inscription in which the great Kushan king Kanishka was hailed as "Mahārāja, Rājātirāja, Devaputra, Kaïsara",[25] where Mahārāja "Great King" was Indian, Rājātirāja "King of Kings" Iranian, and Kaïsara the Roman emperor, making the Chinese "son of heaven" the only possible interpretation for Devaputra. Let me also refer to B.N. Mukherjee's relatively recent examination of Kusan coins, which in my view has proved beyond doubt that *devaputra* was not merely a complimentary epithet, but also a formal regnal title.[26]

Another rendition that had a much wider circulation than *devaputra* is what Arabic and Persian records have transcribed as *baghbūr*, *faghbūr*, *fayfūr*, *bagapuhr*, etc. For example, the tenth-century Arab author al-Nadīm stated that "The meaning of *baghbūr* in the language of China is the 'Son of Heaven', that is, 'descended from heaven'."[27] Marco Polo transcribed the term as *facfūr*, on which Pelliot commented.[28] Unlike the case of *devaputra* which was assumed also by the Kushan kings, in Arab and medieval Persian sources, *baghbūr* referred *exclusively* to Chinese emperors,[29] so much so that Pelliot found it "difficult

[22] The best description of this episode is found in *Hou Han shu* 後漢書 88.2921. All dynastic histories are quoted from Beijing Zhonghua shuju 中華書局 punctuated editions, and will not be individually listed.

[23] Sylvain Lévi, "Devaputra", *JA* CCIV (1934), pp. 1–21.

[24] Pelliot's unsurpassed "La théorie des quartre Fils du Ciel", *TP* XXII (1923), pp. 97–125, remains the best study of this tradition. See also Gabriel Ferrand, "Les grands rois du monde", *BSOS* XI (1930–32), pp. 329–339.

[25] Sten Konow, *Kharoshthi Inscriptions with the Exception of Those of Aśoka* (Reprint Varanasi, 1969), pp. 163 and 165.

[26] B.N. Mukherjee, "The title Devaputra on Kushana coins", *Journal of the Numismatic Society of India,* XX (1968), pp. 190–193.

[27] Bayard Dodge, trans. *The Fihrist of al-Nadim; a tenth-century Survey of Muslim Culture* (New York, 1970), ii, p. 839. See also Gabriel Ferrand, R*elations de voyages et textes géographiques arabes, persans et turks relatifs à L'Extrême Orient du VIIIe au XVIIIe siècles* (Paris, 1913), p. 131.

[28] Paul Pelliot, *Notes on Marco Polo* (Paris, 1963), ii, pp. 652–661.

[29] A particular case is the Pahlavi text of the Tang Dynasty bilingual tomb inscription dated 874. According to some readings, it contained the word *bgpwhl* = *bagpuhr* referring to the Tang emperor. See for example Helmut Humbach, "Die Pahlavi-Chinesische bilingue von Xi'an", in *A Green Leaf: Papers in Honour of Professor Jes P. Asmussen* (Leiden, 1988), pp. 73–82.

to decide whether the Iranian title *faγfūr* was or was not ever used in reference to sovereigns other than the Emperors of China.''[30]

As Pelliot pointed out, both Arabic and Persian forms came from the Sogdian word *βaγapūr* (script *βγpwr*).[31] To my knowledge, the earliest attestation of the Sogdian form is the famous ''Ancient Sogdian Letters'', which used the word *βγpwr* to denote the Chinese emperor.[32] Please note that Henning's dating of the letters to be after the sack of Luoyang 洛陽 by the Xiongnu Liu Cong 劉聰 (311), once universally accepted, now seems untenable after J. Harmatta's two meticulous studies.[33] As Harmatta has argued, the letters were more likely to describe the events of 190–193 when the warlord Dong Zhuo 董卓, whose troops consisted partly of ''Barbarian'' soldiers, looted and burned the Eastern Han capital Luoyang. After Dong's murder, his generals further fought and looted in and around Chang'an 長安.[34] In either case, the Sogdian *βγpwr* certainly predates the Arabic and Persian *baghbūr* by centuries.

Lévi and Pelliot both noted perhaps the strongest argument why *devaputra* and *βaγapūr*, literally ''son of god'', must be a translation of the Chinese ''son of heaven'': they represented rare or unusual constructs in respective language, at least as an appellative of mortals. Pelliot states that ''as a title, [*devaputra*] has never been met with in Sanskrit literature, except in a passage of the *Suvarnaprabhāsa*.'' Its equivalent in Pali, *devaputta*, as Lévi has quoted,[35] was always understood literally, as a *deva* or demigod. The case of *βγpwr* is somewhat different due to the evolution of the meaning of *βγ* and will be discussed in detail later. Its use as ''son of god'', however, is similarly rare, with the only attestation other than to a Chinese emperor is in reference to Jesus.[36]

Here I see in the Indo-Iranian forms of ''son of heaven'' the underlying notion of theophoric appellatives and names, which as I shall argue in a later section uniquely separated the early Chinese civilization from all other Old World civilizations. Yet it is also in this context that the Indic *devaputra/devaputta* and the Iranic *bagapuhr/βγpwr* stood out distinctly, for the simple fact that the Indo-Iranian word *putra/puthra* was invariantly used literally in names and epithets,[37] yet appeared extremely rarely in theophoric constructs.

On the Indic side, I have examined the entire two-volume *Dictionary of Pāli Proper Names* by G.P. Malalasekera,[38] and found *putta* (and for this matter *pitā* ''father'' and *mātā*

[30] Notes, p. 655

[31] Notes, p. 652. W.B. Henning, ''Sogdian loan-words in New Persian'', *BSOAS* X (1939–42), pp. 93–106, certainly agrees with this, as far as the Persian form is concerned (p. 94).

[32] See, e.g., W.B. Henning, ''The date of the Sogdian ancient letters'', *BSOAS* XII (1948), pp. 601–615.

[33] J. Harmatta, ''The archaeological evidence for the date of the Sogdian letters'', in *Studies in the Sources of the History of Pre-Islamic Central Asia*, ed. J. Harmatta (Budapest, 1979), pp. 75–90, and J. Harmatta, ''Sogdian sources for the history of pre-Islamic Central Asia'', in *Prolegomena to the Sources on the History of Pre-Islamic Central Asia*, ed. J. Harmatta (Budapest, 1979), pp. 153–165.

[34] For these events, see *Zizhi tongjian* 資治通鑑 (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1956), 59.1909 – 60.1939. The best reference for the involvement of the Southern Xiongnu is the famous *Beifen shi* 悲憤詩 (*Hou Han shu* 84.2801–02) written by Cai Yan 蔡琰, the daughter if Cai Yong 蔡琰 (132–192). The poem is the reflection of Yan's many years of living with the Southern Xiongnu after being seized by the ''Barbarian soldiers'' under Dong's command.

[35] ''Devaputra'', pp. 12–13.

[36] Lévi (''Devaputra'', pp. 19–21) even tried to ascribe the reference to Jesus to the influence of the Chinese notion of ''Son of Heaven'', which Pelliot (*Notes* p. 654) found to be ''a much more debatable proposition''.

[37] Even outside the Indian subcontinent, such usage is still widespread in, say, Southeast Asia, which was once under the strong influence of Hindu culture. One particular example is the name of the Indonesian political leader Megawati Sukarnoputri, the daughter of Sukarno, Indonesia's founding president.

[38] Reprint London, 1960.

"mother") always used literally in personal names, and not a single time used in a theophoric construct. Similarly, one fails to find a single case of *-putra* in theophoric names listed in Jacob van Velze's *Names of Persons in Early Sanscrit Literature*.[39]

The many compendia of ancient Iranian proper names likewise attest to the fact that *puthra/puhr* too was very rarely an element in a theophoric construct.[40] Nonetheless it is interesting to note that *duχt* "daughter" was on the contrary frequently used in theophoric names.[41]

In my opinion, it is because of the rarity of *puthra/puhr* in Indo-Iranian theophoric names that the use of *bagapuhr* as a personal name, mentioned by Henry Yule and agreed upon by Pelliot,[42] remained a paucity. Even in cases where it was a personal name, its meaning may be more likely to be akin to that of the popular Iranian name Shahpūr than "(Chinese) Emperor", as will be examined later.

The Altaic Attestations

As quoted earlier, Pelliot doubted whether the Iranian title *faγfūr/bagapuhr* was ever used in reference to sovereigns other than Chinese emperors. Though Denis Sinor has cautioned recently that "one always hesitates to take issue with any of Pelliot's points",[43] it is one of several of Pelliot's points I will contend within this study.

My contention is that the Iranian/Sogdian title *bagapuhr/βγpwr* was in fact widely used historically in various nomadic regions bordering the Chinese heartland in reference to leaders of tribes and what Joseph Fletcher has termed supratribal polities,[44] whether these nomadic chieftains could be called sovereigns within their respective domain notwithstanding. It is not clear when and where this usage was introduced on to the Steppe, but the titles were already widely adopted in early fifth century when they first appeared in Chinese records. Geographically they spread as far as Manchuria and beyond. But the usage gradually waned during the Tang and Song dynasties, such that it had largely fallen into oblivion by the time of the Mongol conquest. The pre-Mongol disappearance of this title may also have been the major reason why it has never been recognized previously.

This title was attested in the Chinese transcription *mohefu* 莫何弗/莫賀弗 (Middle Chinese pronunciation *mâk-γâ-piuət*)[45] and *mofu* 莫弗 (*mâk-piuət*). As shall be analyzed later, the phonetic correspondence between the Chinese forms and the Sogdian *βγpwr* is amply

[39] Utrecht, 1938. Maneka Ghadhi in her *The Penguin Book of Hindu Names* (New Delhi, 1992), p. 100, lists the name Devakumāra "son of a deva", which appears to be a modern construct, as no ancient source is given for this name. The same can be said about names like Brahmaputra and Brahmaputrā in her book.

[40] Ferdinand Justi's classic 1895 *Iranisches Namenbuch* and the multi-volume *Iranisches Personennamenbuch* edited by Manfred Mayrhofer (Vienna, 1977–). I fail to find a single case of *puthra/puhr* in a theophoric construct. Yet I cannot claim the same thoroughness in examining the ancient Iranian names as I did the ancient Indic names.

[41] See for instance Justi *Iranisches Namenbuch,* pp. 492–493.

[42] H. Yule, ed., *The Book of Ser Marco Polo* (London, 1926), ii, p. 148; Pelliot, *Notes*, p. 656.

[43] D. Sinor, "Western information on the Kitans and some related questions", *JAOS* CXV (1995), pp. 262–269.

[44] Joseph Fletcher, "The Mongols: ecological and social perspectives", *HJAS* XLVI (1986), pp. 11–50.

[45] Middle and Old Chinese pronunciations quoted in this study are from Bernhard Karlgren, *Grammata Serica Recensa* (Stockholm: The Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities, Bulletin No. 29, 1957; reprint Göteborg, 1964), unless specified otherwise.

substantiated by contemporary transcription data and other evidence, hence beyond doubt. Let us first examine several of the many attestations of the Sino-Altaic forms.

To my knowledge, the first dated appearance of this title in an Altaic milieu is in *Wei shu* 魏書. In the fifth year (402)[46] of Tianxing 天興, a reign title of Emperor Daowu 道武 (Tuoba Gui 拓拔珪), the Mofu of the Yueqin 越勤 tribe joined the Tuoba federation with over ten thousand families.[47] Then in the fourth year (431) of Shenjia 神䴥 under Emperor Taiwu 太武 (Tuoba Tao 拓拔燾), the Mofu Heruogan 賀若干[48] of the Northern Chile 敕勒 (also known as Gaoche 高車 "High Cart"[49]) came to see the Tuoba emperor. There are several other cases of the title Mofu in *Wei shu*, borne by chiefs from Qidan 契丹 (Kitan),[50] Ruanruan 蠕蠕 (Juan-juan)[51] and others in addition to the two groups cited above.

Sui shu 隋書 records that in the fourth year (584) of Kaihuang 開皇 under the founding emperor Wendi 文帝 (Yang Jian 楊堅), the head of the Qidan by the title (or name) of Mohefu 契丹主莫賀弗 sent an embassy to "request submission [to the Sui]."[52] Elsewhere in *Sui shu*, Mohefu of the Qidan was mentioned in plural form.[53]

All records show that the title Mofu/Mohefu represented a hereditary chieftain. This is clearly implied in the following *Wei shu* passage regarding the Wuluoshou 烏洛侯, an ethnic group living in Manchuria:[54]

> [The Wuluohou] does not have kings. The tribal Mofu's are all hereditary.[55]

Jiu Tang shu 舊唐書 (199b.5356.) states more or less the same about the Shiwei 室韋:

> That country has no kings, only seventeen great chieftains, all called Mohefu. They are hereditary.

This is also often traced back in the family tree of prominent ethnic Chinese persons. For example, *Zhou shu* 周書 mentions in the biography of Helan Xiang 賀蘭祥 that his family name came from the fact that one of his forefathers was the Mohefu of the Helan tribe.[56]

The form for the Mojie 靺鞨 people, the ancestors of both the Nüzhen 女真/Jurchen and the Manchu (and even some Koreans through the Kingdom of Bohai 渤海),[57] is Great

[46] The event was recorded to have occurred in the last month of the Chinese year. Therefore it actually happened in the year 403 instead of 402.

[47] 3.40. It is also recorded in *Bei shi* 北史 1.22, with the tribe name mistaken as Yuele 越勒, a not uncommon script error (the Chinese transcription *teqin* 特勤 of the Altaic word *tegin* "prince" has been written as *tele* 特勒 in current editions of almost all dynastic histories).

[48] *Wei shu* 4.79 gives the name as Heruoyu, where *yu* 于 is a very common mistake for *gan*. The correct name is given in *Wei shu* 24.635 and *Bei shi* 21.798.

[49] Read for examples Otto Maenchen-Helfen, "The Ting-ling", *HJAS* IV (1939), pp. 77–86, and Edwin Pulleyblank "The 'High Carts': A Turkish-Speaking People Before the Turks", *Asia Major*, Third Series, III (1990), pp. 21–26.

[50] 100.2223 (*Bei shi* 94.3132).

[51] 103.2294 (*Bei shi* 98.3255).

[52] 1.21. Also *Bei shi* 11.410.

[53] 84.1881. See also *Bei shi* 94.3128.

[54] This is borne out by the Tuoba's "ancestor cavern" then in the Wuluohou domain, which was re-discovered in the late 1970s. See Mi Wenping 米文平, "Xianbei shishi de faxian yu chubu yanjiu" 鮮卑石室的發現與初步研究, *Wenwu* 文物 1981/2:1–7.

[55] *Wei shu* 100.2224; *Bei shi* 94.3132. It is also in *Tongdian* 通典 (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1988) 200.5489.

[56] *Zhou shu* 20.335. Two other such ancestral cases are Heba Sheng 賀拔勝 (*Zhou shu* 14.215) and Husi Chun 斛斯椿 (*Bei shi* 49.1785).

[57] See, e.g., *Jin shi* 金史 1.1–2 on the Nüzhen's ancestry. Pelliot ("À propos des Comans", *JA* XV (1920), pp. 125–185) also agrees that both historically and geographically the Mojie were the ancestors of the Nüzhen.

Mofu Manduo 大莫弗滿咄, as widely recorded in Chinese records.[58] It is intriguing to note that the name apparently did not survive in the Jin 金 and later the vast Qing 清 records, proving the title's non-indigenous origin.

Another interesting case suggesting perhaps the title's long history on the Steppe is in its use as a tribe or clan name. This was with the ethnic group Xi 奚, also known as Kumoxi 庫莫奚 and always recognized as the brethren of the Qidan, among whom the title Mohefu was prominent. Many sources state that one of the Xi tribes or clans was named Mohefu.[59] Here one may observe the well-known employment of official titles, particularly foreign ones, as clan and personal names in Central Asia and on the Steppe. An early example is the Xiongnu title *juqu* 且渠, later taken as the name of the famous Juqu 沮渠 clan in western China who established the state of Northern Liang 北涼 (397–439).[60] The Chinese titles *dudu* 都督 and *cishi* 刺史 also frequently appeared in Central Asian, Old Turkic in particular, onomasticons.[61] Pelliot also referred to this tradition in discussing the possible use of *faγfūr* as a personal name in an Arabic source.[62] A case most similar to the Xi clan name Mohefu is the Jurchen clan name Wanyan 完顏. The *Jin shi Guoyu jie* 國語解 "Glossary of the National Language" has equated this name to Wang 王,[63] indicating strongly that Wanyan may simply have been a corrupt transcription of *wang* "king", a fitting name for the Jurchen royal clan. One may also note that several old Chinese surnames like Wangzi 王子, Wangsun 王孫, Gongsun 公孫, and even Wang all had a similar origin.

Finally, *Bei shi* and *Zizhi tongjian* both record that in year 479 under the Wei, a Qidan Mohefu named Wugan勿干 led his tribe, or tribes, to submit to the Tuoba.[64] This is worth noting because first the famous Yuan dynasty annotator Hu Sanxing 胡三省 of *Zizhi tongjian* made the particular interpretation here that the chieftains 酋帥 of the Qidan were called Mohefu; and secondly the incident was recalled in *Liao shi* 遼史 with Mohefu changed to Mefuhe 莫弗賀.[65]

The *Liao shi* rendition is interesting for two reasons. First the same form is quoted specifically in its *Guoyu jie* "Glossary of the [Qidan] National Language" as an alternative to Mofuhe, "the title of the chief of various tribes."[66] Secondly, to my knowledge this is the last appearance of this title recorded in Chinese history. The *Liao shi* rendition may

[58] *Sui shu* 81.1821, *Bei shi* 94.3124 and *Xin Tang shu* 新唐書 219.6178. *Bei shi* 94.3130 also states the same for the Shiwei. Yet the *Jiu Tang shu* statement quoted earlier and another passage in *Bei shi* (34.3130) indicate the Shiwei's chieftains were known as Mohefu, suggesting Manduo being a subtitle. J. Marquart, "Über das Volkstum der Komanen", *Abhandlungen der Königlichen Gesellschaft de Wissenschaften: Philologisch-Historische Klasse*, XIII (1914), pp. 25–157, observed many years ago (p. 84) that Manduo might be a transcription of *baγatur*, an issue I shall discuss later.

[59] *Zhou shu* 49.899, *Sui shu* 84.1881, *Bei shi* 94.3127 and *Tongdian* 200.5481.

[60] *Jin shu* 晉書 129.3189; *Wei shu* 99.2203.

[61] See for example Gerard Clauson, *An Etymological Dictionary of Pre-thirteenth-century Turkish* (London, 1972), pp. 417 and 453.

[62] *Notes*, p. 656.

[63] *Jin shi* p. 2896.

[64] *Bei shi* 94.3127 and *Zizhi tongjian* 135.4234.

[65] *Liao shi* 遼史 32.378. The name was also mistaken as Wuyu 勿于, a common scribal error as mentioned before.

[66] *Liao shi* 116.1547. Karl Menges, "Titles and organizational terms of the Qytan (Liao) and Qara-Qytaj (Śi-Liao)", *Rocznik Orientalistyczny* XVII (1951–52), pp. 68–79, seems the only author to have noted this title's relation to earlier forms quoted in this study.

have been a simple scribal error as Menges seems to suggest,[67] or a true metathesis in the Qidan language. In either case, it shows that by the time of the Liao (916–1125), the original meaning of or cultural tradition in this title was largely lost.

Chinese Transcription Notes

Let us present the phonetic evidence why *mohefu* (*mâk-γâ-piuət*) and *mofu* (*mâk-piuət*) must be transcribing the Iranian/Sogdian title *bagapuhr/βγpwr*. First, it is universally agreed among scholars that the Chinese rendition *mohe* 莫賀 or 莫何 transcribes *baγa*, widely used in titles and names in Central Asia and on the steppe, especially in the term *baγatur* "hero", transcribed as *moheduo* 莫賀咄 in Chinese.[68] The transcription *mohe* for the Old Turkic title *baγa* has numerous attestations in contemporary Chinese records,[69] and is supported by direct archeological evidence – the trilingual Qarabalghasun inscription left by the Uighurs.[70] The Old Turkic title *baγa* and its Chinese transcription can in fact be traced back to earlier Steppe groups, Ruanruan for instance,[71] whose appearance preceded that of the ancient Türks, a subject I shall discuss later.

As shall be examined later, there is little doubt that the Old Turkic *baγa* comes from Iranian *baγa/baga*. Here I would also like to note a prevailing tendency, attested from ancient Greece and Asia Minor to early Tibet, to transcribe the Iranian word by an *m-* initial.[72] The Chinese transcription data were therefore hardly an exception in this regard.

As for the character *fu* (*piuət*) transcribing the Sogdian word *pūr* "son", let us first note the standard usage of a *-t* final to represent a foreign *-r/l* sound in Chinese transcriptions of the same period, attested particularly in Buddhist literature.[73] Secondly, according to W. South Coblin's reconstruction based on contemporary colloquial texts and Tibetan transcription data, in the Tang time Dunhuang dialects the character *fu* was pronounced **fur* (Tibetan transcription *phur*).[74] The Dunhuang area was certainly an important frontal region in which many cultural and political contacts with various foreign people were made. Thirdly, the character *fo* 佛 (*biuət*), which was used early on exclusively to transcribe the name Buddha and differed from *fu* only by the voiced initial, was rendered into Old Turkic as *bur*, as attested by the now universal Altaic name Burxan for Buddha.[75] This is

[67] Menges, "Titles", p. 73.

[68] Here is a very limited list: J. Marquart, "Komanen", p. 84; Paul Pelliot, "Neuf notes sur des questions d'Asie Centrale", *TP* XXVI (1929), pp. 201–266; Peter Boodberg, "Hu T'ien Han Yüeh Fang Chu" 胡天漢月方諸 No. 9 (May 1935), in *Selected Works of Peter A. Boodberg* (Berkeley, 1979), p. 132; Karl Menges, "Altaic elements in the proto-Bulgarian inscriptions", *Byzantium*, XXI (1951), pp. 85–118, 94 and "Titles", p. 73; Gabriella Molè, *The T'u-yü-hun from the Northern Wei to the Time of the Five Dynasties* (Rome, 1970), p. 78; Gerhard Doerfer, *Türkische und Mongolische Elemente im Neupersischen* Band 2 (Wiesbaden, 1965), p. 369.

[69] For examples, *Sui shu* 51.1332, 84.1865 and 84.1880; *Bei shi* 22.819 and 99.3219.

[70] Wilhelm Radloff, *Die Alttürkischen Inschriften der Mongolei* (St. Petersburg, 1894; Reprint Osnarbrück, 1987), i, Plate III.

[71] *Wei shu* 103.2296.

[72] Justi, *Iranisches Namenbuch*, pp. 184 and 202; E.Benvenniste, *Titres et noms propres en iranien ancien* (Paris, 1966), p. 79; Rüdiger Schmitt, *Iranisches Personennamenbuch* Band V Faszikel 4, *Iranisches Namen in den Indogermanischen Sprachen Kleinasiens* (Vienna, 1982), p. 23; F.W. Thomas, "Tibetan documents concerning Chinese Turkestan", *JRAS*, 1927, pp. 51–85.

[73] As noted by Edwin Pulleyblank, "The Chinese name for the Turks", *JAOS* LXXXV (1965), pp. 121–125.

[74] W. South Coblin, "Comparative studies on some Tang-time dialects of Shazhou", *Monumenta Serica* XL (1992), pp. 269–361, 314,

[75] Clauson, *Etymological Dictionary*, pp. 360–361.

the strongest reciprocal proof that *fu* at the same time must be transcribing an Altaic *pur*. I shall later present supporting evidence for *fu* in these titles to mean "son", representing the Sogdian *pwr*.

The phonetic evidence combined with other historical data below leaves little doubt that *mohefu* and *mofu* represented an Altaic title *bayapur* which had apparently come from the Sogdian/Iranian title *βγpwr/bagapuhr* as shall be demonstrated throughout this article.

The Iranic Influence on the Steppe

One can hardly exaggerate the Iranic influence on the ancient Steppe, starting with the Scythians, widely believed to have spoken an Iranic tongue. One may disagree with some or all of Harold Bailey's Iranian etymologies for the Xiongnu words and titles preserved in Chinese records,[76] but the fact that there was a substantive Caucasoid component in the Xiongnu confederation is hard to dispute.[77] It is also true that the "Western Region Card" figured predominantly throughout centuries of the Sino-Xiongnu conflict,[78] with the then largely Iranian-speaking Central Asia, also known as the Western Region, serving as an important economic, military and human resource for the Xiongnu.[79]

In the millenium since the rise of the Xiongnu Empire, the "Iranic Card" was a perennial theme among various Northern nomadic groups vis-à-vis China, typified by the Sogdians among the Türks and the Uighurs. So much so that the first ever document written under, or literally "erected by", the Türks was the Sogdian inscription of Bugut.[80] J. Harmatta even attributed the Chinese name for Türk to a Sogdian middleman.[81] The role of the Sogdians among the Uighurs was no less spectacular, as shown by the latter's (at least the dominating upper class) wholesale conversion to Manichaeism[82] and the trilingual inscription of Qarabalghasun.

The Central Asians' prominent role in nomadic politics and diplomacy naturally led to the presence of a large number of Iranians and Sogdians among the nomadic people as well as in the frontier regions. Edwin Pulleyblank for example has done a detailed study of a Sogdian colony in northern China.[83] These immigrants spread so far that the famous Tang history authority Chen Yinke 陳寅恪 was puzzled by their heavy presence in northeastern China, at a great distance away from Central Asia,[84] a fact not unexpected given the long reach of the title *βγpwr*, which included Manchuria as cited earlier.

[76] Harold Bailey, *Khotanese Texts VII* (Cambridge, 1985), p. 26.

[77] Read for instance Sanping Chen, "Some remarks on the Chinese 'Bulgar'", *AOH* LI (1998), pp. 69–83.

[78] See for example Ying-shih Yu, "The Hsiung-nu", in *The Cambridge History of Early Inner Asia*, ed. D. Sinor (Cambridge, 1990), pp. 118–149.

[79] Nicola Di Cosmo, "Ancient Inner Asian nomads: their economic basis and its significance in Chinese history", *JAS* CIV (1994), pp. 1092–1126, contains an extensive discussion and much historical and archaeological data on the Xiongnu's Central Asian resources.

[80] See for example S.G. Klyashtorny (Kljaštornyj), and V.A. Livshitz (Livšic), "The Sogdian inscription of Bugut revised", *AOH* XXVI (1972), pp. 69–102.

[81] J. Harmatta, "Irano-Turcica", *AOH* XXV (1972), pp. 263–273.

[82] See Colin Mackerras (ed. and tr.) *The Uighur Empire according to the T'ang Dynastic Histories* (Canberra, 1972), and Samuel N.C. Lieu, *Manichaeism in the later Roman Empire and medieval China* 2nd ed. (Tübingen, 1992).

[83] Edwin Pulleyblank, "A Sogdian Colony in Inner Mongolia", *TP* XLI (1952), pp. 317–356.

[84] Chen Yinke, *Tangdai zhengzhishi shulun gao* 唐代政治史述論稿 (Chongqing/Shanghai, 1944/1947), pp. 33–34.

It can be said that the traditional "Central Asian Card" of the nomads in dealing with the Chinese heartland was inherited and continued by the Mongols, albeit at that time Central Asia had been largely turkicized and Islamized. This is, however, beyond the scope of this article.

It is well-known that royal and official titles on the Steppe were often not indigenous, either inherited from an earlier empire or borrowed from a sedentary neighbour. The perhaps most famous Steppe sovereign title Qaghan does not have a plausible Altaic etymology.[85] Two other important Old Turkic titles, namely *tarqan* and *tegin* were known to have non-Turkic plural forms.[86] Reflecting the long history of the Iranic influence on the Steppe are, as Bailey tried to explore with the Xiongnu data, the strong Iranian or Indo-Iranic elements in the titles and names found among the early Inner Asian nomadic groups. Again the early Türks and other Turkic groups serve as a good example. The popular title *bäg*, later to become *bey*, is generally believed to have come from the Iranian *baγa/baga*,[87] a subject to be further examined later. The hereditary title *šad* "prince" also came from Iranian.[88] The title of Qaghan's wife *qatun* very likely had a Sogdian etymology *χwt'γn* "lady".[89] Another frequent Old Turkic title or name *ïśvara* came from the Sanskrit word *īśvara* "lord". It is intriguing to note that neither of the two founding Qaghans of the First Türk empire had a "native" Turkic name as they appeared in the Orkhon Inscriptions.[90] One of them namely Bumin Qaghan was strangely recorded as Tumen Qaghan in Chinese sources, a peculiarity that "remains unexplained" according to Denis Sinor.[91] I have in a linguistic note concluded that Tumen, which represented the Altaic word *tümen* "myriad", "large numbers", was likely the Tuoba Xianbei form of the name Bumin, which I had attributed to the Sanskrit *bhuman* "earth, territory". The underlying notion of the name is the concept of universality of the king (or "the king of kings").[92] I now realize that the name Bumin is more likely to have come from the Old Persian word *būmi* "land", "empire", which was used as early as the Achaemenid time exactly for the concept of the king's universality.[93]

These examples much strengthen the inference that the Steppe title transcribed as *mohefu* and *mofu* came from the Iranian/Sogdian *bagapuhr/βγpwr*, originally "son of god", denoting the Chinese "son of heaven".

[85] See for example, Peter Golden, *An Introduction to the History of the Turkic Peoples* (Wiesbaden, 1992), p. 71.

[86] They turn out, interestingly, to be Sogdian plurals. But the titles do not seem to be Sogdian either. See Gerard Clauson, "The Foreign Elements in Early Turkish", in *Researches in Altaic Languages* (ed.) L. Ligeti (Budapest, 1975), pp. 43–49.

[87] Read for examples, Karl Menges, "Titles", Louis Bazin, "Pre-Islamic Turkic borrowings in Upper Asia: some crucial semantic fields", *Diogenes* XLIII (1995/171), pp. 35–44, and Doerfer, *Türkische und Mongolische Elemente* ii, pp. 402–404.

[88] Clauson, "Foreign elements" and L. Bazin, "Pre-Islamic Turkic borrowings".

[89] Doerfer, *Türkische und Mongolische Elemente* ii, p. 138, Menges, "Titles".

[90] Denis Sinor, "The establishment and dissolution of the Türk empire", in *Cambridge History of Early Inner Asia*, ed. D. Sinor (Cambridge, 1990), pp. 285–316.

[91] "The establishment", p. 290.

[92] Chen, "Sino-Tokharico-Altaica".

[93] R.N. Frye, "Remarks on kingship in ancient Iran", *Acta Antiqua* XXV (1977), pp. 75–82.

The Evolution of the Meaning of *Bagapuhr*

As the Ancient Sogdian Letters and other ancient manuscripts clearly demonstrated, the Iranian/Sogdian *bagapuhr/βγpwr* originally meant "son of god" in both a social and a religious sense. Nonetheless, it is rather doubtful that the same title on the Steppe, at least when it was widely adopted and eventually even became a clan name, still had this original meaning. I shall argue that, like so many other royal titles on the Steppe and elsewhere, the Altaic form of the original Iranian/Sogdian title *bagapuhr/βγpwr* had been subjected to an "inflation process" and lost much of its original value. In the end, it meant no more than "prince", "of noble origin" or simply "chieftain".

That *mohefu* or *mofu* meant primarily "tribal chief" was amply demonstrated by the various Chinese data cited earlier. Its being a far cry to the "king of kings" was indicated particularly by the title's appearance in plural forms.[94] Moreover, it was explicitly recorded that *mohefu* was a rank lower than *moheduo* or *bayatur*.[95]

It should first be noted that a royal title being gradually devalued of its original meaning and importance is in fact a wide phenomenon present in almost all ancient cultures. The Chinese title *wang* 王 is a case in point. Back to the early Western Zhou 西周 dynasty, *wang* was synonymous to "son of heaven". But this prestigious meaning was soon lost during the Eastern Zhou when more and more feudal lords, beginning with the king of the initially non-Sinitic state of Chu 楚, usurped this title, forcing Confucius to introduce the adjective *tian* to distinguish the Tianwang 天王 "heaven-king", meaning the nominal Zhou "son of heaven" from all other "undeserving" and sometimes upstart rulers who had styled themselves as a *wang* too.[96] The irreversible devaluation of the title *wang* was the major reason behind the creation of the new title *huangdi* 皇帝 "emperor" by the founding emperor of the Qin 秦 dynasty. The various Indo-European "king of kings" titles, e.g., the Achaemenian *χshāyathiya χshāyathiyānām*, the Sanskrit *maharaja*, the Greek βασιλέως βασιλέων, the Indo-Parthian *rajatiraja* and the Latin *rex regum* were no doubt also partly a response to this inflation process of royal titles.

On the Steppe, the devaluation was exemplified by the royal Xiongnu title Shanyu 單于. As the once unified Xiongnu empire gradually lost its cohesion and eventually disintegrated, the title Shanyu saw itself assumed by more and more frontier chieftains and ethnic leaders in northern China. Not long after the collapse of the Western Jin, Shanyu further went from representing roughly a prince,[97] already a far cry from the days when the Xiongnu Shanyu stood much as an equivalent of the Han emperor, to simply being juxtaposed with such titles like *dudu* 都督 "military governor", jiangjun 將軍 "general" and even *cishi* 刺史 "district magistrate".[98] The appearance at about the same time of

[94] For examples, *Wei shu* 40.902 and 100.2224; *Sui shu* 84.1881.

[95] *Sui shu* 84.1883, *Bei shi* 94.3130.

[96] It is well-known that Confucius, who was particularly sensitive to the issue of political order and etiquette, first introduced the construct Tianwang for the marginalized Zhou figurehead "son of heaven" in the chronicle *Chunqiu* 春秋.

[97] Sometimes held by a crown prince (*Jin shu* 106.2769), and sometimes even a Great Shanyu clearly was lower in rank than the crown prince (*Jin shu* 105.2476).

[98] *Jin shu* 109.2816, *Wei shu* 95.2050, 95.2064 and *Bei shi* 98.3270, etc.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1356186302000330 Published online by Cambridge University Press

another steppe regnal title Qaghan representing what Shanyu had once stood for is therefore not surprising at all.

It is very tempting to ascribe the devaluation of the title *bagapuhr/βγpwr* on the Steppe, from referring to "Chinese emperor" to simply meaning "tribal chieftains", to the same process that saw the parallel degeneration of the Xiongnu sovereign title Shanyu. This certainly fits the historical scenario in which the great Han Empire did not outlive the great Xiongnu Empire by long. In all likelihood, the prestige of the Chinese emperor, or *bagapuhr* as he was known in Central Asia, and presumably on the Steppe too, had followed the same downward spiral as that of the Xiongnu *Shanyu* throughout the Three-Kingdom period and the very brief Western Jin period as attested by the famous Ancient Sogdian Letters.[99] The fate of the last two emperors of the Western Jin, namely Huaidi 懷帝 and Mindi 愍帝, captured by a "Barbarian" ruler (in 311 and 316, respectively) and forced to perform the duties of house-slaves including serving as a lavatory attendant,[100] certainly made a strong impression on both the Han Chinese population and the Steppe "Barbarians".

It is worth noting that in the following centuries until the Sui unification (589), the only Chinese monarchs who could have made their power strongly felt in Central Asia and on the Steppe were none other than the Tuoba emperors who had called themselves Qaghans,[101] a tradition still reflected in the Tiankehan 天可汗 "Heavenly Qaghan" (*tängri qan*?) titles assumed by the early Tang emperors.[102] That the Chinese emperors were still known as Qaghans on the Steppe as late as the late eighth century is shown by the Orkhon Turkic inscriptions. There was also an intriguing tendency among the Steppe-origin "sons of heaven" to avoid the Chinese *huangdi* title, as shall be discussed below.

However, an equally if not more plausible interpretation for *bagapuhr/βγpwr*'s relatively low standing on the Steppe is another devaluation process, namely that of the word *bayа/baga* itself within the Iranic cultural sphere.

At issue here is the divinity of kingship in ancient Iran. According Richard Frye, the Achaemenian kings were not deified.[103] While it may or may not be completely due to the influence of Hellenism,[104] the apparent fact is that soon after the Alexander conquest, the word Θεος began to appear in the regnal name of various successors of Alexander from

[99] In Henning's translation: "Sir, the last Emperor (*βγpwr*) – so they say – fled from Saraγ 洛陽 because of the famine. And his fortified residence (palace) and fortified town were set on fire. The residence burnt down and the town was [destroyed]. So Saraγ (is) no more, Ngap 鄴 no more!" ("The date of the Sogdian ancient letters", p. 605.)

[100] *Zizhi tingjian* 88.2790, 90.2851.

[101] The strongest proof is the inscription dedicated in the year 443 to the Tuoba's ancestors rediscovered in 1980, in which the title Kehan 可寒 was used to refer to the early Tuoba rulers. See e.g. Mi Wenping's quoted report in *Wenwu*. It is interesting to see a sanitized version of the same inscription preserved in *Wei shu* 108.2738 that did not contain this Steppe title. The supporting proof can be found in the famous folk poem on which the recent Disney cartoon *Mulan* was based. For the Tuoba background including the very name Mulan, see this author's essay "From Mulan to unicorn", to appear in *Journal of Asian History*.

[102] For the strong Steppe traditions of the early Tang, see Sanping Chen, "Succession struggle and the ethnic identity of the Tang imperial house", *JRAS*, Series 3, VI (1996), pp. 379–405.

[103] Richard Frye, *The History of Ancient Iran* (München, 1983), p. 106 note 68.

[104] Yet see for instance J. Balsdon, "The 'Divinity' of Alexander", *Historia* I (1950), pp. 380–382.

Egypt to Bactria,[105] and then in the title of the partially Hellenized,[106] at least initially, Parthian kings. According to *Ammianus Marcellinus*, the founder of the Parthian dynasty Aršak was the first to be so deified.[107] It is therefore quite natural to see the corresponding Iranian term *baga-* appear in sovereign titles in the Iranian world. By the time of the founding of the Sassanian dynasty in the early third century, the deification of Iranian kings was well entrenched, as shown by the Inscription of Shapūr I at Naqsh-e Rustam in Fars[108] and *Ammianus Marcellinus* that Shahpūr II called himself "partner with the stars, brother of the Sun and Moon."[109]

Then the same devaluation process as that of royal titles elsewhere was set in motion, which has been succinctly described by W.B. Henning as follows:

> The appellative *baga-* 'god' came to be applied to the Great King of Kings of the Persians initially. Later it suffered a social decline, which was most marked in Sogdiane. The local king adopted it, then the kinglet, then the owner of a castle, finally any gentleman laid claim to it.[110]

The Turkic title *bäg* or *bek* was likely related to, if not the above final result, but something close to the sense of "lord" in this inflation process.[111] The same can also be applied to the Steppe title *bagapuhr/βγpwr* with the interpretation "king's son" or "lord's son". In other words, *bagapuhr* was fairly close in meaning to the popular Iranian name Shahpuhr, the Sanskrit name Rajaputra and the Khotan Saka title *rris-pūra*, meaning no more than "prince". In fact, Harold Bailey has given *βγpwr* this alternative interpretation of "prince" in addition to "divine son".[112] In the next section I shall present evidence to show that the same interpretation may also have been true in an Altaic milieu.

A striking parallel as well as supporting evidence is the name Tängri for the Xiongnu-Altaic sky-god. From the beginning, it appeared as part of the Xiongnu Shanyu's regnal name in the context of "son of Tängri" according to *Han shu* 漢書 (94a.3751), an interpretation I shall contend later. The ancient Türks and Uighurs continued this tradition with the word *tängri* always forming a part of the Qaghan's formal royal title.[113] Finally in the Old Turkic text found at Turfan, the Uighur Bügü Qaghan was recorded to have simply stated that *mn tngri mn* or "Ich bin Tängri."[114] Then the devaluation process set in. In his noted article "Tängrim > tärim",[115] Pelliot convincingly demonstrated how the honorific *tängrim*, literally "mon Dieu", degenerated from originally addressing the

[105] And in the case of Cleopatra, the feminine form Θεα. See for examples Warwick Wroth, *Catalogue of the Greek Coins of Galatia, Cappadocia and Syria* (reprint Bologna, 1964), pp. 158, 306; Percy Gardner, *The Coins of the Greek and Scythic Kings of Bactria and India in the British Museum* (reprint Chicago, 1964), p. xxviii, and several other catalogues of ancient Greek coins.

[106] In addition to the Greek language and icons, albeit gradually debased, the word "philhellene" was a near-permanent feature of the Parthian coins, as can be easily verified with any catalogues of ancient Greek coins quoted above.

[107] *Ammianus Marcellinus* (Cambridge, Mass, 1950– 1952), ii, pp. 350–351 (XXIII, 6, 4–5).

[108] Frye, *The History of Ancient Iran*, p. 371 (Appendix 4).

[109] *Ammianus Marcellinus*, i, pp. 332–333 (XVII 5, 3).

[110] W.B. Henning, "A Sogdian god", *BSOAS* XXVIII (1965), pp. 242–254, p. 249.

[111] See for instance, Doerfer, *Türkische und Mongolische Elemente*, ii, pp. 389–410.

[112] Harold Bailey, *Culture of the Sakas* (Delmar, New York, 1982), p. 50; Bailey, *Dictionary of Khotan Saka* (Cambridge, 1979), p. 390

[113] See *Sui shu* 84.1868, *Jiu Tang shu* 13.370, 17a.515, *Xin Tang shu* 215b.6069, etc.

[114] Translation by W. Bang and A. von Gabain. See their "Türkische Turfan-Texte", *Sitzungsberichte der Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften (Philosophisch-historische Klasse)* XXII (1929), pp. 411–430.

[115] P. Pelliot, "Tängrim > tärim", *TP* XXXVI (1944), pp. 165–185.

Qaghan's spouse to eventually meaning "toute femme d'un certain rang." Even *tängrikän* (< *tängri qan*), originally meaning "göttliche König",[116] later became "wise, pious man" in al-Kāṣġarī's *Divan*.[117]

It is worth noting that the Chinese imperial title *huangdi*, unlike its predecessor *wang* once also assumed by the "son of heaven", has largely preserved its original worth in over two millennia of the title's circulation. A likely explanation for this exception of the seemingly omnipresent devaluation of almost all royal titles on the Asian continent is the generally uninterrupted centralized power in the Central Kingdom. Few pretenders were allowed to hold on to this ultimate "son of heaven" title for too long, often just amid the chaos between two major dynasties. Whereas on the Steppe and in Central Asia, particularly in Sogdiana where the social decline of the appellative *baga-* was "most marked" as Henning has observed, political decentralization was usually the historical norm.

A Tuyuhun Puzzle

Let me now discuss an old Tuyuhun 土谷渾 puzzle which in my view not only provides an interesting semi-Sinicized hybrid construct of *bagapuhr* but also sheds new light on how the term was understood by the contemporary Altaic people. The *Song shu* 宋書 (96.2371) records that, in the fourth century, the Tuyunhun Qaghan Suixi 碎奚 delegated all his power to his crown prince son Shilian 視連. The latter was then called *mohelang* 莫賀郎. The *Song shu* explains that *mohe* "means 'father' in the Song language 宋言父也. Similar passages also appear in both the *Wei shu* and the *Bei shi*,[118] seemingly to provide multiple sources for the story. But by further examination, it is very clear that the *Wei shu* passage had been copied almost verbatim from the *Bei shi*, as clearly marked by the Zhonghua shuju edition of the former. The Northern Song scholars who presumably made up for the lost chapters of the *Wei shu* using material from the *Bei shi* and other sources did not even bother to change the "Chinese language 華言" in the passage to "Wei language 魏言" as what would have been used had the original the *Wei shu* truly contained the passages. The *Bei shi*, compiled several centuries later after the *Song shu* and even further removed from the historical scene depicted, evidently copied the story from the *Song shu*. An indication of the copying is that it resulted in an apparently corrupted claim that the whole title *mohelang* stood for "father", making it utterly meaningless. The upshot of the above analysis is that the *Song shu* represented a solitary source of the entire story.

Pelliot took the "father" interpretation literally. But all he could find was the Mongol term *abaγa* "uncle".[119] Both Pelliot's literal interpretation of the *Song shu* passage and his Mongol word explanation are hardly satisfactory as shall be examined below. It is rather unfortunate for Pelliot, who later wrote the excellent exposition of *bagapuhr* "Chinese emperor" as quoted earlier, to miss a title which reads astonishingly similar to that Iranian term.

[116] Bang and von Gabain, "Türkische Turfan-Texte", p. 412.
[117] Mahmūd al-Kāṣġarī, *Compendium of the Turkic dialects (Türk Şiveleri Lügat?)*, edited and translated by Robert Dankoff and James Kelly (Cambridge, Mass., 1985), iii, p. 185.
[118] *Wei shu* 101.2234; *Bei shi* 96.3179.
[119] P. Pelliot, "Notes sur les T'ou-yu-houen et les Sou-p'i", *TP* XX (1921), pp. 323–331.

The key to the Tuyuhun title is the character *lang* 郎, originally meaning a (junior) government official, which Pelliot seemed to have accepted too. Yet during the period of concern, character *lang* was more and more being used to refer to "a young lad of prominent descent" or simply "a noble's son", not unlike the Sanskrit word *kumara*.

The etymology for this meaning of *lang*, in my view, came from the Han dynasty law of *Renziling* 任子令 which stipulated that a high-level government official, after at least three years of service at the rank of an annual salary of 2,000 *shi* 石 or more, could have one of his sons or nephews appointed as a *lang*.[120] This law was presumably repealed in 7 BC.[121] Yet the practice apparently continued unabated during the Eastern Han, either regularly or on an *ad hoc* basis, all the way through the Three-Kingdom period, the Jin 晉 dynasties and beyond, as widely attested in respective dynastic histories.[122]

This hereditary privilege naturally led to the social phenomenon that youngsters of the upper class were often addressed as *lang* irregardless of whether they were actually appointed the *lang* rank. By the time of the Three-Kingdom era, the usage was already widespread, with the two perhaps best-known *lang*'s as Sun Ce 孫策 (175–200) a.k.a. Sun Lang 孫郎,[123] the actual founder of the Wu 吳 State, and Sun's close friend and able military strategist Zhou Yu 周瑜 (175–210) a.k.a. Zhou Lang 周郎.[124] During the Jin dynasty, the usage became even more common, especially by house servants and slaves to address their young masters. Examples abound in *Shishuo xinyu* 世說新語.[125] By the time of the Southern and Northern Dynasties, there further appeared the compound *langzi* 郎子, "kid", "young boy",[126] leaving little doubt about the meaning of the character *lang*.

It is noted in particular that the above use of character *lang* was also popular among the "Barbarian" figures in northern China at the time. Examples include the young Tuoba noble Yuan Cha 元叉 being called Yuan Lang,[127] Dugu Xin 獨孤信 being called Dugu Lang "while young",[128] and Zhangsun Sheng 長孫晟, the most brilliant "Türk specialist" of the Sui and the future father-in-law of the best-known Tang emperor-cum-empire-builder Li Shimin 李世民, being called Zhangsun Lang at the age of 18 (Chinese reckoning).[129] On the other hand, the use of *lang* as an official title in a semi-Sinitic construct like *mohelang* is unattested.

The above evidence amply demonstrates that the character *lang* in the Tuyuhun title *mohelang* can only have the same "a highborn son" interpretation. The remaining obstacle to it being a semi-Sinitic rendition of the Iranic *bagapuhr* is the puzzling *Song shu* claim that *mohe* meant *fu* "father". As every boy is his father's son, the *Song shu* explanation would

[120] *Han shu* 11.337, Ying Shao's 應邵 commentary.
[121] *Han shu* 11.336; *Zizhi tongjian* 33.1060.
[122] The cases are too numerous to list. Here are some examples: *Hou Han shu* 5.232, 9.367, 37.1258, 44.1520, 56.1832, 65.2140, 71.2307; *Sanguo zhi* 三國志 2.59, 45.1075, 56.1308; *Jin shu* 3.72.
[123] *Sanguo zhi* 46.1101, 1104.
[124] *Sanguo zhi* 54.1260.
[125] See for examples Xu Zhen'e 徐振堮, *Shishuo xinyu xiaojian* 世說新語校箋 (Beijing, 1984), pp. 329, 352, 377, etc. The example on p. 352 is a clear case for the meaning of "son".
[126] See examples in *Bei Qi shu* (41.535) and *Nan shi* (55.1369, 69.1680).
[127] *Wei shu* 16.406.
[128] *Zhou shu* 16.263. Dugu Xin was the father-in-law of both the Zhou Tianwang Yuwen Yu 毓 (temple name Shizong 世宗; posthumous title Ming 明) and Yang Jian, the founding emperor of the Sui, as well as the maternal grandfather of Li Yuan 李淵, the founding emperor of the Tang.
[129] *Sui shu* 51.1329.

make the title *mohelang* nothing more than a *vérité de La Palice* applicable to every lad on earth. Pelliot seemed to have had second thoughts too when he revisited the Tuyuhun term *mohe*,[130] which he equated with the Old Turkic *bayа*, the latter naturally having little to do with the Mongol word *abayа* "uncle".

In my view, this puzzle can be easily solved by taking the *Song shu* interpretation *fu* as either an error for *tian* 天 or much more likely a scribe's omission with the word *junfu* 君父. This word originally meant "lord and father" but was later almost always used to refer to just the "lord", with its opposite word *chenzi* 臣子, literally "subject and son", meaning only "the subject(s)". This was to a large extent due to the general recognition of the emperor as the father of his subjects, as befitting the almost universal patriarchal origin of kingship examined earlier.[131] This was also at times aptly applied to the emperor regarding his relationship with his prince sons.[132] With such an emendation, the *Song shu* interpretation becomes a perfect rendition of the Iranian title *bagapuhr* in its somewhat "devalued" meaning of "lord's son" or "prince".

With the recorded heavy Chinese cultural elements among the Tuyuhun and the aforementioned popularity of the *lang* appellative among the "Barbarian" figures in northern China, there is little doubt about *mohelang* being an original Tuyuhun title, an interesting Sino-Iranian compound arising in the nomadic borderland between the two ancient sedentary cultures.

It is not certain that the Iranian *baga* was always interpreted on the Steppe in its devalued meaning of "lord". This is not the place to delve into the possible link between the Old Turkic *bögü* "sage", "sorcery" and the Iranian *baga* (also the Russian word Бог). Yet it is noted that the demigod (literally 非神非人 "neither god nor human", as a boy left by or transfigured from a mysterious huge reptile 巨蟲)[133] ancestor Qaghan of the Qifu 乞伏 Xianbei who established the Western Qin state (385–431) in western China was known as Tuoduo Mohe 託鐸莫何.[134] This legend, at the very least, reflected the tradition of sacral kingship, or the "godly" or "godlike" khanship on the Steppe. In this context, the two interpretations of *bagapuhr*, namely "son of god" and "king's son", may in fact converge, as shall be discussed next.

Sacral Kingship and "Son of God-King"

The Iranian title *bagapuhr*, whether as "son of god" or as "king's son", reflects not only the deep-rooted traditions of sacral kingship in Chinese, Altaic and Indo-Iranian cultures, but also the connections between the three cultures in this regard, if not a common origin of these traditions.

The rendition of the Chinese "son of heaven" by *devaputra* and *bagapuhr* "son of god" has rather faithfully translated the Chinese concept of sacral kinship that a ruler is someone

[130] "Neuf notes".
[131] As explicitly stated in *Hou Han shu* 58.1872.
[132] See for examples *Sui shu* 22.627 and 62.1487.
[133] *Jin shu* 125.3113.
[134] Peter Boodberg interpreted Tuoduo as the Turkic word *tayдaqï* "mountain dweller", and that Mohe "represents, of course, *bayа*". See his "Hu T'ien Han Yüeh Fang Chu" No.5 (January 1935), in *Selected Works*, p. 103.

who has "descended from heaven", as the Arab authors were still able to interpret the title many centuries later. These two renditions are also remarkable in that they were very distinct in respective languages, deviating from both the usual Indo-European sacral kingship titles and the general theophoric "god-given" names.

I have mentioned earlier the paucity of *-putra* and *-puhr* theophoric constructs in Indo-Iranian languages. The same can also be said about the "son of god" regnal titles. It is not surprising that the only other case for *bagapuhr* to be interpreted as "son of god" is the Pahlavi Christian appellative for Jesus, which Sylvain Lévi has also tried to attribute, albeit not very convincingly, to Chinese influence via the Iranians.[135] It is worth noting that the only other "son of god" royal epithet one can find in contemporary West and Central Asia is the semi-barbaric Greek title Θεοπάτορ, literally "god-father", assumed by several Parthian kings.[136] One can compare it with the classic Greek terms υιος Θεου for the Christian "son of god" and Θεου υιός, the Greek equivalent of *Divi filius*, Augustus's patronym,[137] to see how distinct the Parthian title was.[138] It is further noted that the appearance of this regnal name may simply be due to the fact that a deceased royal father had called himself Θεου.[139] In this sense, Θεοπάτορ would mean not exactly "son of god", but rather something similar to Augustus's patronym *Divi filius* (as the adopted son of Caesar, who had of course been already deified as a *deus*), and the "devalued" title of *bagapuhr* when the Iranian kings started to call themselves *baga*. In other words, a form of "son of god-king" as shall be discussed later.

In contrast to the above distinction, however subtle, between the ancient Sinitic and Indo-Iranian civilizations on the manifestation of sacral kingship, there appeared to be much stronger parallels between the Sinitic and Altaic civilizations in this regard.

The most striking parallel is the Steppe belief in Tängri, the universal sky-god.[140] From this angle, it is hard to find another religious notion or deity that is as close as Tängri is to be an equivalent of Tian 天, in both a physical and a metaphysical sense, among all ancient civilizations. This equivalence is made even more prominent by the opening passage of both the Kul Tegin and Bilga Kaghan inscriptions, in which the blue Tengri on high is paired with the brown earth below to give birth to the humans,[141] paralleling the Chinese heaven and earth gods 皇天后土.

This remarkable similarity extends to sacral kingship. The first two aspects of Steppe kingship summarized by Jean-Paul Roux based on the Orkhun inscriptions are none other

[135] Lévi, "Devaputra", pp. 19–21. An anonymous reader points out that *bagapuhr* is also a Jesus epithet in the Iranian Manichaean texts.

[136] Warwick Wroth, *A Catalogue of the Greek Coins in the British Museum* xxiii, *Catalogue of the Coins of Parthia* (reprint Bologna, 1964), pp. 5, 16, 18, 38, 41, etc. It is interesting to see (p. 61) Mithradates III (reign 57–53 BC) call himself Θεουευπάτορ "[of] god-good-father".

[137] Henry G. Liddell, Robert Scott and Henry S. Jones, *A Greek-English Lexicon* (Oxford, 1996), p. 1847.

[138] According to the above most extensive lexicon of Classic Greek (p. 790), Θεοπάτορ is only attested as Parthian royal titles.

[139] W.W. Tarn, *The Greeks in Bactria and India*, 3rd ed. (Chicago, 1984), p. 92.

[140] The most extensive study of the subject is perhaps Jean-Paul Roux's four-part article "Tängri: Essai sur le ciel-dieu des peuples altaïcs", *Revue de l'histoire des religions*, CXLIX (1956), pp. 49–82, 197–320 and CL (1956), pp. 27–54, 173–212. See also N. Pallisen, "Die alte Religion der Mongolen und der Kultus Tschingis-Chans", *Numen* III (1956), pp. 178–229, though the latter was based on materials much later than the epoch of our interest.

[141] See for example Talat Tekin, *A Grammar of Orkhon Turkic* (Bloomington, 1968), p. 232.

than (i) *Le kagan vient du ciel*, and (ii) *Le kagan possède un mandat céleste*.[142] There would seem no better synopsis than these two points in describing the Chinese "son of heaven" ever since its inception, interestingly, after the Zhou conquest.

This raises a question of whether this extraordinary similarity was due to Chinese influence on the Steppe. After all, the *Han shu* (94a.3751) recorded that the Xiongnu called their ruler *Chengli gutu shanyu* 撐犁孤塗單于, with the interpretation that *Chengli* meant "heaven" and *gutu* 孤塗 "son", seemingly a perfect translation of the Chinese "son of heaven".

But there are two major obstacles to this hypothesis of Chinese influence. The first one is that the *Han shu* interpretation of the Xiongnu "son of heaven" is a solitary case not repeated by any other sources. The word *gutu*, allegedly meaning "son", has no acceptable Altaic cognate. This in turn has forced Pulleyblank to look at some extinct or near-extinct Yenissei languages exemplified by the Ket for a possible solution, which does not sound very convincing either.[143] In fact, a Western Jin scholar Huangfu Mi 皇甫謐 (215–282) consulted his Xiongnu slave on this title, and the slave's answer was simply: "*chengli* means *tianzi*."[144] This is certainly consistent with the direct use of *Tängri* as "Qaghan" in Old Turkic as mentioned earlier. Moreover, while the universal sky-god Tängri was inherited by all Altaic groups, the alleged Xiongnu "son of god" construct was conspicuously absent.

This fact is most evident in the earliest written Altaic literature, namely the various Old Turkic inscriptions and documents. The notion that a Qaghan comes from heaven is expressed in many forms like *tängridä bolmiš* "born from heaven",[145] Tängri-Qan "heavenly king", Tängri Ilig "godlike king"[146] and simply Tängri "god", but never a "son of Tängri" construct. An interesting case of an Old Turkic rendition of "son of heaven" is *tinsi oγlī* found in the Orkhon inscriptions to refer to Tianshan 天山 "Heavenly Mountain",[147] also known as Aq-taγ in Old Turkic and Baishan 白山 "White Mountain" in Chinese, probably due to its permanent snow-cover around the peak.[148] The rather awkward Sino-Turkic compound *tinsi oγlī* shows the Türks' recognition of *tian* as an epithet of the Chinese emperor, an understanding well in line with both the Xiongnu's and the Türks' use of Tängri as the title of their respective supreme ruler. This observation is supported by a *Tang huiyao* 唐會要 entry of year 664 in which a Türk chief told Emperor

[142] Jean-Paul Roux, "L'origine céleste de la souveraineté dans les inscriptions paléo-turques de Mongolie et de Sibérie", in *The Sacral Kingship* (Leiden, 1959), pp. 231–241, especially pp. 235–236.

[143] Edwin G. Pulleyblank, "The Consonantal system of Old Chinese: Part II", *Asia Major*, n.s. IX (1963), pp. 206–265. In fact Pulleyblank could not find anything acceptable in the still-living Yenissei languages, which generally have a *fyp* root for "son". In the end, he was forced to identify the word *bīkjàl* "son" in the extinct Arin language as the cognate to *gutu*, whose Han-time pronunciation was reconstructed by him as **kwaḥ-δaḥ*. He alleged that "*bǐ* appears to be a prefix added to nouns of relationship . . ." In my opinion, a much better correspondence in this direction can be found in the Sanskrit term *kudaka* "child", New Persian *kūdak* "id.", Tamil *kura* "young", Santali *kora* "boy", with the reconstructed ancient Iranian form **kuδak* or **kuδag*. For these Indo-Iranian words, see Hans-Peter Schmidt, "An Indo-Iranian etymological kaleidoscope", in *Festschrift for Henry Hoenigswald*, ed.G. Cardona and N. H. Zide, (Tübingen, 1987), pp. 355–362.

[144] *Yiwen leiju* 藝文類聚 (Shanghai: Zhonghua, 1965), 80.1371: 撐犁天子也.

[145] See for instance Tekin, *Grammar*, p. 231.

[146] W. Bang and A. von Gabain, "Türkische Turfan-Texte", p. 414, lines 27 and 29.

[147] Tekin, *Grammar*, p. 252. Here *oγlı* is the third-person possessive of *oγul* "son", "boy".

[148] *Xin Tang shu* 221a.6230 calls it Ajietian 阿羯田 Mountain.

Gaozong 高宗 that a Shanyu (interpreted as Qaghan from the context) was *tianshang-zhitian* 天上之天 "heaven above heaven".[149]

This fact, namely the absence of "son of heaven" constructs in Old Turkic titulary, is also reflected in the Chinese literature. To my knowledge, the only case the title *tianzi* was used directly to refer to a Türk Qaghan is in *Sui shu* (84.1868),[150] which according to Pelliot must be a rendition of *tänritäg* "heaven-like".[151] In fact, even this *Sui shu* title starts with the phrase *congtiansheng* 從天生 "born from heaven". The most interesting case of translating an Old Turkic "born from heaven" title is an entry in *Zizhi tongjian* in 714,[152] in which the Türk Qaghan Mochuo 墨啜, in a marriage proposal to Emperor Xuanzong, called himself *tianshangde guobao tiannan* 天上得果報天男 which Pelliot has translated as "[le qaγan qui] a obtenu au Ciel la récompense, fils du Ciel".[153] This rendition not only demonstrates the influence of Buddhism among the Türks but also helps illuminate the *Jiu Tang shu* (194a.5177) interpretation of the title of Mochuo's grandnephew Dengli 登利, a prevailing Tang transliteration of *Tängri*, as *guobao* 果報 "retribution", which has puzzled Pelliot.[154] The rendition *tiannan* 天男 also reflects the effort by contemporary Chinese translator(s) to preserve the distinctness of the Turkic sovereign title in contrast with the Chinese *tianzi*, an apparent difference also noted by Pelliot who admitted being uncertain about the Turkic original. The title of the Uighur Qaghan Tianqin 天親 "related to heaven"[155] is another example. It is also striking to see the title Tiankehan 天可汗 "Heavenly Qaghan" used at least four times in the Chinese portion of the trilingual Qarabalghasun inscription to refer to the Uighur Alp Bilgä Qaghan (reign 808–821) or his predecessor.[156]

In view of the evidence given above, I contend that the Xiongnu title *chengli gutu* may represent not the uniquely Sinitic genitive form "son of heaven", but the much more common verbal-phrase or other similar theophoric constructs meaning "god-given", "god's gift" etc., attested in almost all Old World civilizations except early China.[157] This contention is consistent with not only the existing Altaic data and the difficulty in finding a "son" cognate to *gutu*, but also the observation of the heavy Indo-Iranian elements in the Xiongnu confederation.[158]

The second obstacle to attributing the Steppe sacral kingship to Chinese influence is in my view the ample data, even in Chinese sources, showing the Steppe kingship to be a heritage distinct from the Chinese "son of heaven" tradition since the Qin-Han era. Nowhere was this separate heritage manifested more predominantly than the proliferation of the title Tianwang 天王 "heaven-king" among the "Barbarian" regimes in northern China after the collapse of the Western Jin 晉.

[149] *Tang huiyao* (Taipei, 1963), 73.1309
[150] Copied into *Bei shi* 99.3293.
[151] "Neuf notes".
[152] 211.6699; *Cefu yuangui* 冊府元龜 Chapter 979 is the likely original source.
[153] "L'édition collective des œuvres de Wang Kouo-wei", *TP*, XXVI (1929), pp. 113–182.
[154] "Neuf notes", Note 29.
[155] *Jiu Tangshu* 195.5208, *Xin Tangshu* 217a.6124.
[156] Radloff, *Alttürkischen Inschriften*, i, Plate III., columns 12, 16, 17 and 18.
[157] Or as F.W.K. Müller has suggested, *gutu* may stand for the Turkic word *kut* or *qut* "Heaven's favor", "good fortune", "majesty", "majestic", as quoted in Pulleyblank, "Consonantal system", p. 244.
[158] See Chen, "Sino-Tokharico-Altaica".

This title first appeared in the Xiongnu Former Zhao 前趙 (304–329) regime, whose rise actually preceded the demise of the Western Jin.[159] The title was formally adopted by the Later Zhao 後趙 (319–351).[160] This was imitated by many "Barbarian" powers in northern China during all or part of their respective existence. They included the Former and Later Qin 秦 (350–394 and 384–417 respectively),[161] several Yan 燕 states,[162] the Xiongnu scion Xia 夏 (407–431),[163] and the Later Liang 後涼 (386–403).[164] The short-lived Ran Min 冉閔 regime (350–352) also used it.[165] So did a rebellious Dingling 丁零 (also known as Chile 敕勒, i.e. the "High-Cart" Uighurs) chief.[166] This tradition was carried on almost to the eve of the Sui unification by the Northern Zhou (557–581)[167] and the Northern Qi (550–577) rulers.[168]

One may contend that the title Tianwang was not new to China but present since the Zhou dynasty. However, there were clear distinctions regarding its use:

(i) Contrary to later claims, Tianwang was *never* an official or formal title of the Zhou kings. Nor was it of any other Chinese emperor from the Qin to the Jin 晉, and from the Sui onward, except the "Christian king" Hong Xiuquan 洪秀全 (1814–1851–1864).[169]

(ii) As mentioned earlier in this article, in literary sources, the title was in fact first used by Confucius, the master of using subtle linguistics to make political points, to distinguish the Zhou king from other pretenders who has styled themselves as kings.

(iii) The "Barbarian" rulers of northern China not only adopted Tianwang as their *formal* regnal title, but often also made the deliberate point that it was a different title to *huangdi* 洪秀全, as amply demonstrated by the cases of Shi Le 皇帝,[170] Shi Hu[171] and the early Zhou monarchs.[172]

(iv) The early Northern Zhou monarchs, who were the last "Barbarian" rulers to use Tianwang as a formal title, not only abolished the Chinese title *huangdi*, but also deliberately did away with the Chinese reign-titles, causing a rare break in this uninterrupted Chinese institution since 140 BC.[173] It is noted that a handful of similar exceptions in this regard were none other than the early Mongol Khans prior to Khubilai and the first Qidan/Kitan monarch Abaoji.[174]

[159] *Jin shu* 88.2290, 102.2674.
[160] *Jin shu* 105.2746.
[161] *Jin shu* 112.2869, 2884; *Wei shu* 95.2082.
[162] *Jin shu* 121.3111 note 8, 125.3128, Wei *shu* 3.50, *Zizhi tongjian* 111.3506, 112.3527.
[163] *Jin shu* 130.3202.
[164] *Jin shu* 122.3060.
[165] *Jin shu* 8.196. Ran was supposed to have a Han origin but grew up from birth as the adopted grandson of the "Barbarian" heaven-king Shi Hu 石虎.
[166] *Wei shu* 95.2066.
[167] *Zhou shu* 4.53, 35.616.
[168] *Bei Qi shu* 8.111.
[169] An interesting semi-exception is the early Qidan/Kitan leader Abaoji 阿保機 who was called a *tianhuangwang* 天皇王 or Heaven Emperor 天皇帝 (*Jiu Wudai shi* 舊五代史 137.1830; *Liao shi* 1.3 and 1.10). This case further strengthens my contention of a separate Steppe tradition of sacral kingship.
[170] *Jin shu* 105.2746.
[171] *Jin shu* 106.2762, 2765.
[172] *Zhou shu* 4.58, 35.616.
[173] This break actually covered the last two puppet emperors of the Western Wei.
[174] It is also no accident that the same Qidan monarch called himself "Heaven Emperor".

(v) In particular, and amazingly in language identical to what the Uighur Bügü Qaghan called himself, yet unheard-of on ''native'' Chinese emperors, the Northern Zhou Tianwang Xuandi 宣帝 directly called himself Tian ''Heaven'' and equated himself with Shangdi 上帝 ''Supreme God''.[175]

A detailed study of the ''Barbarian'' heaven-kings in China is beyond this article. But it is apparent that Tianwang as a formal title represented a Xiongnu heritage, first applied to the Xiongnu ruler Liu Yao 劉曜. There is also an interesting earlier Xiongnu datum regarding the title. In 133 BC, a Han petty officer captured by the Xiongnu revealed, in the nick of time, the Han plot of trapping the Shanyu in a major ambush, saving the Xiongnu from a devastating rout. Thanking heaven for this good luck, the Shanyu called the captured Han officer Tianwang.[176]

It should be observed that Shi Le's adoption of Tianwang as an official regnal title was not only a reflection of his ethnic pride and a deliberate demonstration of his non-Han identity, but also a natural development in the wake of the miserable end of the last two Chinese emperors of the Western Jin, which must have shattered the prestige of the title *huangdi*, especially in the eyes of the ''Barbarians''. This was certainly consistent with the Later Zhao's stress on its distinctness from the Han Chinese and the need to adopt a different state doctrine or religion namely Buddhism.[177] The final northern state to formally adopt the Tianwang title, namely the Yuwen 宇文 Zhou, initiated many other reactionary measures against the Tuoba Wei's earlier wholesale sinification drive, including restoring the ''Barbarian'' language, names and dresses in what can be characterized as a Xianbei revival movement.[178] These facts much strengthen the contention that the Tianwang title represented a distinct cultural tradition, not merely a Steppe copy of the Chinese ''son of heaven''.

Given all the evidence, especially the Northern Zhou Tianwang Xuandi's self-designation, a Western Jin Xiongnu slave interpreting *chengli* as *tianzi* and a Türk chieftain calling Shanyu/Qaghan ''heaven above heaven'', I submit that Tianwang was the Chinese translation of none other than the ''Barbarian'' heaven-god Tängri throughout the entire period.

Proceeding from the Steppe tradition in sacral kinship, particularly the equivalence of Tängri with Qaghan/Shanyu, the fact that the title *bagapuhr,* originally translating Chinese ''son of heaven'', came to mean ''prince'' on the Steppe becomes a natural inference. In other words, via the vehicle of sacral kingship, the title's meaning evolved from ''son of god'' to ''son of god-king''. The honorific *dizi* 帝子 ''princess'', ''prince'' (literally ''child of god-king'') mentioned in an earlier note is a striking, albeit poetic, parallel.

[175] 自稱爲天 and 自比上帝 as given in *Zhou shu* 7.125. See also *Bei shi* 10.380.

[176] *Shiji* 史記 110.2905, *Han shu* 94a.3765, *Zizhi tongjian* 18.582–583. I consider this awkward case likely to be a mistranslation of Tängri as god or *tianshen* 天神

[177] *Jin shu* 95.2487–88.

[178] Sanping Chen, ''A-gan revisited: the Tuoba's political and cultural heritage'', *Journal of Asian History*, XXX (1996), pp. 46–78.

The Zhou's "Barbarian" Origin?

Despite an independent tradition of the Steppe sacral kingship, at least by the time of the medieval "Barbarian" invasions, its strong similarities to Chinese "son of heaven" heritage are too evident to ignore. In my view, a common yet remote origin of both traditions is the best interpretation to accommodate this striking parallel. The late Joseph Fletcher was perhaps the most vocal in this regard:

> My working hypothesis is that the idea of a single universal god and a related concept of universal dominion stemmed from the early Aryans and remained in the steppe with those who remained there (Scythians, etc.). Those who entered Iran and India carried it with them, whence it reached the Near East (Jews, Christians, Muslims), Greece (Alexander), and the Romans (one God, one world, one religion, one empire). The "son of Heaven" and "mandate of Heaven" concepts would have reached China either from the steppe nomads or from Iran or India (Asoka).[179]

Fletcher's sweeping conjecture, while ingenious, is nonetheless troubled by anachronism and contradictions.[180] I only see evidence for a common origin between the Altaic and Sinitic forms of heaven-worship and sacral kingship, which might have contained some early Indo-Iranian elements, but is still far from the all-inclusive Indo-European origin of monotheism including Judeo-Christianity Fletcher had espoused.

One may not infer too much from the tendency of the medieval northern "Barbarians", in order to justify their many non-Han policies and acts, to claim these traditions from China's antiquity.[181] This kind of claim is included incidentally the Northern Zhou's adoption of the Tianwang title and many other alleged old (Western) Zhou institutions;[182] and is consistent with the general propaganda by the "Barbarians" to identify themselves as the descendents of legendary Chinese sage-kings and/or famous ancient Chinese persons to legitimize their rule of the Central Kingdom.[183] But it is also true that the very first "Barbarian" conquest that introduced the sky-god, the "son of heaven" and the "mandate of heaven" in China served as a convenient precedent for the medieval "Barbarian" conquerors whose kingship was based on almost identical notions. This can hardly be considered a pure coincidence.

This accordance in my view strengthens the thesis suggested earlier in this article that the early Zhou people had a partially "Barbarian" origin and some of their cultural traditions were shared by many later Steppe groups. This proposition offers a natural explanation for

[179] "The Mongols", p. 31 note 13.

[180] For example, Fletcher's suggestion that the universal sky-god reached China via the court of Asoka would miss the Zhou conquest by centuries. The relatively late appearance of deified Iranian kings also runs against Fletcher's hypothesis, as the early Iranians would have been one of the most natural intermediaries for the Sinitic contact. The highly personal nature of god's favour (*farr*) to Iranian kings (Frye, "Remarks on kingship", p. 80) is also markedly different to the Chinese notions of the "mandate of heaven" and *zuo* 祚 "imperial fortune", both of which were born by the entire royal house, not an individual.

[181] For example, *Jin shu* 106.2675 states that Shi Hu's enthronement as a Tianwang was "in accordance with the Yin and Zhou systems". See also *Wei shu* 113.2973 (*Zizhi tongjian* 113.3575) for the Tuoba's forgoing the more recent Chinese traditions of officialdom and creating their own titles by "imitating office names from antiquity".

[182] *Zhou shu* 2.36, 24.404, 38.685, *Sui shu* 66.1549. Wang Zhongluo's 王仲犖 *Beizhou liudian* 北周六典 (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1979), is the best compilation and study of the Northern Zhou officialdom.

[183] This almost became the standard description of any "Barbarian" leader's ancestry in Chinese records. The opening chapter of *Wei shu* on the Tuoba's family tree is a typical example.

the striking similarity regarding the sky-god and sacral kingship between the Sinitic and Altaic civilizations.

In addition to the examples raised earlier in this work, F. Hirth was the first to recognize a cognate to the Xiongnu-Turkic word *kingrak* "a double-edged knife" among the weapons that King Wu 武 of the Zhou personally used to conquer the Shang.[184] I would point out the Zhou tradition of regarding (white) wolves as an auspicious token,[185] as well as King Wu's *chai* 豺 "jackal" metaphor in depicting his troops' valour.[186] Were both in line with Inner Asian steppe cultures, but were hard to reconcile with the Chinese cultural tradition vis-à-vis these two animals.

There is also the little-noted fact that the Zhou people introduced a new kinship term *kun* 昆 for "elder brother" into Chinese. Unlike its later Altaic successor *aqa* that was the origin of the now prevailing term *ge* 哥 largely replacing the authentic Chinese term *xiong* 兄,[187] the Zhou term never caught on, except, as the Qing linguist Duan Yucai 段玉裁 observed, in the immediate neighbourhood of the Zhou capital, as reflected in the *Wang-feng* 王風 chapter of the *Shijing*.[188] Assuming an old *a-* prefix in Chinese kinship terms, the Zhou term for "elder brother" reckons well with its Altaic equivalents.[189]

Moreover, there was the story of the Zhou King Gugong's 古公 elder sons Taibo 太伯 and Zhongyong 仲雍, who migrated to the lower Yangtze basin so their youngest brother could inherit the Zhou throne. This is not only recorded in *Shiji* repeatedly,[190] but also mentioned by Confucius.[191] In addition, Gugong was the grandfather of King Wen, hence only three generations removed from the Zhou's final conquest of the Shang. Therefore, the Taibo story cannot be completely a later idealistic invention and must contain a certain element of historical truth. This legend then is strikingly reminiscent of the Steppe tradition of ultimogeniture in which the youngest son, the *ochigin*, inherits his parents' homestead. The migration of the Tuyuhun from northeast China to their new home bordering Tibet and the division of the huge Mongol empire among Chinggis Khan's four sons are all examples of this Steppe tradition.

Shiji in fact was quite frank about the Zhou people's long "Barbarian" experience if not origin. Despite their alleged descent from Houji 后稷, the legendary sage who discovered agriculture, according to Sima Qian's reckoning, the Zhou people lived "among the Rong-Di 戎狄 (Barbarians)" for 14 generations, during which they often abandoned agriculture. It is only during the leadership of Gugong, King Wen's grandfather, that they

[184] Friedrich Hirth, *Ancient history of China, to the end of the Chou dynasty* (New York, 1908; reprint Freeport, New York, 1969), p. 67. Hirth calls this "the oldest Turkish word on record". This claim is consistent with archeological findings that show striking similarity in bronze daggers found in China and west Siberia. See A.P. Okladnikov, "Inner Asia at the dawn of history", in *The Cambridge history of early inner Asia*, ed. Denis Sinor (Cambridge, 1990), pp. 41–96, in particular p. 86.

[185] *Shiji* 4.136 and 110.2881. See also *Jin shu* 87.2264, *Song shu* 27.764 and 27.809 for interpretations.

[186] *Shiji* 4.122. It is interesting to see this changed to "bear" in the *Mushi* 牧誓 chapter of *Shangshu* 尚書, making the "bear" appear twice in that short passage. Apparently later literati who edited these ancient classics felt the original metaphor repugnant.

[187] Chen, "A-gan revisited".

[188] *Shuowen jiezi shu* 說文解字注 (Shanghai: Shanghai shudian, 1992), p. 236.

[189] In particular the noted Murong 慕容 Xianbei word *agan* 阿干 for "elder brother" (see my article "A-gan revisited") and the Nüzhen-Manchu word *ahun* for the same.

[190] 4.115, 31.1445–47.

[191] See the Taibo 泰伯 chapter (Chapter 8) of *The Analects*.

started to "shed the Barbarian customs 貶戎狄之俗" and to build houses and towns.[192] Several ancient commentators had long pointed out that the alleged 14-generation gap from Houji, the agriculture sage, to Gugong had to cover more than a thousand years and was thus utterly unbelievable.[193] In other words, the Zhou's alleged family tree prior to their coming into close contact with the Shang reads amazingly similar to that of all medieval "Barbarian" groups who crossed the Great Wall to settle in the Chinese heartland. Whatever their true ancestry might have been, it is clear that the Zhou people would be no less (and no more) "Barbarian" than the "Barbarians" among whom they had lived for more than a millennium.

A remaining issue is the Zhou's professed heritage, however tangible, in seed-cultivation, which was indeed reflected in sources like the *Shijing*, and its contrast with the primarily animal-breeding economy of the later "Barbarian" groups. A full exposition of this subject is beyond this article. Here let me briefly state that pastoral nomadism as observed in the past two millennia is generally acknowledged as a relatively recent historical development that does not predate the advent of horse-riding, much less the Zhou conquest of the Shang. Archeological data have clearly showed that the vast Eurasian continent represented a cultural continuum in prehistory and early-history.[194] During much of the last millennium BC, early "Chinese" and 'Barbarians" lived side by side in northern China with heavy political, cultural and matrimonial interrelations.[195] This situation lasted almost until the eve of the Qin unification.

The story of Queen-dowager Xuan 宣太后 (?-265 BC) of the Qin, whose son King Zhao 昭王 organised a series of military victories that eventually led to the unification of the Central Kingdom under his great-grandson the First Emperor of China in 221 BC, demonstrates how thin the line separating the early "Chinese" and "Barbarians" was. After the death of her husband King Huiwen 惠文王, incidentally the first Qin sovereign to style himself as a king, this Chinese Cleopatra (in a reversed role) cohabited with the "Barbarian king" (*rongwang* 戎王) of the Yiqu 義渠 and bore the latter two sons, with the ultimate objective of subjugating and annexing the "Barbarian" state. The Queen-dowager accomplished her end, apparently with few qualms, at the expense of not only her relationship with the "Barbarian king" but also his life.[196] A postscript to this Machiavellian love-affair is that Sima Qian, by including this story together with the history of Yiqu in the Xiongnu chapter of *Shiji,* clearly considered the Yiqu and the Xiongnu as belonging to the same "Barbarian complex" to his knowledge.

Even after the advent of pastoral nomadism, agriculture did not disappear on the Steppe, as many have mistakenly claimed. For examples, Otto Maenchen-Helfen has a full section

[192] *Shiji* 4.112–114.
[193] See commentaries of *Shiji* 4.113.
[194] For a somewhat more detailed discussion, see Chen "Sino-Tokharo-Altaica". For in-depth studies of specific examples, see Chauncey S. Goodrich, "Riding astride and the saddle in ancient China", *HJAS*, XLIV (1984), pp. 279–306, and Edward L. Shaughnessy, "Historical perspectives on the introduction of chariots into China", *HJAS*, XLVII (1988), pp. 189–237.
[195] Examples abound in *Zuozhuan* and other early sources. Jaroslav Prušek, *Chinese Statelets and the Northern Barbarians in the Period 1400–300 B.C.* (Dordrecht, 1971), is a good modern reference.
[196] *Shiji* 110.2885, corroborated by *Shiji* 79.2406 and *Zhanguo ce* 戰國策 (Shanghai, 1985), 5.184.

titled "Hun Agriculture?" in his *magnum opus* on the Huns,[197] and Di Cosmo has done an extensive study on the agricultural productions within the Xiongnu empire.[198] In my view these results lend strong support to Owen Lattimore's ingenious theory of "progressive differentiation" for the displacement of a rather uniform Asian prehistory by the marked bipolar, nomadism-versus-intensive-farming division observed throughout much of recorded history,[199] whose full exposition is beyond this article. Suffice to say that agriculture activity, or its absence, is a non-issue in comparing the Zhou conquest with later "Barbarian" invasions.

As a final note on a possible Indo-Iranian role in the Sinitic conception of sacral kingship, let us observe that the Zhou sky-god Tian or its more complete form Haotian is etymologically built upon the Shang pictograph *da* "big", "great", "big man", as discussed earlier. There is a certain echo of this construct in the ancient Greeks' mixing up the Iranian *bayа* with μεγα as noted in an earlier footnote.

"Son of Heaven", Theophoric names and the Iranic Influence

Contrary to Fletcher's sweeping hypothesis about a common Indo-European origin of the sky-god and sacral kingship in Eurasia, the Chinese "son of heaven" actually reveals a unique trait of the Chinese civilization, distinct from *all* other major Old World cultures, Indo-European in particular, namely the absence of theophoric personal names. In sharp contrast, all other major civilizations in the Old World have each had a rich tradition in theophoric names.[200] This marked difference between China and all other Old World civilizations no doubt is also related to the lack of a strong religious tradition in the Central Kingdom.[201]

The simple fact is that from the very beginning until the introduction of Buddhism, theophoric personal names had *never* been attested in China. For a very long time, *tianzi* "son of heaven" remained the only theophoric appellative in the Central Kingdom,[202] and

[197] Otto Maenchen-Helfen, *The World of the Huns; Studies in Their History and Culture* (Berkeley, 1973), pp. 174–178.

[198] Di Cosmo, "Ancient Inner Asian nomads".

[199] Owen Lattimore, *Inner Asian frontiers of China*, 2nd ed. (New York, 1951), pp. 54–61. A fine elaboration of this theory is given by Peter Boodberg in a 1942 lecture, in *Selected Works*, pp. 1–23.

[200] There is a rich literature on Near Eastern and Indo-European onomasticon, particularly by early German authors. Here I only list several major titles. On Sumerian names, see Henri Limet, *L'Anthroponymie sumerienne* (Paris,1968). On ancient Egypt, see Hermann Ranke, *Die ägyptischen Personennamen* (Glückstadt, 1935–1977), i–iii. On Hittite names, see Emmanuel Laroche, *Recueil d'onomastique Hittite* (Paris, 1951). On ancient Indian/Sanskrit names, see van Velze's *Names of Persons in Early Sanscrit Literature* cited before. On various Semitic languages including Assyrian and pre-Islamic Arabic, see K.L. Tallqvist, *Assyrian Personal Names*. (Helsinki, 1914), Frank L. Benz, *Personal Names in the Phoenician and Punic Inscriptions* (Rome, 1972) and many other titles. On Hellenic names, see P.M. Fraser and E. Matthews's extensive two-volume concordance *A Lexicon of Greek Personal Names* (Oxford, 1987). On ancient Iranian names, see Justi's classic 1895 *Namenbuch* and E. Benvente's modern study *Titres et noms propres en iranien ancien* (Paris, 1966).

[201] For the relationship between theophoric names, the so-called personal god and the Near Eastern religious tradition, see Thorkild Jacobsen, *The Treasures of Darkness: a History of Mesopotamian Religion* (New Haven, 1976) and two excellent focus studies by German authors Hermann Vorländer, *Mein Gott: Die Vorstellungen vom persönlische Gott im Alten Orient und im Alten Testament* (Kevelaer, 1975) and Rainer Albertz, *Persönliche Frömmigkeit und offizielle Religion* (Stuttgart, 1978).

[202] Another possible early theophoric construct is *shenbao* 神保 "god-protect" (*Shijing*, Ode 219), also written as *lingbao* 靈保 "spirit-protect" in *Chuci* 楚辭. It was traditionally interpreted as an honorific noun meaning the (ancestor) idol (*shi* 尸). Zhu Xi 朱熹, *Zhuzi yulei* 朱子語類 (Beijing, 1986), 81.2125, was perhaps the first to

as such a rather unique construct shown by the rarity of the *-puthra* theophoric name in Indo-Iranian cultures as examined earlier.

Coinciding with the introduction of Buddhism via Central Asia, this arguably Mesopotamian heritage finally reached China during the Middle Ages.[203] The Qing scholar Zhao Yi 趙翼 was perhaps the first to notice the sudden popularity of naming people after gods and deities during the Southern and Northern Dynasties.[204] Those names with a Buddhist origin have also received attention from modern scholars.[205] Yet a general treatment of Chinese theophoric names is conspicuously lacking and will be pursued in a separate study. Here let me briefly summarize that all principal types of theophoric names found in the Near East, namely verbal-sentence, nominal-sentence, one-word, genitive-construct and even hypocoristica,[206] were attested in China. But verbal-sentence (god-give, god-protect, etc) and genitive-construct (god's gift, god's slave, etc.), followed by the one-word type, constitute by far the great majority of Chinese theophoric names. It should also be noted that in the case of Buddhist theophoric names, the divinity element often comes from the Triratna, the ''Buddhism trinity'' (Chinese *sanbao* 三寶 ''three treasures''), namely the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha.[207] In ''god-given'' or ''heaven-given'' names corresponding to Pali/Sanskrit *-datta*, Iranian *-dāta* and Greek *-doros*[208] the Chinese may also take the ''son-of-deity'' form.

In Table 1 (opposite) I demonstrate this new fad by providing some cursory statistics of persons who had a formal entry in the respective dynastic history with a theophoric name, style, or a diminutive (childhood) name.[209]

The general issue of Chinese theophoric names has to be dealt with elsewhere. With relation to *tianzi* ''son of heaven'' and *bagapuhr* ''son of god'', let us briefly examine the ''heaven-given'' or ''god-given'' forms. As far as I am aware, a local lord of the Dunhuang 敦煌 region Zhang Tianxi 張天錫 represented the very first such name in China, at least in official records. As a frontal area in the Sino-Iranian exchanges, Dunhuang was

interpret it as meaning a sorcerer. But Wang Guowei 王國維, *Guantang jilin* 觀堂集林 (Beijing, 1961), ii, 2.81, utilizing bronze inscription data, showed it to be yet another honorific title for deceased ancestors. This was at any rate not a proper name.

[203] One notes the almost simultaneous appearance of opprobrious names, which may also be attributed to similar foreign, particularly ancient Indian, influence. On the latter see van Velze *Names of Persons in Early Sanscrit Literature*, p. 26 and Jan Gonda, *Notes on Names and the Name of God in Ancient India* (Amsterdam, 1970), pp. 9–10.

[204] Zhao Yi, *Gaiyu congkao* 陔餘叢考 (Taipei, 1965), 42.3.

[205] In particular, the Japanese author Miyakawa Hisayuki's 宮川尙志 far-from-complete collection ''Rikucho jinmei ni arawaretaru Bukkyogo'' 六朝人名に現はれたる佛教語, *Toyoshi Kenkyu* 東洋史研究 III (1938) no. 6, p. 41, IV (1939) no. 1, p. 71, no.2, p. 94, no. 6, pp. 78–79, noted by Arthur Wright, *Studies in Chinese Buddhism* (New Haven, 1990).

[206] The best example of theophoric hypocoristica is the name Suo Shenshen 索神神, found in, not surprisingly, the Dunhuang region. See Tang Geng'ou 唐耕耦 and Lu Hongji 陸宏基 comp., *Dunhuang shehui jingji wenxian zhenji shilu* 敦煌社會經濟文獻真跡釋錄 (Beijing, 1986), p. 270, a document dated 847–859.

[207] For a discussion of the Buddhism trinity, read for example Hermann Oldenberg's classic treatise, *Buddha: Sein Leben, Seine Lehre, Seine Gemeinde* (Stuttgart, 1921), pp. 387–388.

[208] An alternative Hellenic form is *-dotos*. See Olivier Masson, ''Remarques sur quelques anthroponymes myceniens'', *Acta Mycenaea* 1972, pp. 281–293, p. 283. One thus observes that the name Herodotus of the ''father of history'' means ''Hera's gift''.

[209] It should be noted that a childhood name does not always appear in the person's biography. Due to the sheer size of the dynastic histories (I used the Zhonghua shuju edition of the nine dynastic histories, which have a total of more than 14,600 printed pages) omissions may occur in this regard despite my best efforts.

Table 1. Number of Persons with a Theophoric Name in Several Dynastic Histories

Dynastic history	Number of persons with a formal entry[210]	Persons with a Buddhist name (%)[211]	Persons with other theophoric name (%)	Both kinds combined (%)
Jin shu	924	5 (0.54)	5 (0.54)	10 (1.08)
Wei shu	1312	26 (1.98)	34 (2.59)	60 (4.57)
Bei Qi shu	319	6 (1.88)	4 (1.25)	10 (3.13)
Zhou shu	319	10 (3.13)	5 (1.57)	15 (4.70)
Song shu	494	16 (3.24)	9 (1.82)	25 (5.06)
Nan Qi shu	196	10 (5.10)	5 (2.55)	15 (7.65)
Liang shu	317	10 (3.15)	5 (1.58)	15 (4.73)
Chen shu	223	7 (3.14)	1 (0.45)	8 (3.59)
Sui shu	362	7 (1.93)	2 (0.55)	9 (2.49)

certainly not a surprising place to become the beachhead of this Near Eastern tradition. However, because Dunhuang was also a stronghold of traditional Chinese politico-cultural heritage and rituals,[212] Zhang's name was styled in strict but somewhat peculiar Chinese fashion: a rare three-character "style", as the five-character name-style combination was taken directly from the *Shijing* (Ode 300). Similar "god-given" names in the forms of Shenci 神賜, Shenzi 神子, Shenguo 神果, Tianyang 天養, etc., later abounded in the region and in the Chinese establishment further west in Tulufan (Turfan), as revealed by the Dunhuang and Tulufan documents. It became so popular that the great-grandfather of the Tang's founding emperor also bore such a name Li Tianci 李天賜.[213] Similar names "god-protect", "god's power" and "god's slave" abounded as well.

It is my contention that these "god-given" names, especially the Shen-神 "god-" forms, represented primarily the Iranic rather than the Indo-Buddhist influence. It is plausible that these Chinese names came from the Sanskrit name Devadatta, transliterated as Tipodaduo 提婆達多 or Tiaoda 調達,[214] or even the Greek name Theodore. But the fact that the most famous bearer of this Sanskrit name was none other than a cousin and principal opponent and enemy of the Buddha would seem not very conducive to its popularity among the faithful of the Triratna,[215] as clearly demonstrated by the fact that the name does

[210] As shown by the tables of contents. Buddhist monks and nuns are excluded. So are apparent non-Han "Barbarian" names.

[211] Often ambiguity is caused by the characters *fa* 法 and *dao* 道. The former translates as *dharma*, one of the Triratna and is frequently used in Buddhist theophoric names. But it can also be used in traditional Chinese names. The latter is the principal concept of Taoism, but is widely used in Buddhism too, sometimes as an alternative translation of *dharma*. An early name for a Buddhist monk was none other than *daoren* 道人. I include a name with these characters only when either the name has known Buddhist Sanskrit equivalent, e.g., Fayou corresponds to Dharmamitra (Pali form Dhammamitta) or I have additional evidence, say a sibling's name or a special mention of the family's Buddhist faith, showing the character was indeed used in a Buddhist context.

[212] This is one of several critical conclusions Chen Yinke has drawn in his important work on the origin and sources of the political ideology, cultural heritage and government system of the Sui-Tang era: *Sui-Tang zhidu yuanyuan lüelun gao* 隋唐制度淵源略論稿 (Chongqing/Shanghai, 1944/ 1946), pp. 12–29.

[213] Tang huiyao 1.1, *Xin Tang shu* 1.1; *Jiu Tang shu* 1.1 gave a slighly different name Tianxi 天錫.

[214] Interpreted as *tianshou* 天授 or *tianyu* 天與. See *Eanyi mingyi ji* 翻譯名義集 (*Taisō Tripitaka* No.2131, pp. 1062–1063).

[215] Whereas *deva* could be used as a Chinese theophoric name, as attest by the Northern Qi courtier Mu Tipo 穆提婆.

not appear even once in the two-volume *Dictionary of Pāli Proper Names* by G.P. Malalasekera. My proposition that these Chinese "god-given" names primarily came from an Iranian original Bagadāta (which incidentally is also said to be the origin of the name of the Iraqi capital) is further based on (i) no direct Sanskrit equivalent of the Chinese character *shen* which corresponds perfectly to Iranian *baga*, (ii) the large number of contemporary Chinese *shen-* "god-" names that do not have an apparent Sanskrit equivalent, (iii) the *shen-* names born by numerous people with a Central Asian origin, and (iv) that *baga* was directly attested in Chinese onomasticon.[216]

There has been an old controversy regarding the element *baga* in pre-Islamic Iranian names, with a minority opinion claiming it not theophoric but merely signifying "lord", "gentleman", i.e., the much devalued meaning after *baga* was used to address deified kings.[217] Though Gignoux has already convincingly shown the theophoric value in most such Iranian names,[218] the prevalence of *shen-* theophoric personal names in western China under the Iranian influence certainly lends much support to Gignoux's thesis.

This rather sudden explosion of theophoric names in medieval China was not limited to personal nomenclature. It is also observed in toponymy, especially in western China. A detailed exposition is again beyond this essay. But it may be mentioned that Mogao 莫高, the name of the large grotto system at Dunhuang that houses the most famous Buddhist mural arts, may well be a rendition of the Iranian word *baga* too, as suggested by the name of the early Buddhist monastery Xianyansi 仙岩寺 "Temple of Cliff of the Immortals" located at the foot of the Mogao Mountain 莫高山[219]

The introduction of theophoric names in China also had a major impact on the uniquely Sinitic institution of reign titles (*nianhao* 年號). It is true that characters *tian* "heaven" and *shen* "god" were used earlier in several reign titles, starting with Han Wudi's Tianhan 天漢 "Heavenly River (i.e. the Milky Way)"[220] (100–97 BC) and Han Xuandi's Shenjue 神爵 "sacred bird (i.e. phoenix – prompted by its alleged sightings)" (61–58 BC). But it is equally true that both characters had always been used as an adjective or qualifier in these early cases.[221] Their use in a reign title as a subject or object, however, had to wait until after the introduction of theophoric names in China, with the earliest attestations being the Tuoba emperor Daowudi's Tianxing 天興 "Heaven empowers" (398–403) and Tianci 天賜 "Heaven bestows" (404–408). The use of characters *tian* and *shen* in reign titles also became much more frequent. Following is a frequency table of the "heaven-" and "god-"

[216] See the name Zang Mohai 臧莫孩 of a prominent general of the ethnic Juqu regime in northwestern China (*Jin shu* 129.3192ff.); Sogdian *βγ-* in personal names were rendered as 磨伽, 摩訶 etc., with 薄賀比多 being the best example, apparently transcribing Bagapāta, "god-protect". The Chinese forms here are quoted from Xiang Da , *Tangdai Chang'an yu Xiyu wenming* 唐代長安與西域文明 (Beijing, 1957), pp. 14, 24 and 90.

[217] 向達hillipe Gignoux, *Iranisches Personennamenbuch* Band 2, Fasz. 2, *Noms propres sassanides en moyen-perse épigraphique* (Vienna: Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1986), Introduction.

[218] In particular, Phillipe Gignoux, "Le dieu Baga en Iran", *Acta Antiqua*, XXV (1977), pp. 119–127 and Gignoux, "Les noms propres en moyen-perse épigraphique: étude typologique", in Ph. Gignoux et al., *Pad Nām I Yazdān: études d'épigraphie, de numismatique et d'histoire de l'Iran ancien* (Paris, 1979), pp. 35–106.

[219] *Mogaoku ji* 莫高窟記, Dunhuang manuscript P.3720, dated 865.

[220] Yet Han here is also the name of the river 漢水, from this comes the name of the region the founding emperor of the Han was first enfeoffed with, hence the dynasty name. A pun was likely intended by this reign title.

[221] In addition to the quoted cases, this is also clearly indicated in all such earlier reign titles prior to the Eastern Jin. See *Sanguo zhi* 47.1142, 1148, 47.1171, and *Song shu* 31.898.

Table 2. Tian- and Shen- Reign Titles: 140 BC–589 AD[222]

Period	Timespan in years	Total no. of reign titles	Tian-/Shen- constructs	%	No. per 100 years
140 BC – 316 AD	456	135	7	5.2	1.5
317–589: Southern regimes	273	67	6	9.0	2.2
317–589: Northern regimes	273	142	13	9.2	4.8

reign titles from 140 BC (the introduction of reign title) to the Sui unification (589), using the demise of the Western Jin (317) as a cut-off point.

The contrast would be even more drastic if we include various minor ethnic regimes in the north.[223] In fact, counting all pretenders prior to 316, there were only two Shen- reign titles, both meaning "phoenix", assumed by two emperors and an ephemeral rebel leader (in power for only four months in the year of 303), yet there were a total of seven from 317 to 589, a much shorter time-span and all proclaimed by ethnic leaders in northern and northwestern China. In my view, this is a perfect example of the combined influence of Iranic and Steppe civilizations, especially the former's predominating Baga- "god-" theophoric names and the latter's sacral "Tängri" kingship tradition.

Nowhere is this influence more evident and longer lasting than on the honorific imperial names, namely the posthumous epithet (*shihao* 諡號), temple name (*miaohao* 廟號) and, largely since the Tang Dynasty, individualized honorific name assumed by a living emperor (*zunhao* 尊號).[224] It may sound surprising, but it is a fact that characters *shen* "god" and *tian* "heaven" *never* appeared in these personalized honorific names of any "son of heaven" prior to the "Barbarian" invasions in the fourth century.[225]

The first ever appearance of the character *shen* "god" in these names was the semi-legendary Tuoba leader Liwei 力微, who was officially called Emperor Shenyuan 神元皇帝.[226] It should be noted first that this chieftain lived more than a century before the Tuoba's rise in the fourth century and the Chinese title was thus a rather late creation. Secondly, Liwei was said to be born of a goddess or *tiannü* 天女,[227] hence the name Shenyuan "godly origin" may simply be a translation of his "Barbarian" epithet in this regard. One may notice the striking parallel between Liwei and the Qifu Xianbei's "neither-god-nor-human" ancestor Tuoduo Mohe (*baga*!) cited in an earlier section.

The first genuinely Chinese use of the character *shen* in royal titles was the posthumous name Shenwu 神武 "godly martialness" of Gao Huan 高歡 (496–547), the founder (*gaozu* 高祖) of the Northern Qi. Huan himself was never enthroned as he actually showed deliberate humility to the puppet emperor under his thumb.[228] The posthumous epithet

[222] Including only major dynasties and the "Sixteen States".

[223] For examples, Mozhe Niansheng's 莫折念生 reign title Tianjian 天建 (524–527), Jihu 稽胡 Liu Lisheng's 劉蠡昇 Shenjia 神嘉 (525–525) and Moqi Chounu's 万俟醜奴 Shenshou 神獸 (528–530).

[224] Prior to the Tang, *zunhao* stood generically for *huandi*, "emperor", *huanghou* "empress", *huangtaihou* "empress-dowager", etc. It also included Tianwang "heaven-king" naturally.

[225] Neither was the character *qian* 乾, *tian*'s synonym.

[226] *Wei shu* 1.3.

[227] Emperor Liwei was famed among the Tuoba ancestors for not having a maternal clan 力微皇帝無舅家 (*Wei shu* 1.2). For the significance of maternal clans on the Steppe, see my article "Succession struggle".

[228] *Zizhi Tongjian* 160.4958.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1356186302000330 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Shenwu was given in 565 by his grandson Gao Wei 高緯, the fifth emperor of the Northern Qi. This was Huan's second posthumous name and the formal one used in official dynastic history.

The first ever use of the character *tian* in royal epithet is by the Northern Zhou Emperor Xuan 宣帝 (Yuwen Yun 宇文贇, 559–578–580) who not only used Tian "heaven" as first person as mentioned earlier, but also proclaimed himself the Tianyuan Huangdi 天元皇帝 "heaven-origin emperor". Tianyuan was thus used in all standard sources as his royal epithet.

Once started by these ethnic monarchs of the Northern Dynasties, the usage of the characters *shen* and *tian* soon became popular. Of the twenty Tang emperors who were fortunate enough to receive honorific posthumous titles no fewer than ten had either or both characters in one of their individual royal names (either *shihao*, or *miaohao* or *zunhao*).[229] The usage became even more prevalent in later dynasties with *shen* being used for the first time as a temple name in the Northern Song. During the Ming and Qing, hardly any emperor went without having these two characters appearing in his various honorific names and titles. Yet hardly anyone has so far noted the combined Irano-Altaic origin of this Chinese imperial tradition.

The Case of Bagatur

One of the most widespread names originating in Inner Asia is Bagatur or Bagadur, generally interpreted as "hero", "brave man". It is also one of the oldest. According to some scholars, the Xiongnu Shanyu Maodun 冒頓 represents the earliest attestation of this name.[230] It is certainly found among the Türks and other northern ethnic groups along medieval Chinese frontiers, and is usually transcribed as *moheduo* 莫賀咄. It has spread not only within the Altaic groups (attested even in the name of Mongolia's current capital), but also to Iran, the Arab world, Russia, East Europe and the Indian Subcontinent.[231]

This name also has a most mysterious etymology with no fewer than eleven theories being proposed. As summarized by Doerfer, none of them sound really convincing. Among the many theories, there is one that considers that the name has come from a hypothesized form **bagaputhra* through dissimilation, making it yet another variant of *bagapuhr*, "son of god". This theory has been heavily criticized by, among others, Pelliot, who argued that "the meanings of *fayfūr* and *bāhādur* are quite different . . ."[232] This is, however, the last of Pelliot's opinions I am taking issue with in the current article.

Contrary to the above opinion of Pelliot, who unfortunately failed to recognize the widespread Altaic attestations of the title Bagapuhr, several Chinese records show that Bagatur was used in parallel with Bagapuhr, referring to a (hereditary) tribal chief. In particular, the tribal chief of the Northern Shiwei 北室韋 was called *qiyin moheduo*

[229] Including, not surprisingly, a *tianhuang* 天皇 "Heaven Emperor" title for Gaozong, reflecting the heavy Steppe heritage in the early Tang, as argued in my article "Succession struggle".

[230] For instance Edward Parker so assumed throughout his *A Thousand Years of the Tartars*, 2nd. ed. (London, 1924).

[231] Doerfer, *Türkische und Mongolische Elemente*, ii, pp. 371–374, Pelliot, *Notes*, p. 657.

[232] *Ibid*.

乞引莫賀咄, each assisted by three *mohefu*'s 莫何弗.[233] The hereditary tribal chief of both the Mojie 靺鞨 and the Southern Shiwei 南室韋 was called the (Great) Mofu Manduo 莫弗滿咄.[234] Marquart for one has interpreted Manduo as a variation of *bagatur*.[235] *Tongdian* (196.5367) also recorded that a Wuhuan 烏桓 chieftain had *moheduo* as his title.

As for the divergence of the meaning of the two names claimed by Pelliot, as the first in being both used as a title for a hereditary tribal chieftain, this alleged gap in meaning is certainly small in this regard. Secondly, regarding the "brave man" interpretation of Bagatur, one would expect the same quality to be bestowed on a "highborn son" of the Steppe, where military valour is of the highest social value, and particularly if the highborn son entertains any thoughts of inheriting the power from his father. It is thus not surprising that at least one Chinese source gives the title *bagapuhr* the same *yongjianzhe* 勇健者 "brave and strong" interpretation,[236] as was normally assigned to Bagatur. In fact, as meticulously examined by Fletcher, military prowess or being "brave and strong" was the key qualification of a political contender on the Steppe, another being that he came from "a generally acknowledged khanly lineage".[237] These are exactly the two qualities the *bagapuhr*/Bagatur pair would demarcate.

While the issue of etymology has yet to be untangled, the data I have presented above strongly suggest that the *baga-* element in the name Bagatur is the same as that of *bagapuhr*, and the two are both theophoric constructs related to sacral kingship. In this sense, Bagatur implies the standard marshal qualities of a divine king: god's mighty, heroic and invincible warrior and conqueror of the enemies, etc.[238] The same notion is manifested in the first Chinese "godly" imperial honorific Shenwu 神武 for the founder of the Northern Qi cited earlier, an epithet recycled repeatedly on many later emperors.[239]

The exact semantics notwithstanding, the above points already provide the social or ideological origin of the title Bagatur, namely the legitimization and rationalization of tribal leadership by resorting to the chieftain's godly/khanly origin and qualities. Given this "chiefly" origin, I find another possible early Chinese rendition of the title, namely Buda 部大 (Old Chinese pronunciation **b'əg-d'âd*), which was used for addressing a "Barbarian" chieftain during a rather short timespan, roughly around the Sixteen-State period. On the surface, it was a perfect abbreviation of *buluo daren* 部落大人 "big man of a tribe". But such an interpretation of Buda has the dual difficulty that (i) there would be no reason for its quick disappearance, as *buluo daren* continued to be used for a long time, and (ii) *buluo daren* could never be used as a second person in Chinese, whereas Buda was.[240]

[233] See *Sui shu* 84.1883, *Bei shi* 94.3130 and *Tongdian* 200.5487.

[234] *Sui shu* 81.1821, 84.1882; *Xin Tang shu* 219. 6178.

[235] "Über das Volkstum der Komanen", p. 84 note 1.

[236] *Tongdian* 197.5402 (cf. p. 5421 note 40).

[237] "Turco-Mongolian Monarchic Tradition in the Ottoman Empire." *Harvard Ukrainian Studies*. III/IV (1979–80), pp. 236–251, and "The Mongols".

[238] These are well summarized in Ivan Engnell, *Studies in Divine Kingship in the Ancient Near East* (London, 1967; reprint of the 1943 ed.), Excursus, particularly pp. 178–189.

[239] Including Emperors Xuanzong 玄宗 and Dezong 德宗 of the Tang, Emperor Taizu 太祖 of the Later Liang and Emperor Mingzong 明宗 of the Later Tang, to name a few. The same word also appeared in the Chinese portion of the trilingual Qarabalghasun inscription honouring the Uighur Alp Bilgä Qaghan (Radloff, *Die Alttürkischen Inschriften* i, Plate III, column 1).

[240] *Jin shu* 104.2709,

This is not the place to examine the issue of why so few "Barbarian" cultural traits remained in the Sinocentric Chinese records of an era dominated by non-Han ethnic groups. But there is at least one case of a Sinified "Barbarian" word from this period: the Chinese slur word *nucai* 奴才, literally "slave talent", which we have shown elsewhere to come from a (proto-) Mongol root meaning "dog" (*noqai* in modern Mongolian).[241] In my view, Buda may also have been a calqued and metathesized form of Bagadur.[242]

It is difficult to conclude this section without venturing yet another plausible etymology for the title Bagatur/Bagadur, namely the possibility of a Greco-Iranian "god-given" compound. Gignoux has opposed this suggestion due to its hybrid nature.[243] But I do not see an absolute reason to preclude such a possibility. There are many points, however, to suggest the opposite:

(i) Post-Alexander Hellenistic influence on the Steppe was widespread and long-lasting.[244]

(ii) The debasement and "Barbarization" of the Greek language in this long period in Inner Asia was well-known.[245] This was even reflected in Chinese artifacts.[246]

(iii) As far as we know, the name-title Bagatur/Bagadur originated in a "Barbarian" *milieu*.

(iv) The Greek *-dore* constructs, especially the name Theodore, had penetrated Inner Asian onomasticons.[247]

(v) Greek colonists in Central Asia were also known to identify local gods with their own.[248]

(vi) Such a semi-Greek hybrid was indeed attested in a largely Hellenistic *milieu* as shown by the personal name Philammon in Ptolemaic Egypt.[249]

(vii) It was also under the heavy Hellenic influence that there appeared Milinda's four ministers, whose names, in Caroline Rhys-Davids' words, were "impossible as they are in either Greek, Sanskrit, or Pali . . .".[250] Semi-Greek and semi-Indian titles and names are also attested in numismatic data.[251]

(viii) In a *milieu* quite likely to be similar to that which saw the appearance of Bagatur, there appeared a Sino-Iranian hybrid title *mohelang* formed by the Iranian root *baga* "god" "god-king" and a Chinese suffix *-lang* "lad" "son", as examined earlier.

[241] Sanping Chen and Chung-mo Kwok, "*Nucai* as a Proto-Mongolic word:an etymological study", (in Chinese) *Journal of Oriental Studies*, XXXIV (1996), pp. 82–92.

[242] It is also a possible rendition of the pure Iranian form *bagadāta*, which is not attested in a "Barbarian" milieu.

[243] In a personal communication dated May 13, 1998.

[244] See, among many other titles, W.W. Tarn, *The Greeks in Bactria and India*, and Frank L. Holt, *Alexander the Great and Bactria: the formation of a Greek frontier in Central Asia* (Leiden, 1988).

[245] This is clearly shown in Greek coins from many places in Asia. See also references cited in Maenchen-Helfen's article in the next note.

[246] Otto Maenchen-Helfen, "A Parthian coin-legend on a Chinese bronze", *Asia Major*, III (1952), pp. 1–6.

[247] Konow, *Kharoshthi Inscriptions*, pp. 2, 66 and 98.

[248] Frye *The History of Ancient Iran*, p. 174.

[249] Olivier Masson, "Une inscription éphébique de Plotemaïs (cyrenaïque)", in his *Onomastica Graeca Selecta*, Tome 1, pp. 243–256, says: "Philammon, il est bien probable qu'on le comprenait 'celui qui aime Ammon' . . .", (p. 254).

[250] Caroline A. F. Rhys Davids, *The Milinda-Questions* (London, 1930), p. 26.

[251] Konow *Kharoshthi Inscriptions*, pp. xxxiii and xliv (Introduction).

(ix) The parallel use of Bagatur and *bagapuhr* on the Steppe suggests the two may have similar theophoric "from god" etymologies.

The Disappearance of *Bagapuhr*

As mentioned earlier, the use of the title Bagapuhr among the Altaic groups, widespread during the Northern Dynasties, waned during the Tang and Song, and ceased by the time of the Mongol explosion. The disappearance was so thorough that, except the brief mention in the *Liao shi*, the history of the Qidan who were widely believed to have spoken a proto-Mongol tongue, no trace of the title is found in Nüzhen-Manchu and Mongol documents and languages, even though the title as an epithet for Chinese emperors continued to be noted by the Arab authors and Marco Polo.

The Steppe title *bagapuhr* in the sense of "son of god-king" as examined in previous sections reflected a long tradition that royal blood, or "a khanly lineage" in Fletcher's words, was a key qualification for a political career. This tradition can be seen in the Xiongnu's ruling clans being characterized as *guizhong* 貴種 "of noble descent",[252] a catch-word continued to appear in Chinese records regarding "Barbarian" leaders.[253] Among many other cases, the tradition is also seen in the enormous prestige of the Mongol Chinggisid "Golden Lineage", a legacy even Tamerlane found difficult to violate.[254]

The importance of royal blood is certainly not limited to the Steppe. For instance, Richard Frye has described that "everywhere in the Iranian cultural area, pride in royal descent was important for rule."[255] In fact, royal descent went much beyond instigating imperial pride, but was a key element of a regime's political legitimacy, as demonstrated by various post-Islam-Conquest Iranian dynasties' claim of a Sassanian ancestry, despite the fact that several were actually of Turkic origin.[256]

Royal descent was no less import in ancient China. It was first of all a critical prerequisite for occupying the imperial throne, hence often an enormous hurdle for upstart pretenders, as vouched by the numerous dynastic founders who resigned themselves to just being a chancellor. Examples include Cao Cao 曹操 (155–220), Sima Yi 司馬懿 (179–251) and sons, Gao Huan and Yuwen Tai 宇文泰 (507–556). Royal descent was also a critical element of the early Zhou socio-political structure,[257] long regarded as an ideal model by later political thinkers. Even *junzi* 君子 "gentleman", a core notion in classic Chinese social ideology, came from none other than a term for "son of lord".

It is both natural and intriguing to see the Iranian title *bagapuhr*, originally translating as the Chinese "son of god" and later used as "son of god-king" on the Steppe, being

[252] *Shiji* 110.2890–91, *Han shu* 94a.3751.
[253] For examples, *Xin Tang shu* 115.4211, 212.5980.
[254] Until the last years of Tamerlane's rule, he continued to maintain a puppet khan of the Chaghatay line, and the latter's name was kept on the coins Tamerlane minted until the very end of his rule. See for examples Hilda Hookham, *Tamburlaine the Conqueror* (London, 1962), pp. 71–72, and Beatrice F. Manz, *The Rise and rule of Tamerlane* (Cambridge, 1989), p. 57.
[255] "Remarks on kingship", p. 82.
[256] Shahrokh Meskoob, *Iranian nationality and the Persian language* (Translation of *Milliyat va zaban*) (Washington D.C., 1992), pp. 36–37.
[257] See, e.g., Allen Chun, "Conceptions of kinship and kingship".

replaced by the transliteration of the authentic Chinese title Taizi 太子, literally ''crown prince'', yet used on the Steppe in a meaning very similar to that of *bagapuhr*, namely a hereditary noble chief. This title was transcribed back in to Chinese as *taiji* 台吉 during the Ming and Qing, but had already appeared as early as the Mongol conquest.[258] A more formal title Huang- taizi 皇太子 ''imperial crown prince'' was also widely attested, from Hentaiji 狠台吉, Huangtaiji 黃台吉,[259] etc., to the name of the brilliant Later Jin 後金 khan cum Qing emperor Huangtaiji 皇太極 (1592–1626–1643; temple name Taizong 太宗). It should be noted that the Steppe application of the title Taizi, while deviating from the formal Chinese definition of ''crown prince'', was nonetheless akin to the title's popular or folklore use in China, namely a mere ''prince'' and even just a ''highborn son''.[260]

The disappearance of the title *bagapuhr*, on the other hand, symbolized the gradual but permanent loss of the pre-Islamic Iranian influence on the Steppe and in East Asia after the Arab conquest of the Sassanian Empire. It is true that people from the ''Western Region'' again played very important roles in China under the Mongols. But their influence was felt almost entirely within the sedentary world, with little permanent effect on the Steppe except the Mongol alphabet borrowed from the then still largely Buddhist Turkic Uighurs, the former nomads who had settled in Central Asia a few centuries earlier, but not from the largely Islamized Iranians.[261]

To a certain extent, the demise of the once prominent and widespread Iranic influence on the Steppe, and in East Asia in general, was the direct result of a rather accidental historical event, namely the famed Battle of Talas in 751 between the Arab and Chinese forces (and their respective local allies). After five gruelling days of fighting on the banks of the Talas River, the battle ended with the crushing defeat of the Chinese troops when the Karluk 葛羅祿 soldiers suddenly reversed their allegiance.[262] The significance of the Battle of Talas has long been recognized for having thwarted the Chinese advances into Central Asia[263] as well as for spreading Chinese technologies, paper-making in particular, to the West.[264] Yet its effect on the Sassanian Iranians has not been widely noticed. J. Harmatta seems to be the only author to have expressed the insightful observation that the battle ''rendered possible the liquidation by the Arabs of the last withstanding centres of the Sasanian Empire, the independent petty kingdoms along the Caspian Sea.'' As hopes of restoring the pre-Islamic Iranian power evaporated, the perpetual Iranic cultural influence on the Steppe since prehistory was doomed. The Korean general Gao Xianzhi 高仙芝, who commanded the Chinese and allied forces at Talas, might not have realized its weight, but

[258] Recorded by Rashid al-Din as *taiši*, which may also be transcribing Chinese *taishi* 太師. The latter was known as Tayisi later. See H. Serruys, ''The office of Tayisi in Mongolia in the fifteenth century'', *HJAS*, XXXVII (1977), pp. 353–380. But as Pelliot has noted, it was evidently used sometimes as *taizi*, which was directly attested in *The Secret History*. See P. Pelliot, ''Notes sur le 'Turkestan' de M. W. Barthold'', *TP* XXVII (1930), pp. 2–56.

[259] *Ming shi* 明史 199.5267, 327.8487 etc.

[260] For example, in modern Chinese folk arts even the son of Mu Guiying 穆桂英, the legendary female general allegedly of the Northern Song, was referred to as a Taizi. See He Genhai 何根海 ''Nuo and the fertility cult'' (in Chinese), *Journal of Oriental Studies*, XXXIV (1996), pp. 70–81.

[261] The Uighur alphabet was in turn adapted from the Sogdian script, thus clearly representing a pre-Islamic heritage.

[262] *Zizhi tongjian* 216.6907–08.

[263] W. Barthold, *Turkestan Down to the Mongol Invasion* 3rd ed. (London, 1968), p. 196.

[264] Joseph Needham, *Science and Civilization in China* (London, 1954), i, pp. 236–237.

the far-reaching consequences of his political and military failure in 751 have in a wry way demonstrated the symbiotic relationship between the Iranic, Altaic and Chinese cultures in the ancient world.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1356186302000330 Published online by Cambridge University Press