

A GENERAL HISTORY OF CHINA

VOLUME

II

The Qin and Han Dynasties



中国对外翻译出版有限公司
China Translation & Publishing Corporation

Compiled by Huang Yuanye and Peng Haitao
Translated by Wang Qiuhai and Hu Zhihui



A GENERAL HISTORY OF CHINA



VOLUME



The Qin and Han Dynasties



中国对外翻译出版有限公司
China Translation & Publishing Corporation

图书在版编目(CIP)数据

中国通史. 第2卷, 秦汉 = A General History of China. Volume 2.
The Qin and Han Dynasties: 英文 / 瞿林东等主编; 黄苑野, 彭海涛编;
王秋海, 胡志挥译. —北京: 中国对外翻译出版有限公司, 2014.12

ISBN 978-7-5001-3976-8

I. ①中… II. ①瞿… ②黄… ③彭… ④王… ⑤胡… III. ①中国历史—秦汉时代—英文 IV. ①K20

中国版本图书馆CIP数据核字(2014)第306251号

出版发行 / 中国对外翻译出版有限公司

地 址 / 北京市西城区车公庄大街甲4号物华大厦六层

电 话 / (010) 68359827 68359303 (发行部) 68359719 (编辑部)

邮 编 / 100044

传 真 / (010) 68357870

电子邮箱 / book@ctpc.com.cn

网 址 / <http://www.ctpc.com.cn>

总 策 划 / 张高里

特约译审 / Natalie Zee Elisabeth Hallett

特约编辑 / 王人龙 章婉凝

责任编辑 / 胡晓凯

文稿统筹 / 刘素梅

装帧设计 / 黄浩 潘峰

排版制作 / 郑高云 陈彬

印 刷 / 北京盛通印刷股份有限公司

经 销 / 新华书店

规 格 / 710×1000mm 1/16

印 张 / 134

版 次 / 2014年12月第一版

印 次 / 2014年12月第一次

ISBN 978-7-5001-3976-8

定 价: 1980元



版权所有 侵权必究
中国对外翻译出版有限公司

ELEVEN

THE GREAT QIN EMPIRE



1

Qin Shi Huang's Unification of the Country

Born in a foreign land, he was subject to continuous insults and humiliation, which left a huge shadow on his young mind. Although he succeeded to the throne as a teenager, he was but a figurehead and soon developed a warped mind due to the seamy court. He arrogated all power to himself in the beginning, unified China and abandoned the title of King to become Emperor in a vain hope of passing his title to his posterity. In his later years he became suspicious and violent. Though he died filled with regret and reluctance to part with the world, he left behind a magnificent imperial tomb in the Central Shaanxi Plain.

This emperor built a powerful empire, which started reign by feudal monarchy for more than 2,000 years and his glory of governing the country by his own family alone soon became something that later emperors and careerists pined for.

A picture of Lǚ Buwei taken from the book *Boguyezi*, a collection of forty-eight pictures drawn by Ming Dynasty artist Chen Hongshou late in his life. All of the pictures are about historical stories or figures. ●



IN 259 BC, a seemingly ordinary baby was born in Handan in the State of Zhao, today's Handan City in Hebei Province. At the time, Handan was in a sad state as it had been repeatedly ravaged by war. Because the baby was born in the first month of the lunar year in Zhao, his parents gave him the name Zhao Zheng ('zheng' and 'first month' are homophones in Chinese). This boy would become Qin Shi Huang, the first emperor of China, who wiped out the other six states and dominated the world.

Zhao Zheng's father was Yiren, the grandson of King Zhao of the State of Qin. Yiren lived in Handan, capital of the State of Zhao, as a hostage when he was very young. He was chosen as his mother was not in favour with Crown Prince Ying Zhu. Owing to the successive years of wars between Qin and Zhao, Yiren was in a precarious situation. At this

time, a wealthy merchant named Lü Buwei considered Yiren 'a valuable commodity', so decided to make a political gamble on him. He tried his best to get to know the prince and became a good friend of his. He even gave his favourite concubine, Zhao Ji and, half of his property to Yiren, advising him to make friends with heroes across the nation to boost his reputation. Qin at that time was a powerful state, but its ruler, King Zhao, was advanced in age. Though the crown prince Ying Zhu had twenty-odd sons, his most favourite legitimate wife, Lady Huayang, had no son. Therefore, Lü Buwei purchased valuables with the other half of his property, went to Qin, offered them as a gift to Lady Huayang, then after explaining the pros and cons, persuaded her to adopt Yiren as her stepson.

Zhao Zheng's mother was Zhao Ji, the woman given to Yiren by Lü Buwei. As documented in historical records, Zhao Ji was already pregnant when she was given to Yiren, so Zhao Zheng was in fact the son of Lü. But there are many scholars who have a different view. According to *Records of the Historian*, Zhao Ji was from a rich and influential family of the State of Zhao. In that case, it would have been impossible for her to have been a concubine of Lü, let alone a gift for Yiren. In short, people have been speculating on the birth story of Zhao Zheng since he was born, but the truth has been buried in the long course of history and become an eternal mystery.

In the forty-ninth year under the rule of King Zhao of Qin, or 258 BC, Qin launched an onslaught on Zhao and wrought heavy casualties on the state. As a result, the king of Zhao vented his anger on Yiren. At this critical moment, Lü Buwei greased the palms of officials in Zhao with

a large amount of money and finally fled to Qin with Yiren. However, due to the urgency of the situation, the immature Zhao Zheng and his mother Zhao Ji were left in Zhao. After that, the young boy suffered untold humiliation and insult in the perilous State of Zhao, which devastated his young heart.

Six years later, in 251 BC, King Zhao of Qin passed away and Ying Zhu, the father of Yiren, succeeded his throne. He called himself King Xiaowen and designated Yiren as the crown prince. Meanwhile, due to strategic reasons, the relations between Qin and Zhao had somewhat improved. Zhao Zheng, who had led a precarious and dependent life, finally returned to the State of Qin with his mother.

King Xiaowen died in the prime of his life only one year and three days after ascending to the throne. Yiren, or King Zhuangxiang reigned for no more than three years. This series of incidents helped thirteen-year-old Zhao Zheng, more commonly known as Ying Zheng, ascend the throne in 247 BC.

The sudden change, however, did not bring much happiness to the young king of Qin. As he was still a minor, military and political power fell into the hands of Lü Buwei, who was now the chancellor of Qin. Ying Zheng's mother Zhao Ji, who was originally Lü's concubine, had become the empress dowager. She not only asked Ying Zheng to respectfully call Lü 'uncle', but also resumed their love affair. Later, she dined, wine and sang all through the night with Lao Ai, a hanger-on recommended to her by Lü Buwei. She and Lao even gave birth to two half-brothers for the young king. Although Ying Zheng had bid farewell to his childhood of trials and tribulations, he now found himself involved in a sinister

and ruthless vortex of political struggle, acting only as a puppet in the gloomy court. The lack of affection in his childhood seemed only to be compensated for by his extraordinary talent and tenacity. He silently endured all the humiliation and suffering to accumulate strength.

In 238 BC, while putting down the rebellion of Lao Ai, Ying Zheng seized the chance to relieve Lü Buwei of his office and asked him to return to his fief. In 235 BC, when Ying Zheng found out that the former chancellor still had a lot of influence, Ying forced him to commit suicide. In this way, Ying Zheng, who had been living under humiliating circumstances, truly became the supreme ruler of the State of Qin. What would Ying Zheng bring to the world now that he had been given a free hand to do whatever he liked?



Bronze dagger-axe of Chancellor Lü Buwei. It is now preserved in the National Museum of China. ◉



Portrait of Qin Shi Huang, the first emperor to unify China 🏯

He first put important civil officials and generals such as Li Si, Wei Liao, Wang Jian and Meng Tian into key posts. Then he bribed the ministers of the other six states with large sums of money in order to prevent the dukes from forming a north-south alliance against Qin. He also adopted the strategy of uniting those far away to his cause and turning them against his enemies next to them. He began tackling his enemies in this fashion one by one. From 230 BC onwards, Qin started the battle against the other six states, which proved to be the prelude to the unification of China.

Since the State of Han, adjacent to Qin, was weak and small, it was the first to suffer the impact of Qin's attack. In 230 BC, a Qin general named

Teng led a Qin army south across the Yellow River where he launched a surprise attack against Han. His troops captured the capital and the Han king, bringing about the downfall of the state. Then the Qin army planned its next attack on its old enemy — the State of Zhao. In 228 BC, Qin general Wang Jian sent troops to lay siege on Zhao's capital Handan when the State of Zhao was famine-stricken. He led the main body of his army himself and went east through Jingxing, present-day Jingxing County, Hebei Province. The following year, Wang Jian destroyed the army of Zhao, captured Handan, and Qian, the Zhao king. Prince Jia of Zhao fled to Dai (present-day Daixian County in Shanxi Province) and proclaimed himself king there.

After capturing Handan, the army of Qin reached the Yishui River. Upon hearing the news, the ruler of the State of Yan and his men were thrown into a panic. Crown Prince Dan believed that all the dukes and princes had surrendered to Qin, making it no longer possible to form an alliance against it. Therefore, he decided to resort to assassination, which resulted in the stirring and tragic scene of Jing Ke attempting the assassination of the Qin king. This incident angered Ying Zheng and accelerated the demise of Yan.

In 226 BC, the Qin army seized Jicheng, capital of Yan, which today would be in southwestern Beijing. King Xi of Yan and Crown Prince Dan fled to Liaodong — area east of the Liaohe River. Qin general Li Xin led his troops in hot pursuit to follow up the victory and eventually wiped out the remaining army of Yan. King Xi of Yan was forced to kill the crown prince to sue for peace. Qin, in order to concentrate its strength against Wei and Chu, temporarily suspended its attack against Yan and Dai.

In 226 BC, Qin General Wang Ben attacked the northern region of the State of Chu, occupying more than ten cities. At the same time, the Qin troops marched northward and, in 225 BC, hemmed in Daliang (northwest of present-day Kaifeng city, Henan Province), capital of Wei, on all sides. Relying on its city's strong defences, Wei held its position desperately. Seeing that it was impossible to take the city by sheer force, the Qin army channelled the water from the Yellow River and Honggou Canal to flood the city. Three months later, the city was damaged and King Jia of Wei surrendered, marking the downfall of Wei.

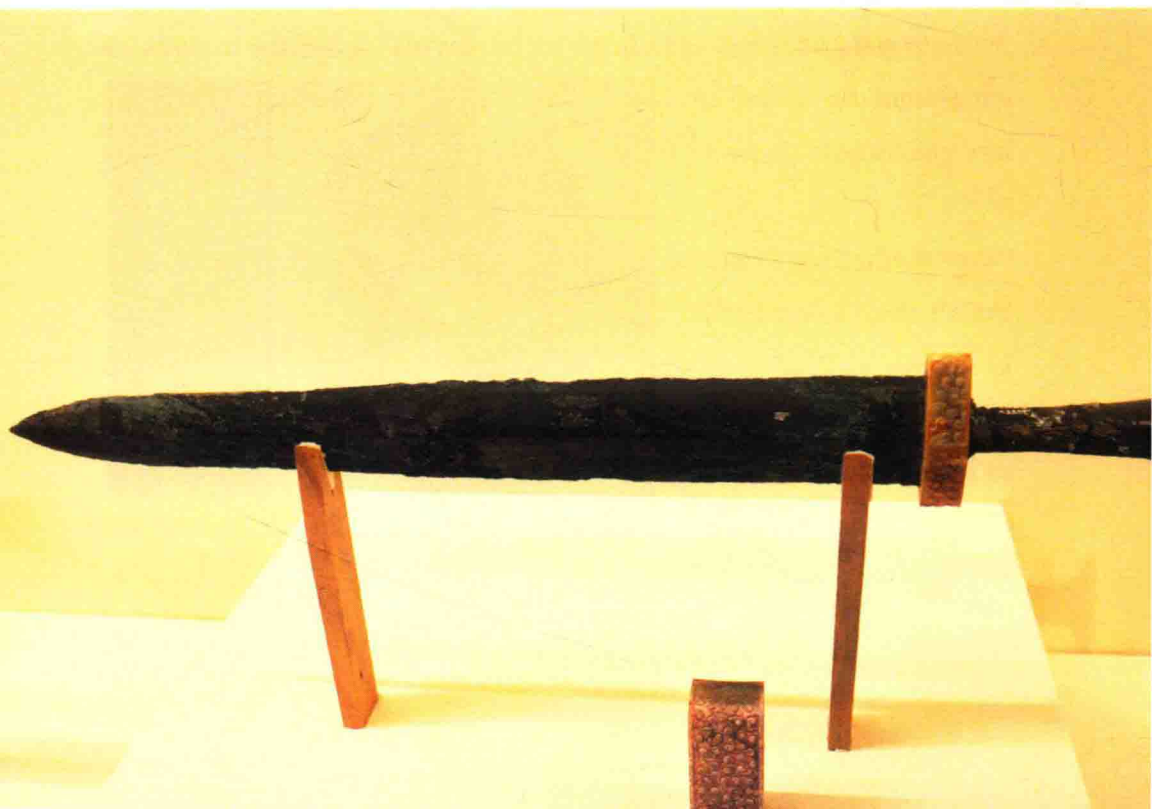


THE COVER OF A COMIC BOOK ON THE STORY 'THE KING OF QIN AND JING KE THE ASSASSIN' ◀

The story of Jing Ke, the assassin, has been passed down for generations and has developed into a Chinese idiom 'Tuqiongbixian (图穷匕见)', meaning the real intention is revealed in the end. Jing Ke is also known as a tragic hero.

During this period, though the State of Chu was invaded repeatedly and its domestic situation was deteriorating, it still had the vast region of the Yangtze and Huai River Valley. After Qin conquered Wei, Ying Zheng reinstated veteran general Wang Jian in 224 BC to attack Chu with troops 600,000 strong. While Chu went all out to meet the Qin army head-on, the Qin soldiers bided their time and held fast to their camps. Having sought battle in vain and being short of supplies, the

Sword with jade decorations from the State of Wei, now located in the National Museum of China





Wang Jian, senior general of the State of Qin

Chu army had to withdraw eastward. Wang Jian seized the opportunity to pursue the enemy and defeated the Chu army completely by killing their commander Xiang Yan. In 223 BC, the Qin army seized the capital of Chu, Shouchun (present-day Shouxian County, Anhui Province), and captured King Fuchu of Chu. Wang Jian was pressing ahead by crossing the Yangtze River and eventually exterminated Chu.

After the demise of Wei and Chu, Qin attacked Liaodong once more. In 222 BC, Wang Ben captured Liaodong along with King Xi of the State of Yan. He then took the city of Dai and captured King Jia of Dai, originally Prince Jia of Zhao. Both Yan and Zhao perished. At this time the only state left was Qi. Because King Jian of Qi thought only of the present, he implemented a friendly policy towards Qin and did not lend any support to the other five states in their fight against Qin. He did not feel the threat of Qin until after Qin had annihilated the other five states, at this point hurriedly assembling an army in the west. However, in 221 BC, Wang Ben had already led an army southward from the former

State of Yan in order to attack Linzi, capital of Qi (present-day Zibo, Shandong Province). Faced with an army that came quickly from the north, Qi was caught off guard and quickly fell apart. The Qin army took Linzi in one fell swoop, captured the Qi king and destroyed the state.

By 221 BC, after more than a decade of bloody and brutal wars, Qin had eliminated Han, Zhao, Wei, Chu, Yan and Qi. This ended the separatist regimes that had existed for hundreds of years since the Spring and Autumn and, Warring States periods, and established the first unified and multi-ethnic feudal country in Chinese history.



A picture illustrating how Qin eliminated the other six states

Qin Shi Huang was the first emperor that unified China and the autocratic centralised system he pioneered was continued by later dynasties. Regarded as one of the most accomplished emperors in Chinese history, he created a new era for the Chinese nation.

2

Centralisation System of the Qin Empire

An all-conquering hero, he had great talent, bold vision and dedicated himself completely to numerous state affairs every day. He also spent money like water and abused the financial resources of the people. Even though he founded a unified empire, he eventually brought it to utter destruction.

Faced with a huge and unrivalled empire built up in the turmoil of war, Ying Zheng, the emperor of all ages, was absorbed in thought. How was he to control his subjects and the vast territory? How could he strengthen his regime and ensure that his empire would last forever?