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Sima Qian's National View and His Writing on the Image of the Huns

-- Focusing on *The Biography of the Huns of Records of the Grand Historian*

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Abstract: After experiencing "The Tragedy of Li Ling" in the Western Han Dynasty, Sima Qian crated *The Biography of the Huns* to express his real political views and national thought. The first part of He's work records the historical evolution of the Huns; the second part records the customs and habits of the Huns society; and the third part describes Sima Qian's views on the results and influence of the Han-Hun War. The above three parts are interlinked around the relationship between Han and the Huns, and the judgment is based on the preface, which jointly reflects Sima Qian's national concept of "homology of all races, national equality and harmonious coexistence". At the same time, it is of far-reaching significance to the evolution and formation of the idea of the unification of the Chinese nation.

Keywords: Sima Qian; *The Biography of the Huns*; National view; Relationship between Han and the Huns

As for Sima Qian's ethnic view, Chi Wanxing once published *A study on Sima Qian's Ethnic Thoughts*, which was a comprehensive study of Sima Qian's ethnic view for the first time. In recent decades, Yu Shengchun, Aqi Tu, Menghe Naren and Dang Daen have studied *The Biography of the Huns* in Historical Records. In recent years, some scholars have begun to pay attention to the influence of Sima Qian's national view on the formation of national integration and unification thought. In general, these achievements mainly focus on the study of Sima Qian's national view or *The Biography of the Huns* in Historical Records, while ignoring the concrete implementation of Sima Qian's national view in *The Biography of the Huns*. Although some articles on Sima Qian and the image of the Huns writing has been involved. However, the textual research is relatively simple, and the lack of in-depth investigation of the material. It's necessary to further study.

1. Homology of all races: Reconstruction of the origin of the Huns

With the breakthrough and leap from tribal civilization to state, a traditional national view centered on the debate between Yi and Xia gradually formed in ancient Chinese society. On its origin, it began in the pre-Qin Dynasty, such as *Guoyu* said: "If they weren't the sons and nephews of the King's branch, they were all Yi, Jing, Rong, and Di."^① And the main criteria for distinguishing the Yi and Hua, the *Zuo Zhuan* said: "China has great etiquette, so it is called Hua; with the beauty of clothing, it is called the Xia."^② If dividing Yi and Xia from the perspective of geography, *Huainan Zi* said: "The Son of Heaven has a way and defends in the Si Yi."^③ believed that the central region was directly ruled by China, and that the surrounding courtiers were barbarians. In addition, the "Debate of the Yi-Xi" evolved into an attempt to "change the Yi with Xia" and became the core principle of dealing with foreign relations in Chinese history. For example, *Mencius* said: "I have heard of those who use Xia to change Yi, but I have not heard of those who change Yi to Xia."^④ Under the influence of this idea, the Han Dynasty founded the Manyi-di(蛮夷邸)and opposed the "Yi nationality" and the "Huaxia nationality".

Different from the "Debate of the Yi-Xia" in history, Sima Qian broke the inherent traditional concept of the "Homology of all races" and included all ethnic groups as "Yi" into the category of "Huaxia". As he said in the *Biography of qing*: "Qin's first, Emperor Zhuan Xu's Miao Shang." *Chu Shijia (Noble Family)* said: "The ancestors of Chu came from Emperor Zhuan Xu." *Yue Shijia (Noble Family)* said: "Goujian, the king of Yue, was of Yu, and the Shao Kang's concubine, the late Xia emperor." In this view, Sima Qian believed that the vassal states of the Spring and Autumn Period and the Qin, Chu, Dongyue and others who were regarded as Yi and despised at that time were descendants of the Emperor Huang Di, thus explaining his national theory of "Homology of all races". It is worth noting that Sima Qian also applied this view to the Huns tribe who fought with the Han Dynasty for many years.

There are different opinions on the origin of the Huns in history, but there is no unified answer so far. Meng Wentong's *Study of Zhou-Qin Ethnic Minorities* believes that the ancestors of the Huns should be the Xirong Yiqu(西戎义渠) tribe defeated by Qin.^⑤ Lin Gan's *A Gen-*

eral History of Huns believes that Huns includes all ethnic groups originally active in the north and south of the desert.^⑥ From the perspective of ethnic origin and clan name, Sima Qian pointed out in *The Biography of the Huns*: "The descendants of his ancestors Xia Houshi are also called Chun Wei. Above Tang Yu, there are Shan Rong(山戎), Xian Yun(狵狵), Hun Yu(荤粥). They live in the northern Man and move along with livestock." He believed that the Huns were descendants of Xia Houshi. In other words, he believed that Huns originated from Xia people or Huaxia, and had the same ancestor as Han people. During the reign of Emperor Wu of Han Dynasty, the conflict between Han and Huns was a sharp national problem at that time. Sima Qian not only wrote *The Biography of the Huns*, but also brought it into the category of "Huaxia nationality". Thus it can be seen that the tolerance of his national thought reflects his national view of "unification".

2. National equality: A detailed description of the Huns customs

Influenced and restricted by the "Debate of the Yi-Xia", Han scholar-officials often banished Huns. For example, *Huainan Zi* said: "Hu raccoon Huns country, vertical body drag hair, Ji distance anti-speech."^⑦ Ban Gu's *The Biography of the Huns of the Book of the Han Dynasty* contains: "Yi Di people, was sent left lap, human face animal heart."^⑧ It is not difficult to see that the national characteristics of Huns are rarely recorded in *Huainan Zi* and Ban Gu. Sima Qian not only thought that Han and Huns were the unity of the same race, but also took a tolerant and equal attitude towards some customs and habits of Huns which were completely different from those of Han nationality and made sufficient and detailed records in *The Biography of the Huns*.

Sima Qian's records of Huns customs were mainly embodied in the dialogue between Zhong Xingyue(中行说) and Han envoys, which were mainly divided into three aspects: diet manual, marriage system and funeral customs. According to *The Biography of the Huns*, in the diet manual, Huns "from the king below, salty food animal meat, clothing its leather, use Zhan Qiu(旃裘) as a quilt. The strong eat fat and the old eat the rest; the strong are valued, the old and the weak are despised." They believe that healthy people are more noble than old and weak people, which is also completely different from the traditional virtue of respecting the elderly and loving the young. At the same time, they were short of handicrafts and could not produce a large number of goods they needed, so "plunder" became their main way of life; in marriage system, Huns implemented the marriage system of transferring houses, "when the father died, the wife took his stepmother; when the brother died, they took his wife." A man may marry his father's and brother's wives. Although this system made people in the Central Plains feel strange, it reflected the social and historical development of the Huns. Its original meaning was to bind women who lost men in their families, and later evolved into the meaning of reserving individual family labor force and family productivity for Huns who were in animal husbandry all year round. In the funeral custom, Huns mainly carried out burial, "its death, there are coffins, gold and silver, Qiu(裘), but no tree, funeral clothes, fortunately, ministers and concubines from the dead, up to dozens of people." The Huns have retained certain sacrificial customs.

To sum up, Sima Qian explained some customs of Huns nationality through the dialogue between Zhong Xingyue(中行说) and Han envoy in Historical Records. In addition, Sima Qian also explained the reasons for its customs: "Huns customs, people eat meat, drink its juice, clothing its skin; livestock eat grass and drink water, transfer at any time. Therefore, if they are anxious, they will practice riding and archery; if they are lenient, they will be happy and have nothing to do; if they are light in restraint, they will be easy to do." It is not difficult to see that Sima Qian's attitude towards Huns customs is based on his approval and tolerance, which makes him record this, which once again shows his broad mind to accommodate the folk customs of various nationalities.

3. Living in harmony: A reflection of the Han-Hun War

After Emperor Wu of the Han Dynasty Liu Che succeeded to the throne, the Huns often invaded the frontier of the Central Plains, and the marriage policy did not achieve the expected effect. Based on economic development and political stability, Emperor Wu of the Han Dynasty launched many large-scale wars against Huns.

The watershed of the relationship between Han and Huns was Mayi ambush. According to *The Biography of the Huns* contains: "Han Dynasty envoy Mayi servant Nie Yi(聂壹), illegal smuggling(奸兰) and Huns trade, detailed to sell Mayi City to lure Chan Yu. Chanyu believed him, but he was greedy for Mayi's property. He sent one hundred thousand cavalries into Wuzhou Fortress." After the incident, Emperor Wu put Wang Hui, who planned to lure the enemy, into prison and killed him on the grounds that the siege of Mayi failed to ambush the slaves. From then on, the Western Han Dynasty began a large-scale war with Huns.

The record of *The Biography of the Huns* ended in Zhenghe three years (90B.C), that is, when Li Guangli was defeated and surrendered to Huns, suggesting that the later war had little effect. Not only did the Huns not surrender, but they dragged down the Han Empire. In this way, the people could not live in peace and the country could not develop steadily, indicating that the war against Huns could not continue. But generally speaking, the influence of the decades of war between Han and the Huns is more beneficial than harmful, and it is a just action to resist aggression and enhance national strength. On the one hand, Han Dynasty realized the expansion of territory and the unification of many nationalities. On the other hand, fighting Huns not only safeguarded people's lives and property, defended territorial integrity, but also

promoted the development of national social economy and culture.

From *The Biography of the Huns*, Sima Qian realized that the war between Han Dynasty and Huns was inevitable and affirmed the stable development and historical significance of this war for the country. And he said: "Confucius wrote the Spring and Autumn Annals, which clearly described the events of the period of Duke Yin and Duke Huan of Lu. In the period of Duke Ding of Lu and Duke Fei of Lu, the descriptions were implicit, because this was a text close to contemporary politics and had nothing to praise, and it was taboo. The mistake of those among the secular people who talk about the Xiongnu problem lies in their desire to get lucky for a moment of power, so they devote themselves to flattery and make their one-sided views favorable, regardless of the actual situation of the Huns and Han Dynasty. The generals only relied on the vastness of China's land and the grandeur of morale to deal with the Huns. The emperor formulated countermeasures according to these, so the achievements established were not deep and wide. Although Yao was wise, he failed to complete the great cause by himself. After he got Dayu, the whole China was able to be peaceful. If you want to carry forward the tradition of the sage-king, you only have to choose and appoint generals! It's just about choosing the right candidate!" He clearly expressed his reflection on the Han-Hun War, that is, the negation of the disasters and economic losses brought about by the Han-Hungarian War. In addition, Sima Qian's record ended when Li Guangli was defeated and surrendered to Huns, suggesting that the later war had little effect, perhaps another form of reflection.

4. The influence of Sima Qian's writing on ethnic relations

Sima Qian's progressive national view not only directly affected his personal writing of Xiongnu image, but also had a profound impact on the later national exchange and identification, as well as the common development of all ethnic groups and the stability and harmony of the great unity. It not only promotes the psychological identity of the ethnic minorities to the common ancestor and the central position of China. It also contributed to the formation of the concept of Huaxia Center and the common culture of the Chinese nation. It had a profound impact on the national integration under the unification.

Since Sima Qian, the historical books of all dynasties have followed his views on ethnic issues. More importantly, the ethnic minorities began to emphasize that they were descendants of the Emperor Huang Di and regarded China as orthodox. At the end of the Western Jin Dynasty, Liu Yuan(Huns) raised an army against Jin and said: "It is possible for an elder brother to die and his younger brother to inherit."^① After the founding of the country number "Han", to the Han Dynasty orthodox successor self-proclaimed: "chasing respect Liu Chan for the emperor "Xiaohuai", the establishment of Han Gaozu following the three ancestors of the five gods and sacrifice it." Although this is due to his political consideration of winning Han people's support and achieving his great cause of unification, he cannot ignore his identification with the blood relationship between the two ethnic groups and the orthodox Chinese concept. Otherwise, it is difficult to understand his behavior of not honoring his father and offering sacrifices to the ancestors of Xiongnu when he was on the throne and emperor. At the same time, Helian Bo(赫连勃勃), another leader of Huns, once said "Since the descendants of our ancestors Xia Houshi, the country is called Bactria."^② Claiming to be "the descendant of Dayu."which was obviously influenced by *Biography of the Huns*. In addition, Lu Guang of the Di(氐), after the establishment of the Later Liang Dynasty, "pursued Lu Wang (Jiang Ziya) as the ancestor." He flaunted himself as the orthodox Chinese; Tuoba Gui(拓跋珪)of Xian Bei nationality said after establishing the Northern Wei Dynasty: "After the Emperor Huang Di, he claimed to be King of Earth Virtue."^③ These ethnic minorities emphasized that they were all descendants of the Emperor Huang Di, just like the Han nationality, which rarely happened before the Han Dynasty. From this, we can see the deep influence of Sima Qian's ethnic view of "Homology of all races".

In addition, Sima Qian's view of "Homology of all races" and "the center of China" also promoted the common respect of Chinese culture among all ethnic groups entering the big family of the Chinese nation. In other words, it makes it impossible for each ethnic group to put aside Chinese culture to talk about its own identity and status as the Han nationality. For example, Liu Yao of the former Zhao Dynasty (Huns) said: "The university was established in the east of Changan Palace(长安宫), and the primary school was in the west of Weiyang Palace(未央宫)...Select the virtuous Confucian scholars in the imperial court to educate them with Ming classics."^④ After Zhao Dynasty (Jie) Shi Le, although not a word. However, "establish the Imperial College."^⑤ In order to show that they have the same identity and status as the Han nationality to inherit the ruling power of the Central Plains Dynasty, the rulers of all ethnic groups all regard inheriting Chinese culture as their own duty. On the other hand, the rulers of all ethnic groups also regarded themselves as Chinese orthodoxy and called others barbarians and hypocrites. For example, during the Sixteen Kingdoms period, when Shi Le established the Later Zhao Dynasty, he was most afraid of calling his clan "Hu", so he was renamed "Chinese", while other ethnic minorities were called "Liu Yi" and "Bai Man". As Fu Jian of the former Qin Dynasty said, "The mixed residence of various tribes is not unified and cannot be a major disaster for China. It is best to appease them first, collect their taxes, and if they do not obey orders, then punish them."^⑥

Because the rulers of all ethnic groups are Chinese orthodox self-identity, so that the Northern and Southern Dynasties, the north is called

"Dao Yi", south is called "Suo Lu". It is not difficult to see from this that no matter which nation holds political power, no matter how fierce the national struggle is, the frequency of regime change. The concept that all ethnic groups have the same origin and that China is respected is unchanged and unified. It was under the influence of the thought of the same ancestor and common culture that Emperor Xiaowen of the Northern Wei Dynasty successfully completed the comprehensive sinicization reform, which greatly accelerated the pace of the integration of the northern and southern nationalities. After the strengthening of the unified political situation in Sui and Tang Dynasties, the minorities entering the Central Plains almost completely merged with the Han nationality. This is not only the result influenced by Sima Qian's national view, but also the result of his thought of unification and national fusion.

Note

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