Murong Jun

Murong Jun, courtesy name Xuanying, was the second son of Murong Huang. Earlier, Murong Hui had often said: "Through my accumulated virtue and benevolence, my descendants shall possess the Central Plains." When Jun was born, Hui declared: "This child's bone structure is extraordinary; our family has found its heir." As Jun grew up, he reached a height of eight chi and two cun, possessed an imposing appearance, studied extensively from books, and demonstrated both civil and military talents. When Huang became King of Yan, he appointed Jun as Acting Commander, General Who Pacifies the North, Colonel of Eastern Barbarians, Left Worthy Prince, and Crown Prince of Yan. After Huang's death, in the fifth year of Yonghe (349), Jun usurped the throne of Yan King. Following the precedent of the states during the Spring and Autumn period, he declared it his first year and issued an amnesty throughout his domain.

At this time, Shi Jilong had died and both Zhao and Wei fell into great chaos. Jun planned to annex these territories, appointing Murong Ke as General Who Assists the State, Murong Ping as General Who Assists and Supports, Yang Wu as General Who Assists Righteousness, and Murong Chui as Vanguard Commander-in-Chief and General Who Establishes the Vanguard. He selected over 200,000 elite troops to await the opportunity. That year, Emperor Mu sent Palace Attendant Chen Shen to appoint Jun as Commander of the Imperial Insignia, Palace Attendant, Grand Commander-in-Chief, Commander of All Military Affairs North of the Yellow River, Governor of four provinces - Youzhou, Jizhou, Bingzhou, and Pingzhou, Grand General, Grand Chanyu, and King of Yan, with the authority to appoint officials following the precedents of Hui and Huang.

The following year, Jun led three armies south, departing from Lulong and stopping at Wuzhong. Wang Wu, Shi Jilong's Inspector of Youzhou, abandoned the city and fled, leaving his general Wang Ta to defend Ji. Jun captured the city, executed Ta, and established his capital there. He relocated the people of Guangning and Shangu to Xuwu, and the people of Dai Commandery to Fancheng, before returning.

When Ran Min killed Shi Zhi and usurped the imperial title, he sent his envoy Chang Wei to visit Jun. Jun took him to observe his subordinates, and had his secretary Feng Yu question him, saying: "Ran Min, a man of ordinary talent raised by others, betrayed kindness and usurped power. What auspicious signs justify his claim to the imperial title?"

Wei replied: "Heaven's will manifests in different ways. Wolves and crows marked the Three Kings, while unicorns and dragons heralded the Han and Wei. How could my lord, who follows Heaven's mandate, lack such omens? Moreover, the use of arms and killing are noble traditions of wise kings. Tang and Wu personally carried out punishments and banishments, and Confucius praised them. Wei Wu was raised by eunuchs, his origins unknown, and with troops not even numbering a regiment, he still achieved great accomplishments. The barbaric Hu were cruel and chaotic, butchering the common people. My lord raised his sword to eliminate them, saving the masses. His merit reaches to Imperial Heaven, his achievements rival those of Gaozu. How can accepting Heaven's mandate be inappropriate?"

Yu said: "Last year, Shi Zhi sent Zhang Ju requesting aid, claiming the imperial seal was in Xianguo. Was this true? Also, we heard Min cast a golden statue of himself which failed to form. How can you claim he has Heaven's mandate?"

Wei replied: "On the day the Hu were eliminated, none in Ye were spared. How could the seal have reached Xianguo? This was merely a plea for help. The divine seal is truly with my lord. As for those deceptive acts, they were attempts to deceive the masses with strange occurrences, fabricating countless tales to mystify events. My lord now holds Heaven's authority, resembling the Supreme Deity, with the four seas in his grasp and great achievements to his name. Why would he need to seek validation through such things? As for the statue casting, I have not heard of it."

Jun, who strongly believed Ju's words and was pleased about Min's failed statue casting, wished to verify this and had firewood piled and set ablaze beside Wei, ordering Yu and others to persuade him. Wei remained composed and declared firmly: "Since coming of age, I have not deceived even common people, how could I deceive a ruler of thousands of chariots? Using deception to save my life is not something I would do. If speaking truthfully leads to death, so be it. Adding more wood and hastening the fire would be your great kindness."

The attendants urged Jun to execute him, but Jun said: "In ancient times, even during warfare, envoys moved between armies. This is merely the normal duty of a subject." He then pardoned Wei.

Huang sent Murong Ke to capture territory in Zhongshan, and Murong Ping to attack Wang Wu at Lukou. Ke stopped at Tang city, where Ran Min's general Bai Tong and Zhongshan Governor Hou Kan held firm in defense. Ke left his general Murong Biao to besiege it while he advanced to attack Changshan. Ping halted at Nan'an, where Wang Wu sent his general Zheng Sheng to resist Ping. Ping launched a counterattack and beheaded him, after which Hou Kan climbed over the city wall to surrender. Ke advanced to capture Zhongshan and executed Bai Tong. Jun's military discipline was strict and clear, and none of his generals committed any violations. When Jia Jian, the Governor of Zhangwu under Min, led his commandery troops to intercept and battle Ping at Gaocheng, Jian was captured in battle and over three thousand heads were taken.

That year, Zhai Shu of the Dingling tribe and Liu Zhun, one of Ran Min's generals, led their forces to surrender to Jun. Shu was enfeoffed as the King of Guiyi, and Zhun was appointed Left Marshal.

At this time, the Xianbei leader Duan Qin initially submitted to Jun but later rebelled. Jun sent Murong Ke and Prime Minister Feng Yi to attack Ran Min at Anxi, and Murong Chui to attack Duan Qin at Yimu. Jun went to Zhongshan to support both armies. Min became frightened and fled to Changshan, where Ke caught up with him at Shi River. Min's reputation for might was well established, and everyone feared him. Ke told his generals: "Min's soldiers are old and tired, truly difficult to use effectively. Moreover, he is brave but lacks strategy - he's worth only a single warrior. Despite his armor and weapons, he's not worth fighting. I will divide our army into three parts and position them in a pincer formation to await him. Given Min's rash nature, and knowing our forces outmatch his, he will surely risk death to charge our center. I will prepare heavily armored troops in dense formation to await his arrival. You gentlemen need only ready your troops and wait for the battle to join, then attack from the flanks - victory will be certain." When they fought, they defeated him, beheading over seven thousand men and capturing Min, who was sent to be executed at Longcheng.

Ke stationed his troops at Huhun. Min's general Su Hai sent his commander Jin Guang with several thousand cavalry to raid Ke, but Ke counterattacked and killed him. Hai became terrified and fled to Bingzhou. Ke advanced to occupy Changshan, causing Duan Qin to fearfully request surrender, then proceeded to attack Ye. Min's general Jiang Gan closed the city and defended it. Jun also sent Murong Ping and others with ten thousand cavalry to join the attack on Ye.

At this time, a magpie nested in the western pepper tree of Jun's Zhengyang Palace and bore three chicks with vertical feathers on their necks; Fancheng presented an unusual bird with five-colored markings. Jun asked his officials, "What omen is this?" They all said: "The magpie is a yan (swallow) bird. The crown-like feathers on its head signify the rise of Great Yan and represent the imperial crown. Nesting in the western pepper tree of Zhengyang Palace symbolizes the supreme ruler receiving tribute from ten thousand nations. The three chicks correspond to the verification of the three successions. The divine bird's five colors indicate that the sacred dynasty will inherit the register of the five elements to rule the four seas." Jun was greatly pleased upon hearing this. Subsequently, Jiang Gan led five thousand elite troops out of the city to provoke battle, but Murong Ping and others defeated them, killing over four thousand, while Gan returned to Ye alone on horseback.

At this time, his officials urged Jun to assume the imperial title, but Jun replied: "I come from a hunting region in the remote wilderness, from customs where we wear our hair loose and fold our robes to the left. How could I have a share in the register of dynastic succession! You gentlemen are overly praising me, hoping for something inappropriate - this is truly not something someone of my modest virtue should hear." Murong Ke and Feng Yi attacked Wang Wu at Lukou and forced his surrender. Soon after, Murong Ping captured Ye city and sent Ran Min's wife, family members, associates, and cultural artifacts to Zhongshan.

Previously, Jiang Gan had sent the Imperial Seal to Jianye. Jun, wanting to mystify his achievements and claim that destiny was with him, falsely claimed that Min's wife had obtained and presented it to him. He granted her the title "Lady who Presented the Seal." Then, in the eighth year of Yonghe (352), he usurped the imperial title, declared a general amnesty within his territories, established the reign name Yuanxi, and appointed various officials. He appointed Feng Yi as Grand Commander, Murong Ke as Palace Attendant, Yang Wu as Director of the Imperial Secretariat, Huangfu Zhen as Left Vice Director of the Imperial Secretariat, Zhang Xi as Right Vice Director of the Imperial Secretariat, Song Huo as Supervisor of the Palace Secretariat, Han Heng as Director of the Palace Secretariat, and made other appointments according to rank. He posthumously honored Hui as Emperor Wuxuan of the High Ancestors, and Huang as Emperor Wenming of the Grand Ancestors.

When the [Jin] court sent envoys to Jun, he told them: "Go back and tell your Son of Heaven that I have taken up the people's cause, been supported by the Central Plains, and have already become Emperor."

Earlier, Shi Jilong had sent someone to seek an oracle at Mount Hua, obtaining a jade tablet that read: "When the years are in Shen and You, it will be as thin as a thread. When the year is in Renzi, the true person will appear." At this time, the people of Yan all believed this referred to Jun. He renamed Sizhou as Zhongzhou and established the office of Metropolitan Commandant. His officials said: "Great Yan has received the Mandate, succeeding the rulers of the Light Record and Black Essence. As the succession passes to the heir of the Metal element, we should follow the calendar of Xia, wear the crown of Zhou, use black for banners, and prefer black sacrificial animals." Jun agreed to this. Those who participated in civil and military affairs, various envoys, and those present at his enthronement were all promoted three ranks. The armies at Gu River and those guarding Ye, down to the common soldiers, were all rewarded according to their ranks. Those who died in battle received posthumous promotions of two ranks for officers, while soldiers' descendants were exempted from corvée labor. Former palace personnel were all promoted according to their abilities. He established his wife from the Kezuhun clan as Empress and his eldest son Ye as Crown Prince.

The Jin General of Ningshuo, Rong Hu, rebelled and surrendered Pengcheng and Lu Commandery to Jun.

Li Du from Changshan gathered several thousand followers and rebelled at Pubi Fort. Jun sent Murong Ke to lead troops to subdue him and force his surrender.

Earlier, after Ran Min was defeated, Wang Wu had declared himself King of Anguo. After Wu's death, Lü Hu took up the same title and held out at Lukou. Ke advanced to attack and drove him away. He sent the vanguard commander Yue Wan to pursue him to Yewang, where all of his followers surrendered.

Yao Xiang surrendered Liang state to Jun. Jun appointed Murong Ping as Commander-in-Chief of military affairs for ten regions - Qin, Yong, Yi, Liang, Jiang, Yang, Jing, Xu, Gun, and Yu - and all areas south of the Yellow River, with temporary headquarters at Luo River. Murong Qiang was appointed Vanguard Commander-in-Chief and Commander of military affairs for Jing and Xu provinces and all areas along the Huai River, and advanced to occupy Henan.

When Jun traveled from Helong to Ji City, the people of Youji were being relocated eastward, causing mutual disturbance and forming groups in various places. His subordinates requested permission to suppress them, but Jun said: "These small groups are merely unsettled because of my eastern tour. Now that I have arrived, they will soon settle down on their own. However, we should still maintain precautions against unexpected events." Therefore, he ordered both inside and outside [the city] to be placed under strict guard.

Fu Sheng’s Governor of Henei, Wang Hui, and Governor of Liyang, Han Gao, surrendered their commanderies to Jun. The Jin officials - Sun Hei, Governor of Lanling, Gao Zhu, Governor of Jibei, and Gao Weng, Governor of Jianxing - each rebelled against Jin and surrendered their commanderies to Jun.

Earlier, Jun's General of Chariot and Cavalry and Duke of Fanyang, Liu Ning, who had been stationed at You City and had surrendered to the Fu clan, now came to Ji City with 2,000 households to admit his guilt. He was appointed Rear General.

The King of Goguryeo, Zhao, sent envoys to express gratitude and present local tributes. Jun appointed Zhao as Commander of Military Affairs of Ying Province, Grand General Who Conquers the East, and Inspector of Ying Province. He was enfeoffed as Duke of Lelang, while maintaining his position as king.

Shen Yin, the Palace Attendant and Gentleman of the Yellow Gate, submitted a memorial saying:

"The establishment of ranks and the weight of ceremony were instituted by ancient kings. The styles of crowns and robes have varied through different eras. During Han times, due to the exceptional merits of the Xiao and Cao families, they were granted special privileges to wear swords and shoes in the palace and enter court without hurrying. Without such merits, these ceremonies should be discontinued.

Regarding the Eastern Palace (Crown Prince's residence), these became the standard. Wei and Jin dynasties continued this tradition, prohibiting the wearing of shoes. Now the Crown Prince is overly humble, following the same protocols as other officials, with ceremonies that are too lowly, violating court protocol. The Crown Prince holds the weighty responsibility of ruling heaven, yet wears the same crown as other princes when traveling - this fails to distinguish between noble and humble ranks.

For sacrificial ceremonies and court celebrations, he should properly wear the imperial robe with nine emblems and the crown with nine pendants. Moreover, in midwinter at the winter solstice, when the yin number completes its cycle and the Yellow Bell generates qi rising from below, this is the month to close passes and cease military activities, when rulers do not inspect other regions. The Book of Rites says: 'In this month, affairs should be quiet, and the noble man should practice abstinence and avoid music and sex.'

Only the Zhou Offices mention the Son of Heaven performing the southern suburban sacrifice with eight types of music. Some say this is for spiritual matters, not regular court ceremonies, hence allowing music. Rulers should be careful with subtle matters and follow the weightier ceremony.

Previously, drums were silent at the two solstices, and there should not be such arrangements. Today's musical performances seem to follow regular ceremony. The ceremonies of the two solstices differ from other occasions - carelessly using musical instruments disturbs the spiritual qi, and using them for entertainment is truly insufficient.

Although court dress follows ancient ritual, the crimson garment began with Qin and Han, continuing to the present day as standard. On the first and fifteenth of each month, and New Year's Day, the full ceremonial robes and shoes are worn. According to ritual, there are three situations where feudal lords meeting the Son of Heaven cannot complete ceremonies - rain soaking garments and losing composure is one of them. Now when it rains on court days, there is no set protocol. Ritual should be appropriate to the occasion, not excessively reverent.

Recently, when the ground was wet and shoes could not be worn, the ceremonial robes were changed for regular clothes. The rules speak of court dress as what one wears to court, yet within the same ceremony there are two different standards for upper and lower garments - some abandoned, some maintained - truly violating the spirit of ritual.

The great feast of receiving the Mandate follows the path of Yu and Xia. All ceremonies should be adjusted and fixed to become permanent institutions for the imperial dynasty."

Jun replied: "Regarding the matter of wearing swords, shoes, and not hurrying, let it be referred to the Court of Imperial Sacrifices for discussion. As for the Crown Prince wearing the imperial robe and crown with nine pendants, this would elevate his status too close to the sovereign, and cannot be implemented. Regarding the ceremonial attire, how can it be applied in some cases and abandoned in others? All these matters should be carefully determined."

Initially, Duan Kan, son of Duan Lan, had taken advantage of Ran Min's rebellion to gather followers and establish himself at Guanggu in the east, declaring himself King of Qi. He claimed allegiance to Jianye, but sent letters that challenged the proper protocol, refusing to acknowledge Jun's legitimate position. Jun dispatched Murong Ke and Murong Chen to suppress him.

After Ke crossed the Yellow River, Kan's brother Pi, who was brave and clever, advised Kan: "Murong Ke is skilled in warfare, and his forces are substantial - we likely cannot resist him directly. If he besieges us, even if we request surrender, he may not accept. You should hold firm while I lead our elite troops to confront him. If we win, you can lead a pursuit to ensure not even a single enemy horse escapes. If we lose, you can quickly surrender and still retain a position as a lord of a thousand households." Kan rejected this advice. When Pi insisted on going, Kan became angry and executed him. Kan then led 30,000 troops to oppose Ke.

Ke encountered Kan south of the Ji River and engaged him in battle, thoroughly defeating him and executing his brother Qin, capturing all his forces. Ke then besieged Guanggu. His generals urged him to attack quickly, but Ke said: "In military strategy, sometimes slow tactics achieve victory, and sometimes swift attacks are needed. When forces are evenly matched and the enemy has strong reinforcements, creating concerns about attacks from both front and rear, quick attacks are needed to secure swift victory. However, when we are strong and they are weak, with no external support, and we have sufficient force to control them, we should contain and observe them, waiting for their collapse. The Art of War says 'surround ten times to attack five times' - this is what it means. Kan has deep ties with rebels, and his people remain loyal. In the Ji'nan battle, they fought fiercely but lost due to poor tactics. Now they rely on natural defenses, and are united in purpose. In siege warfare, the defenders typically have double the advantage - this is a military principle. A forced attack might succeed in several weeks, but would cost many lives. Since this campaign began, our troops have had no rest. I think about this constantly, losing sleep - how can we carelessly sacrifice lives? We should take our time to achieve victory."

All his generals acknowledged: "We cannot match your wisdom." They then built shelters and began farming, while maintaining a tight siege. Wang Teng, whom Kan had appointed Inspector of Xu Province, and Xue Yun, the Chanyu of Suotou, surrendered to Ke.

During the siege, Duan Kan had sent envoys to Jianye requesting assistance. Emperor Mu sent the Northern Palace Gentleman Commander Xun Xian to assist, but fearing the enemy's strength, he delayed and dared not advance. [Murong Ke] captured Yangdu and executed Wang Teng before returning. Ke then captured Guanggu and appointed Kan as General Who Submits to Order. He relocated over 3,000 households of Xianbei, Hu, and Jie people to Ji, left Murong Chen to guard Guanggu, and then led his troops back.

Jun's Crown Prince Ye died and was posthumously titled Prince Xianhuai. In the first year of Shengping (357), Jun installed his second son Wei as the new Crown Prince. He issued an amnesty throughout his domain and changed the era name to Guangshou.

He sent his Army Protector Murong Chui, Central Army Commander Murong Qian, and Army Guardian Ping Xi, along with others, to lead 80,000 infantry and cavalry to campaign against the Dingling and Chile tribes north of the frontier. They achieved a great victory, capturing and beheading over 100,000 enemies, seizing 130,000 horses and over a million cattle and sheep.

Earlier, Hui had owned a remarkable horse called Zhebai (reddish-white), which had extraordinary features and exceptional strength. When Shi Jilong attacked Jicheng, when Huang was about to flee to avoid danger and wanted to ride it, the horse neighed sorrowfully and stomped its hooves, allowing no one to approach. Huang said: "This horse senses something different from the previous reign. I have always relied on it to escape danger, but now it refuses - perhaps this is my late father's will!" So he stopped. Soon after, Jilong withdrew, and Huang found this incident even more remarkable. By this time, the horse was forty-nine years old, yet still maintained its exceptional vigor. Jun compared it to Bao Shi's black steed and ordered a bronze statue to be cast in its likeness. He personally wrote an inscription and eulogy, which were engraved on the sides, and placed it at the east wing gate of Jicheng. That year, just as the statue was completed, the horse died.

The Xiongnu Chanyu He Laitou led 35,000 of his tribespeople to submit to Jun. He was appointed General of Pacifying the West and Duke of Yunzhong Commandery, and was settled in Pingshu City in Dai Commandery.

Jin’s Governor of Taishan, Zhuge You, attacked their eastern commandery. Jun sent Murong Ke to engage in battle, and the imperial forces were defeated. The Northern Palace Gentleman Commander Xie Wan, who had previously occupied Liang and Song, became frightened and fled back. Ke then advanced his troops to raid Henan, capturing the regions of Ru, Ying, Qiao, and Pei. He installed local administrators there before returning.

Jun moved from Jicheng to Ye, issued an amnesty throughout his domain, renovated the palaces, and rebuilt the Bronze Bird Terrace.

The Minister of Justice Chang Wei submitted a memorial saying: "Although Great Yan has established new institutions, many of its court procedures still follow Wei and Jin practices. Only the rule that those whose grandfathers were not properly buried cannot serve as officials is unique and stands as a fundamental principle of royal teaching. However, rituals should be adapted to the times, and customs may change. For example, when the First Emperor established the Three Chapters Law, the people of Qin accepted it. Recently, with the Central Plains in chaos and continuous warfare for years, there have been disasters of cities falling and armies being destroyed, with soldiers often being buried in mass graves. In ten households, nine have become orphans or lone survivors. Moreover, with three regions standing like mountain peaks, fathers and sons are separated in different states, and news of life or death, fortune or misfortune, becomes as distant as the sky. Some make temporary arrangements, while others follow different customs. Filial sons exhaust themselves without benefit, and dutiful grandsons cannot complete their mourning periods. Although they may perform empty burial ceremonies to express their infinite grief, there are no ritual texts for such practices, nor are they recorded in the laws. As a result, talented individuals are unable to advance, and those with abilities cannot serve - this is truly painful. I fear this is not the way to promote those in humble circumstances or make full use of contemporary talent. How could people like Wu Qi and the two Chens ever display their abilities? How could Emperor Gaozu of Han have escaped the siege at Pingcheng? How could Zhizhi's head have been displayed at the Han frontier? I carefully examined the Wuchen Edict, which aimed to cleanse impurities and make a fresh start with the world, celebrating renewal. Yet in five or six years, there has been continued conflict, which, in terms of heaven's principles, I privately find concerning."

Jun replied: "Wei is a respected scholar well-versed in law. What he has presented is indeed worth considering. However, now the world is not yet peaceful, and chaos has not ended. This is precisely the time when we need to seek out and promote exceptional talent. We cannot yet implement all measures comprehensively, but we can remove this restriction and allow for further discussion of general reforms."

He ordered the construction of temples for Wei (廆) in both Changli and Liaodong commanderies, and temples for Huang (皝) in Fanyang and Yan commanderies. He appointed Ping Xi, who was serving as a military protector, as the Chief of Construction to oversee the building of these two temples.

Fu Jian's Regional Inspector of Pingzhou, Liu Te, led 5,000 households to surrender to Jun.

Li Hei from Hejian gathered more than a thousand followers and attacked various commanderies and prefectures. He killed Wei Yan, the Magistrate of Zaoqiang. Jun's Governor of Changle, Fu Yan, attacked and executed him.

In Changshan, a large tree was uprooted, and beneath its roots were found 70 bi (jade discs) and 73 gui (jade tablets), with extraordinary brilliance and color unlike ordinary jade. Jun believed this was a sign from the mountain deity and sent his Court Secretary Duan Qin to perform sacrifices there with the title of Grand Steward.

Initially, when Ran Min proclaimed himself emperor, Li Li, Zhang Ping, Gao Chang, and other generals under Shi Jilong led their forces to pledge allegiance to Jun, sending their sons to serve as hostages. They then sought support from Jiankang, formed alliances with Fu Jian, and accepted noble titles, maintaining their positions through these connections. Though they continued to send tribute, their loyalty remained incomplete. When Lü Hu fled to Yewang, he sent his younger brother to present a memorial apologizing to Jun, and was appointed General Who Pacifies the South and Governor of Henei. Additionally, Feng Yang of Shangdang proclaimed himself Governor and allied with Zhang Ping. Through Ping's repeated recommendations, Jun pardoned Yang's crimes and appointed him Governor of Jingzhao. Both Hu and Yang secretly maintained communications with the capital. Zhang Ping controlled the territories of Xinxing, Yanmen, Xihe, Taiyuan, Shangdang, and Shangjun, commanding over three hundred fortified settlements and more than one hundred thousand Hu and Jin households, establishing a tripartite power structure. Jun sent Minister of Education Murong Ping to campaign against Zhang Ping, General Muyu Gen to attack Yang, Minister of Works Yang Wu to attack Chang, and Pacification General Murong Zang to attack Li. Over a hundred fortified settlements in Bingzhou surrendered, and Jun appointed Vice Director of the Right Yue Wan as General Who Pacifies the West, Commander of the Xiongnu Protection Force, and Inspector of Bingzhou to pacify the region. Zhang Ping's appointed officials - Zhuge Xiang the Conquerer of the West, Su Xiang the Protector of the North, Qiao Shu the Pacifier of the East, and Shi Xian the Protector of the South - led 138 fortified settlements in surrendering to Jun. Jun was greatly pleased and restored their official ranks. Subsequently, Zhang Ping fled to Pingyang with three thousand followers, Yang fled to Yewang, Li escaped to Xingyang, and Chang fled to Shaoling, all surrendering their forces.

Jun then planned to launch another invasion and sought to establish control over Guanxi. He ordered provinces and commanderies to conduct a census of able-bodied men, thoroughly investigating those who had evaded registration. One male was to remain in each household while the rest were to be conscripted, aiming to amass an infantry force of 1.5 million men. He planned to gather them the following year and advance upon Luoyang, establishing a three-directional military command. Liu Gui of Wuyi submitted a memorial strongly remonstrating against this, describing the people's impoverishment and arguing that the military conscription was unlawful. He warned that the people might not endure such demands, potentially leading to catastrophic collapse, and outlined thirteen matters of current policy that were unsuitable for the times. Jun read this with approval and referred it to his ministers for thorough discussion. Most recommendations were adopted, and the conscription was modified to recruit one man per five households, relaxing military preparations for one year. All were ordered to gather in Yedu by the last month of the following year.

That year, the Jin general Xun Xian attacked Shanchi and captured it, executing Jun's Governor of Taishan, Jia Jian. Jun's Inspector of Qingzhou, Murong Chen, dispatched Commander Yue Ming to provide relief. Xian's forces were defeated, and Shanchi fell once again.

Jun established an elementary school in Xianxian District to educate noble youth. He enfeoffed his son Hong as Prince of Jibei and Chong as Prince of Zhongshan. During a banquet with his ministers at Puchi, as the wine flowed freely and poems were recited, the conversation turned to discussions of classics and history. When speaking of Crown Prince Jin of Zhou, Jun wept and said to his ministers: "In the past, Emperor Wu of Wei grieved for Cang Shu, and Sun Quan mourned endlessly for Sun Deng. I always thought these two rulers were being overly sentimental, lacking in proper dignity. But since Ye's death, my hair has grown white, and I now understand their feelings. What do you think of Ye's character? In mourning him now, am I not setting a strange precedent for the future?" His Minister of Education's Chief Secretary Li Ji replied: "When the Crown Prince was in the Eastern Palace, I served as his tutor. Having been close to him, I dare not claim ignorance of his character and aspirations. I have heard that only sages achieve perfection without fault. The former Crown Prince possessed eight great virtues, and I saw no deficiencies." Jun said: "Your praise may be excessive, but pray tell what they were." Ji responded: "His filial piety was heaven-sent, his nature aligned with the Way - this is the first. His intelligence and quick comprehension flowed like water - this is the second. His steadfast decisiveness and deep understanding of principles - this is the third. His hatred of flattery and love of honest counsel - this is the fourth. His love of learning and respect for the worthy, never ashamed to ask those below - this is the fifth. His outstanding bearing surpassing the ancients, his accomplishments exceeding his time - this is the sixth. His humble courtesy and respect for teachers and the Way - this is the seventh. His generosity with wealth and diligent care for the people's hardships - this is the eighth." Jun wept and said: "Though your praise may be generous, had this child lived, I would have no worries about my death. Since I cannot follow the path of Tang and Yu by abdicating to the worthy, I must at least follow the Three Kings in hereditary succession. Jingmao is young, and his talents are not yet developed - what do you think of this?" Ji replied: "The Crown Prince has natural intelligence and grows in wisdom daily, but of the eight virtues, two remain unfulfilled. He is overly fond of hunting and music, which diminishes him." Jun turned to Wei and said: "Boyang's words are like beneficial medicine - you should take them to heart."

Thereupon, he inquired about the elderly, the sick, and widows who could not support themselves, and granted them grain and silk according to their circumstances.

One night, Jun dreamed that Shi Jilong bit his arm. Upon waking, he was disturbed by this and ordered Jilong's tomb to be opened, his coffin broken open, and his corpse removed. He trampled on the corpse and cursed it, saying, "How dare a dead barbarian dream of the living Son of Heaven!" He sent his Chief Surveillance Officer Yang Yue to enumerate Jilong's crimes of cruelty, had the corpse whipped, and then had it thrown into the Zhang River.

Zhuge You led another campaign against Jun with 30,000 troops by land and water, entering through Shimen and camping at Hezhu. You's subordinate commander Kuang Chao advanced to occupy Yanbi, while Xiao Guan camped at Xinzha. He also dispatched Commander Xu Jiong to lead 3,000 naval troops to patrol up and down the river, creating a show of force from both east and west. Jun sent Murong Ping and Fu Yan to lead 50,000 infantry and cavalry, and they fought at Dong'a, where the imperial forces were defeated.

The seven northern states including Helan and Shele all surrendered. Soon after, Jun fell ill and said to Murong Ke: "My illness makes me feel weak, and I fear I may not recover. Life and death are matters of fate, what is there to regret! However, the two rebels are not yet eliminated, and Jingmao is still young - I worry he may not be able to handle such difficulties. I wish to follow the example of Emperor Xuan of Song and entrust the state to you." Ke replied: "Although the Crown Prince is young, he is naturally intelligent and wise. He will surely be able to handle state affairs. We must not disrupt the proper succession." Jun angrily said: "Between brothers, why use empty rhetoric?" Ke responded: "If Your Majesty believes I am capable of bearing the responsibility of the empire, am I not also capable of assisting a young ruler?" Jun said: "If you can act as the Duke of Zhou did, what more would I have to worry about! Li Ji is upright and loyal, capable of handling important matters - treat him well."

At that time, troops were concentrated in Ye city, and bandits were rising up everywhere, conducting raids every night and making it dangerous to travel at dawn and dusk. Therefore, [the authorities] reduced regular taxes, established special prohibitions, and offered the position of Fengche Duwei (Commandant of the Imperial Carriages) to those who would inform on their fellow bandits. They captured and executed the bandit leaders Mu Guhe and over a hundred others, after which the raids ceased.

In the fourth year of Shengping, Jun died at the age of forty-two, having reigned for eleven years. He was posthumously titled Emperor Jingzhao, his temple name was Liezu, and his tomb was called Longling.

Jun was fond of literature and scholarly works. From the beginning of his reign until his final years, he never tired of discussing and studying texts. In his spare time from governing, he would only engage with his attending ministers in discussing principles and meanings, and he authored more than forty works. He was naturally stern and serious, careful about maintaining proper dignity and decorum. He never appeared at court in casual attire, and even in private or during leisure activities, he never showed signs of being relaxed or negligent.

Han Heng

Han Heng, courtesy name Jingshan, was from Guanjin. His father Mo was renowned for his scholarship and conduct. From a young age, Heng was skilled in composing texts and studied under Zhang Zai from the same commandery. Zhang Zai recognized his talent and said: "He has the talent to be a minister to kings."

Heng was eight feet and one inch tall and was widely read in classical texts, being knowledgeable in all areas. During the Yongjia chaos, he fled to Liaodong. After Murong Hui expelled Cui Bi and moved to Changli, he summoned Heng, appreciated his talents, and appointed him as Canjun Shi (Military Advisor).

During the Xianhe period, Song Gai and others proposed that since Hui had established merit in one corner of the empire and showed loyalty to the royal house, his low position did not match his heavy responsibilities and was insufficient to pacify both Chinese and barbarians. They suggested petitioning for him to receive the titles of Grand General and Prince of Yan. Hui accepted this and ordered his officials to discuss it thoroughly. Everyone agreed with Gai's proposal.

However, Heng objected, saying: "Since the various barbarians took advantage of our weakness, people have suffered greatly, and Chinese civilization has declined with no proper order. Your Excellency has shown loyal military service and sincere dedication, worried about the state's welfare, maintaining integrity in isolation and danger, and establishing merit thousands of miles away - such loyal service to the throne has never been seen before. Those who establish merit should worry about their trustworthiness and righteousness not being evident, not about their titles and positions not being high enough. Thus, even Duke Huan of Qi and Duke Wen of Jin, who unified the realm, did not first seek official recognition to command the feudal lords. We should instead prepare our military forces, wait for opportunities, eliminate the various threats, pacify the realm, and after achievements are made, the nine bestowments will naturally come. Moreover, pressuring the ruler to seek favors and titles is not proper behavior for subjects."

Hui was displeased with this and sent him out to serve as the Magistrate of Xinchang. When Huang became Military Commander, Heng again served as Military Advisor. He was later promoted to Governor of Yingqiu, where his governance was highly effective. When Jun became Grand General, he summoned Heng to serve as Consulting Military Advisor and additionally appointed him as General Yangli.

When Jun usurped the throne and was about to determine the sequence of the Five Elements, there were many conflicting opinions. At that time, Heng was ill in Longcheng, and Jun summoned him to resolve the matter. Before Heng arrived, the officials had already decided that Yan should succeed Jin as the dynasty of Water virtue.

When Heng arrived, he said to Jun: "Zhao's control of the Central Plains was not merely due to human affairs, but was Heaven's mandate. What Heaven has given, men should not take away - I humbly believe this should not be done. Moreover, the great King of Yan's origins began with Zhen (Thunder), and according to the 'Yi Jing', Zhen represents the Azure Dragon. At the beginning of receiving the mandate, a dragon appeared at the capital city - the dragon represents the virtue of Wood, which is a mysterious sign of agreement." Although Jun initially found it difficult to change course, he ultimately followed Heng's proposal.

When Jun's Supervisor of the Imperial Library, Nie Xiong from Qinghe, heard Heng's words, he sighed and said: "Without gentlemen like this, how could a state prosper? This surely refers to Lord Han!"

Later, Heng and Li Chan both served as tutors to the Eastern Palace (Crown Prince). When they accompanied Crown Prince Ye to court, Jun turned to his attendants and said: "These two tutors are great men of their generation, not easily matched." This shows how highly he was regarded.

Li Chan

Li Chan, courtesy name Ziqiao, was from Fanyang. In his youth, he was resolute and had high aspirations. During the Yongjia chaos, his fellow countryman Zu Ti led troops to the southern lands and was able to establish a stronghold. Chan went to join him.

Zu Ti was fond of forming alliances, and his younger brother Yue had great ambitions. Chan subtly understood their intentions and led more than ten family members to secretly return to his hometown, where he served under the Shi family as Governor of his native commandery.

When Murong Jun launched his southern campaign and the vanguard reached the commandery borders, local people urged Chan to surrender. Chan said: "When one accepts another's salary, one should share in their fortunes. If I were to abandon this principle to survive, what would honorable men think of me!" Only after his forces dispersed did he go to the army to request surrender.

Jun mocked him, saying: "You received favors from the Shi family and wore brocade in your hometown. Why couldn't you establish merit at the right time, and instead submitted yourself to us? Is this how a man of integrity should conduct himself in the world?" Chan wept and replied: "I truly know that Heaven's mandate has shifted, and it's not something I could resist. However, as one who served his master like a loyal dog or horse, how could I forget to show my devotion? It was only because I was isolated and pressed by circumstances, with no way to exert my efforts, that I humbly submitted to death. It was not truly out of sincere submission."

Jun admired his passionate response and said to his attendants: "This is truly a man of honor." He then promoted Chan to various positions, including that of Minister. Chan was upright by nature and fond of speaking directly. Whenever he had an audience, he would always discuss the successes and failures of court politics. His peers all feared him, and Jun respected his scholarly refinement.

Several times he firmly declined positions, citing his old age and inability to handle complex affairs. He was then appointed as Grand Guardian to the Crown Prince. He said to his son Ji: "With my talents to have reached this position, my early aspirations have already been exceeded. I should not invite ridicule in my twilight years." He firmly declined and returned home, where he died. His son was named Ji.

Li Ji

Ji, courtesy name Boyang, was known from a young age for his moral character and was eloquent in reasoning. At the age of twenty, he became a Gongcao (Administrative Assistant) in the commandery.

When Shi Jilong personally led a campaign against Duan Liao and stationed his army at Fanyang, the common people were suffering from famine, and military supplies were lacking. Jilong was furious, and the Governor was so frightened that he went into hiding. Ji stepped forward and said: "Our commandery borders the northern frontier and is in constant conflict with bandits. People in the border regions live in fear. When we heard that Your Excellency personally led the campaign to eliminate the rebels, even infants and the elderly wished to serve the cause - not just for the state, but also for their own peace. They would gladly sacrifice themselves on the battlefield, how could they selfishly withhold military supplies! However, this year has brought disaster and poverty, families are suffering from hunger, and people are exhausted with no means of support. Their failure to meet obligations is truly pitiful." Jilong, seeing that Ji was young but possessed strong principles, admired him and pardoned the situation, thus saving the Governor.

Provincial Governor Wang Wu appointed him as Chief Clerk. When Jun launched his southern campaign, Ji followed Wu in fleeing to Lukou. Deng Heng said to Wu: "Ji's hometown is in the north, and his father has already surrendered to Yan. Though he is here now, he will ultimately not be useful and may become a problem." Wu replied: "During these troubled times, Ji abandoned his family to uphold righteousness. His integrity matches that of ancient heroes. If we harm him out of suspicion, it will surely shock public opinion." Heng then desisted. Wu, fearing that Heng might eventually harm Ji, provided him with resources to leave.

When Ji arrived at Jun's court, Jun reproached him for arriving later than his father. Ji replied: "I have heard that Yu Rang's revenge for Zhi Bo is praised in historical records. When one serves in an official capacity, what service is not for the ruler! Your Majesty is promoting the civilization of Tang and Yu; I do not consider my submission to be too late." Jun said: "This is also one way of serving one's master."

He was gradually promoted to Middle Attendant to the Crown Prince. When Wei came to power, Murong Ke wanted to appoint Ji as Right Vice Director of the Department of State Affairs, but Wei resented Ji's previous words and refused. After Ke's repeated requests, Wei said to Ke: "All affairs of state are entrusted to you, uncle, but regarding Boyang alone, I request to decide myself." Ji subsequently died of grief.