Murong Bao, courtesy name Daoyou, was the fourth son of [Murong] Chui. In his youth, he was impetuous and lacked principles, and was fond of those who flattered him. During Fu Jian's reign, he served as the Taizi Xima (Attendant to the Crown Prince) and as the Magistrate of Wannian. During Fu Jian's campaign to Huaifei, Bao was appointed as General of Lingjiang. After becoming Crown Prince, he worked to improve himself, devoted himself to Confucian studies, became skilled in discourse and composition, and carefully attended to the minor officials around his father, seeking to build a good reputation. The court officials of [Murong] Chui unanimously praised him, and Chui himself believed Bao would preserve the family enterprise, holding him in high regard.

Upon [Murong] Chui's death that year, Bao succeeded to the illegitimate throne, declared a general amnesty within his territories, and established the Yongkang reign period. He appointed his Grand Commander Kurou Guanwei as Grand Preceptor and Left Minister of the Guards, and Duan Chong as Grand Guardian, with others receiving various ranks according to their merit. Following Chui's final edicts, he conducted a census, disbanded military camps and placed them under commandery and county administration, established registers of noble families, and clarified official protocols. However, his laws were harsh and governance severe, causing discord between ruler and subjects, such that nine out of ten households yearned for rebellion.

Initially, [Murong] Chui was concerned that Bao had not yet established an heir apparent. Bao's illegitimate son, the Duke of Qinghe, Hui, possessed many talents and strategic abilities, which deeply impressed Chui. When Bao campaigned in the north, he appointed Hui to oversee palace affairs and granted him privileges equal to those of a crown prince, thus indicating his intentions. When Chui attacked Wei, since Longcheng was the old capital where ancestral temples were located, he again appointed Hui to govern Youzhou, entrusting him with the important northeastern regions and selecting capable officials to enhance his authority. On his deathbed, Chui designated Hui as Bao's successor, but Bao favored his younger son, the Duke of Puyang, Ce, and had no intention of choosing Hui. Bao's eldest illegitimate son, the Duke of Changle, Sheng, being of the same birth status and older, resented Hui's precedence and actively promoted Ce as the suitable heir while disparaging Hui. Bao was greatly pleased and consulted with his King of Zhao, Lin, and King of Gaoyang, Long, who all complied with his wishes. Bao then conspired with Lin and others to establish Ce's mother Lady Duan as Empress and Ce as Crown Prince, while promoting Sheng and Hui to kings. Ce, courtesy name Daofu, was eleven years old, handsome in appearance but dull-witted and weak.

When Wei attacked Bingzhou, the Cavalry General Nong engaged them in battle but was defeated and retreated to Jinyang, where Sima Muyu Song closed the gates against him. Nong led several thousand horsemen in retreat to Zhongshan, but when they reached Luchuan, Wei's pursuing forces caught up with them. All his remaining cavalry were lost, and he escaped alone on horseback. Bao convened his ministers in the East Hall to discuss the matter. The Governor of Zhongshan, Fu Mo, said: "Wei's forces are strong, fighting across a thousand li, advancing with victory, their morale doubled. If their cavalry reaches the plains, their advantage will only increase. We can hardly oppose them and should defend from strategic positions." The Director of the Imperial Secretariat, Hui Sui, said: "Wei's army has many horsemen and moves swiftly, but carrying provisions on horseback will only last ten days. We should order commanderies and counties to gather thousand households into fortresses, dig deep moats, build high walls, and clear the fields to await them. Finding nothing to plunder and no food supplies, they will be forced to retreat within sixty days." Minister of State Feng Yi said: "Wei's army of 100,000 is the mightiest force in the realm. Though the common people might gather in camps, they cannot defend themselves. This would only provide supplies and troops to strengthen the enemy and disturb the people's hearts, showing our weakness. Defending the passes and fighting from there is the best strategy." Murong Lin said: "Wei's forces are now emboldened by victory and their momentum cannot be opposed. We should focus on defense and preparation, waiting for them to exhaust themselves before striking." Thus, they strengthened the cities, stockpiled grain, and prepared for a prolonged engagement.

When Wei failed to take Zhongshan and advanced to occupy Lukou in Boling, various generals fled in fear, and all commanderies and counties surrendered to Wei. Upon hearing of internal troubles in Wei, Bao deployed all his forces in opposition, with 120,000 infantry and 37,000 cavalry, stationed at Bosi in Quyang. The Wei army advanced to Xinliang. Fearing Wei's military prowess, Bao sent the征北 [General] Long to launch a night attack on Wei's forces, but he was defeated and retreated. The Wei army advanced in formation, and both sides camped facing each other. Fear pervaded the ranks, and the army's morale collapsed. Nong and Lin urged Bao to return to Zhongshan, so he withdrew. The Wei army pursued and attacked, causing Bao and Nong to abandon their main force and flee with 20,000 cavalry. During this time, there was a great snowstorm with strong winds, and the frozen dead lay packed along the road. Fearing the Wei army would catch up, Bao ordered all to discard their robes and weapons, not allowing even an inch of blade to be carried back.

The Wei army advanced to attack Zhongshan and camped at Fanglin Garden. That night, Minister of State Murong Hao plotted to assassinate Bao and install Murong Lin. However, Hao's brother-in-law Su Ni revealed the plot, so Bao ordered Murong Long to arrest Hao. Hao and several dozen co-conspirators broke through the gates and fled to Wei. Lin, fearful and unsettled, used troops to coerce the General of the Left Guard and Prince of Beidi, Jing, plotting to lead the palace troops to assassinate Bao. Jing refused on moral grounds, which angered Lin, who killed Jing and fled to the Dingling people.

Earlier, when Bao heard of Wei's invasion, he had ordered Murong Hui to lead troops from You and Bing provinces to Zhongshan. After Lin's rebellion, Bao feared Lin would intercept and seize Hui's army, so he planned to send troops to escort Hui. Lin's Attendant Officer Duan Pingzi fled back from the Dingling and reported that Lin was gathering Dingling forces in great numbers, planning to attack Hui's army and occupy Longcheng in the east. Bao, along with his Crown Prince Ce and generals Nong, Long, and over 10,000 cavalry, went to meet Hui at Ji, leaving Duke of Kaifeng Murong Xiang to guard Zhongshan.Hui appeared fully cooperative, preparing armor and weapons, and advanced with 20,000 infantry and cavalry in formation to meet Bao south of Ji. Bao divided his forces between Nong and Long, and sent the Duke of Xihe, Kuruo Guanji, with 3,000 troops to help defend Zhongshan. Hui showed signs of resentment over Ce being Crown Prince. When Bao discussed this with Nong and Long, they both said, "Hui is just a young man who has become proud from his independent command. It's nothing more than that. We will admonish him properly."The people of Youping admired Hui's authority and virtue and were reluctant to leave him. They all petitioned: "The King of Qinghe is naturally gifted in military matters and his strategic abilities surpass others. We have sworn to live and die with him, and inspired by the king's grace, our courage is doubled. We wish Your Majesty, the Crown Prince, and other princes to stay at Ji Palace, and let the king lead us to break the siege of the capital, after which we will escort Your Majesty's carriage."Bao's attendants, fearing Hui's military prowess, slandered him and advised against this, causing widespread resentment among the troops. When the attendants urged Bao to kill Hui, Court Attendant Qiu Nigui heard of this and warned Hui: "The attendants are secretly plotting thus, and His Majesty is likely to agree. You rely on your parents, but your father has other plans; you depend on your troops, but they've been taken from you. With no way forward or back, I fear there may be no way to preserve yourself."

Qiu Nigui suggested to Hui, "Why not eliminate the two kings, depose the Crown Prince, and take the position of Crown Prince yourself, while also leading the military and ministers to save the state?" But Hui refused.Bao said to Nong and Long, "Observing Hui, rebellion seems inevitable. We should kill him early. Otherwise, I fear great disaster will follow." Nong replied, "With enemies threatening us internally and the central provinces in chaos, Hui has maintained order in the old capital, pacified the people, and rushed to help when the capital was in danger. His reputation is strong enough to command respect from foreign tribes. Since his treachery isn't yet obvious, we should be patient. The state is now as precarious as hanging by a thread; internal killing would only damage our authority." Bao said, "Hui's rebellious heart is set, but you all are too kind to remove him. I fear one day trouble will break out, and he will harm you fathers first, then me. When things fail, remember my words." After Nong and others strongly advised against it, Bao relented.Hui, growing more fearful upon hearing this, fled to Huangyu Valley in Guangdu. He sent Qiu Nigui and others leading over 2,000 warriors to attack Nong and Long separately. Long was killed that night, and Nong was severely wounded. Later, when Hui returned to Bao, Bao intended to kill him but pretended to reassure him while secretly ordering Left Guard Muyu Teng to kill Hui, but the attempt failed. Hui fled back to his troops and then led them to attack Bao.Bao fled to Longcheng with several hundred cavalry. Hui pursued with his forces and sent messengers demanding the execution of corrupt courtiers and requesting the Crown Prince, but Bao refused. Hui then besieged Longcheng. Court Attendant Gao Yun led over a hundred suicide troops in a night attack against Hui, defeating him. Hui's forces scattered, and he fled alone on horseback to Zhongshan, where he climbed over the walls to enter the city but was killed by Murong Xiang.

Xiang usurped the imperial title, established government offices, and changed the era name. He indulged in wine and debauchery, killing without restraint, executing over 500 people from princes and nobles downward. Everyone inside and outside the court was terrified, and none dared to look at him with defiance. The city suffered severe famine, with dozens of high officials dying of starvation.Lin led the Dingling forces into Zhongshan, executed Xiang and over 300 of his close associates, and then also usurped the imperial title. As Zhongshan suffered extreme famine, Lin left to occupy Xinshi. He fought against Wei forces at Yitai, where his army was defeated. The Wei army then entered Zhongshan, and Lin fled to Ye.

Murong De sent Attendant Officer Li Yan to persuade Bao to launch a southern campaign. Bao was delighted, but Murong Sheng strongly advised against it, arguing that their troops were exhausted and Wei had just pacified the Central Plains. He suggested they should rest their forces and wait for a better opportunity in future years. Bao was about to follow this advice.However, Military Protector Muyu Teng stepped forward and said, "Now that our forces are gathered, we should take advantage of this newly stabilized situation to achieve victory. While people can be led to follow, it's difficult to plan with them from the start. You should make decisions independently without collecting various opinions that might disrupt military planning."Bao declared, "My decision is made. Anyone who dares to object will be executed!"Bao departed from Longcheng, appointing Muyu Teng as Grand Marshal of the Vanguard, Murong Nong commanding the center, and himself leading the rear, with 30,000 infantry and cavalry, advancing to Yilian. The senior officers Duan Sugu and Song Chimei, taking advantage of the troops' weariness of campaigns, killed the Minister of Works and Prince of Lelang Zhou, and forced the installation of Prince of Gaoyang, Chong. Bao fled alone to Nong's forces and led troops to suppress Sugu. The army, fearing endless campaigns and chaos, threw down their weapons and fled. Teng's forces also collapsed, and Bao and Nong rushed back to Longcheng.Lan Han secretly conspired with Sugu, who then advanced to attack the city. Nong was deceived by Lan Han and secretly went out to join the rebels, only to be killed by Sugu. All the troops scattered, and Bao fled south with Murong Sheng, Muyu Teng, and others. Lan Han, acting on behalf of Crown Prince Ce, sent envoys to welcome Bao, meeting him at Ji city. Bao wanted to return north, but Sheng and others warned that Lan Han's loyalty was uncertain, and if they returned with such few forces, it would be too late to regret if Han had ulterior motives. Bao agreed and continued south from Ji. When they reached Liyang and heard that Murong De had declared himself emperor, they retreated in fear.

He sent Muyu Teng to gather scattered troops in Julu, while Murong Sheng rallied powerful leaders in Jizhou, and Duan Yi and Duan Wen assembled their forces in Neihuang. People responded to these calls, and they were set to gather at an appointed time. However, Lan Han sent Left General Su Chao to welcome Bao. Since Han was Chui's uncle-in-law and Sheng was Han's son-in-law, Bao believed Han would be loyal without duplicity, so he returned to Longcheng.Han led Bao into an outer residence and murdered him. Bao was forty-four years old and had reigned for three years, which was the third year of Long'an. Han also killed Crown Prince Ce and over a hundred princes, ministers, and officials. Han then proclaimed himself Grand Commander-in-Chief, Grand General, Grand Chanyu, and King of Changli. Sheng usurped the throne and posthumously titled Bao as Emperor Huimin, with the temple name Liezong.

When Huang moved to Longcheng, he planted pine trees as the shrine's guardian trees. When Qin destroyed Yan, a great wind uprooted them. Several years later, two mulberry trees suddenly grew at the shrine's location. Previously, there were no mulberry trees in the Liao River valley. When Hui established relations with Jin, he sought mulberry seeds from Jiangnan, and all the mulberry trees in Pingzhou came from Wu. After Hui's death, Chui became the King of Wu and restored the state. When Bao was about to fall, a great wind uprooted one of the mulberry trees.

Biography of Murong Sheng:Sheng's courtesy name was Daoyun, and he was Bao's eldest son by a concubine. From a young age, he was deep-thinking and resourceful. When Fu Jian executed members of the Murong clan, Sheng secretly fled to Chong.When Chong declared himself emperor, he became self-satisfied, distributed rewards and punishments unfairly, and issued unclear policies. At age twelve, Sheng said to his uncle Rou, "The King of Zhongshan's wisdom does not surpass others, his talent is below average, and before showing kindness to others, he has become arrogant. In my view, he will likely meet with disaster." Soon after, Chong was killed by Duan Muyan.Sheng followed Murong Yong east to Changzi and told Rou, "Now we are in a precarious situation amid weapons and suspicion. If we appear foolish, we'll be suspected; if we appear wise, we'll be in greater danger than birds in their nests. We should be like wild geese flying high, covering thousands of miles in one go, rather than waiting to be caught in nets." He then secretly traveled east with Rou and his younger brother Hui to join Murong Chui.When they encountered bandits in Xian, Sheng said, "I am six feet tall, I won't drown in water or burn in fire. Do you dare to face my blade? Try setting up your arrow at a hundred paces. If I hit it, you should fear for your life; if I miss, I'll surrender myself to you." The bandits set up the arrow, and Sheng hit it with one shot. The bandits said, "You must be the son of a noble family; we were just testing you," and sent them on their way with provisions.A year later, Yong executed all of Jun and Chui's descendants, male and female. When Sheng arrived, Chui asked him about affairs in the west, and he drew maps on the ground to explain. Chui laughed and said, "In the past, Cao Cao patted Emperor Ming's head and made him a marquis. A grandfather's love for his grandson has always been thus." He then enfeoffed Sheng as Duke of Changle. Sheng was brave, resolute, and had the distinguished character of his uncle Quan.

When Bao assumed the imperial throne, he promoted Sheng to the rank of prince. When Bao launched a southern campaign from Longcheng, Sheng remained to manage affairs. When Duan Sugu rebelled, Sheng rushed out to protect Bao, who nearly fell into Sugu's hands but was saved thanks to Sheng. Sheng repeatedly offered brilliant strategies to Bao, but Bao didn't follow them, leading to repeated defeats. After Bao returned to Longcheng, Sheng stayed behind.When Bao was killed by Lan Han, Sheng rushed to mourn him. General Zhang Zhengu advised against this, but Sheng said, "I will risk my life and express my grief. Han is simple-minded and will surely consider our marriage ties and spare me. Within ten days or so, I can accomplish my aims." He then went to attend the funeral.Han's wife, Lady Yi, wept and pleaded for Sheng's life. Han took pity and sent his son Mu to welcome Sheng, housing him in the palace and treating him with the same respect as before. Han's brother Ti and younger brother Nan urged Han to kill Sheng, but Han refused. Murong Qi, Han's grandson, was also spared. When Qi met with Sheng, they began plotting together.Sheng sent Qi to raise troops outside the city, gathering several thousand men. Han sent Lan Ti to suppress Qi. Ti was arrogant, debauched, and disrespectful to Han. Sheng took this opportunity to tell Han, "Qi is just a youth and couldn't have planned this alone; there must be someone supporting him from within. Ti is naturally arrogant and shouldn't be trusted with large forces." Han became angry and executed Ti, then sent his Military Protector Qiuni Mu to fight Qi.Seeing Ti's execution, Han's brothers became fearful. They all turned their troops against Han and defeated Mu's forces. Han became terrified and sent his son Mu to suppress them. Mu told Han, "Murong Sheng is our enemy. Now that Qi has rebelled, Sheng must be supporting him. Moreover, with internal strife threatening us, we shouldn't nurture a disease in our core." Han was about to execute Sheng and summoned him for questioning.

Sheng's wife informed him of this, so he pretended to be gravely ill and stopped going out, which made Han desist. There were men named Li Han, Wei Shuang, Liu Zhi, Zhang Hao, and Zhang Zhen, all of whom were Sheng's old confidants, and Lan Mu had taken them into his inner circle. Li Han and the others frequently visited Sheng, secretly forming grand plans.When Mu defeated and executed Lan Nan and others, he held a great feast for his officers and soldiers, where both Han and Mu became drunk. That night, Sheng, pretending to go to the latrine, stripped off his clothes and climbed over the wall into the Eastern Palace. There, together with Li Han and others, he killed Mu. The crowd cheered, and they proceeded to attack and behead Han. Han's two sons - Duke Lu He and Duke Chen Yang - were stationed at Lingzhi and Bailang respectively. Sheng sent Li Han and Zhang Zhen to attack and kill them.The situation both inside and outside the capital became peaceful, and both officials and commoners were pleased. Sheng remained humble and modest, refusing to claim an imperial title. That year, as Prince of Changle, he assumed control of the government, issued an amnesty within his territory, and changed the era name to Jianping. He reduced the titles of various princes to dukes, and restored civil and military officials to their former positions.

Earlier, Murong Qi had gathered forces in Jian'an to oppose Lan Han, and the common people eagerly supported him. Han sent his nephew Quan to suppress Qi, but Qi defeated and destroyed Quan's forces, then advanced to station at Yilian. After Sheng executed Han, he ordered Qi to disband his troops. However, Qi instead joined with the Dingling leader Yan Sheng and the Wuhuan leader Wang Long to rebel against Sheng. They led their army to Henggou, just ten li from Longcheng. Sheng led troops to defeat them, captured Qi, and executed Long, Sheng, and over a hundred others.Sheng then usurped the imperial throne and issued a general amnesty for all crimes except the most serious ones. He posthumously honored his uncle, Crown Prince Quan, as Emperor Xianzhuang, elevated Bao's empress née Duan as Empress Dowager, Crown Prince Quan's consort née Ding as Empress Xianzhuang, and gave Crown Prince Ce the posthumous title of Crown Prince Xian'ai.When Murong Hao (Inspector of Youzhou), Zhang Tong (Left Vice Director of the Imperial Secretariat), and Zhang Shun (Administrator of Changli) plotted rebellion, Sheng executed them all. He changed the era name to Changle. For criminal cases, he personally decided them every ten days, and there were no punishments involving beating or flogging, yet the judicial proceedings were largely fair and accurate.

The King of Goguryeo, An, sent envoys with tribute goods. At that time, a bird with a white body and green head appeared at the palace gate and stayed in the eastern garden, lingering there for twenty days before departing. As a result, the eastern garden was renamed the White Sparrow Garden.

When Sheng was listening to poetry and stories about the Duke of Zhou, he turned to his ministers and said: "The Duke of Zhou, in assisting King Cheng, failed to win the sincere trust of both superiors and subordinates, and had to execute his own brothers to stop rumors. Yet he still receives praise in the classics and his virtues are celebrated in music. Consider my Grand Chancellor, Prince Huan [Murong Kuo], who came during the decline of many dynasties, when the ruler was at a vulnerable age and two enemies were threatening us. He faced greater difficulties than those of the past. In managing court affairs, he united all opinions; in external strategy, he expanded our territory by a thousand li. He maintained kinship ties through propriety and courtesy, governed various princes through virtue and law, and promoted harmony and prosperity. There were no divided opinions during his time. How can the Duke of Zhou's achievements be mentioned in the same breath as his? Yet there are no songs praising him, and his great virtues remain unrecorded. This is not right." He then ordered the Imperial Secretariat to compose "The Ode of Yan" to record Kuo's achievements.He also summoned Director of the Imperial Secretariat Chang Zhong, Minister Yang Liu, and Supervisor of the Imperial Library Lang Fu to the East Hall and asked, "Throughout history, gentlemen have called the Duke of Zhou loyal and sage-like. Isn't this mistaken?" Liu replied, "The Duke of Zhou held the heavy responsibility of regent, yet he made known the names of his ministers and addressed the slanderous rumors against him. He moved Heaven with strong winds to enlighten his ruler. His way touched the spirits, and his righteousness has illuminated ten thousand generations. That is why generations have praised his greatness, and later kings could not diminish his glory."Sheng asked, "What does Director Chang think?" Zhong replied, "In the past, when King Wu was gravely ill, the Duke of Zhou sincerely offered to take his place. During the time of rumors, his righteousness moved Heaven and Earth. He disciplined his son Boqin to demonstrate royal virtue. The Duke of Zhou's loyalty as a minister and the beauty of his sagely understanding have been unmatched since the time of the Poetry and Documents."Sheng said, "How strange are your two opinions! I see only the Duke of Zhou's deception, not his loyalty and sagacity."

"In the past, King Wu had a dream of nine years, and when he told King Wen, King Wen said, 'I have a hundred years, you have ninety, and I will give you three of mine.' When King Wen died, King Wu's lifespan was already determined. When King Wu had not yet exhausted his years and the Duke of Zhou sought to die in his place - isn't this deception? If he was confused about Heaven's mandate, then he wasn't sage-like. While occupying the throne, his sincerity was not evident, leading to armed conflict between brothers. King Wen's influence spread from near to far, hence it is said his example affected first his wife, then extended to his brothers. The Duke of Zhou personally violated his sage father's teachings and followed a suspicious path, punishing his own flesh and blood to vent private anger - where is the loyalty in this? It's just that there were no honest historians at the time, and later Confucians inherited these mistaken tales."Chang Zhong replied: "The opening of the metal-bound coffer and the returning winds are enough to prove his sincerity. When faced with the crisis of his two uncles spreading rumors, he was able to put great righteousness above family ties, ultimately securing the royal house, returning the throne to his sovereign, assisting in great achievements, bringing about great peace, establishing rites and music, and bringing endless blessings. This cannot be said to be anything other than supreme virtue."Sheng said: "You are merely following established texts without examining the greater principle. Let me explain it to you. Since Houji, the Zhou had accumulated virtue and benevolence up to Kings Wen and Wu. As great sages, Wen and Wu responded to their time and gained the empire. Living beings looked up to their virtue, and the four seas submitted to their benevolence. Although King Cheng was young when he inherited this great enterprise, his reign was destined to be long, and he had the Lords of Lü, Shao, Mao, and Bi as his teachers and mentors. Even without the Duke of Zhou's regency, the kingly way would have been achieved. The Duke of Zhou unnecessarily took upon himself the responsibility for security and danger, monopolized court authority, and failed to observe the proper ceremony of facing north. Guan and Cai were loyal to the royal house and believed that the Duke of Zhou's regency was not proper conduct for a subject, so they said he would not benefit the young king."

"The Duke of Zhou should have demonstrated the principle of great compliance and explained his sincere righteousness to address public doubts. Instead, he stationed troops in the capital and carried out executions on his own authority. His crime of disloyalty became known throughout the realm, and he even presented the 'Owl' poem to the king, shifting blame to his sovereign - what kind of behavior is this? Furthermore, when the Duke of Zhou took action, he claimed to have informed the Two Dukes. The Two Dukes could have cleared the Duke of Zhou's name, yet they merely watched as King Cheng harbored doubts. This shows that the Two Dukes also had suspicions about the Duke of Zhou. Being more distant relatives, they didn't interfere directly but expressed their concerns through Guan and Cai. This shows that his loyalty was not evident at the time, and his benevolence did not extend to his brothers.Only after realizing that public support was elsewhere and Heaven's mandate was not with him did he return power to King Cheng - this is what they call loyalty! The omen of the great wind uprooting trees was Heaven's protection of the Zhou way, not forgetting the virtue of Kings Wen and Wu. Thus Heaven pardoned the Duke of Zhou's initial transgression, wishing to complete the great excellence of the Zhou house. Examining the Duke of Zhou's mind and tracing his actions, he was actually a criminal against the realm - how can this be called supreme virtue? After the Duke of Zhou was restored to his position, the reason the Two Dukes kept silent about their true thoughts was to make clear Guan and Cai's loyalty."

Sheng then asked Chang Zhong, "Between Yi Yin and the Duke of Zhou, who was more virtuous?" Zhong replied, "Yi Yin, without having the Duke of Zhou's family ties, achieved merit for an entire generation. When Tai Jia behaved badly, Yi Yin banished him to Tong Palace. After Tai Jia reflected on his faults and reformed, Yi Yin restored him. The ruler had no complaints, ministers spread no slander, the way of the state was preserved, and his excellence continues to this day. I believe Yi Yin's achievements surpass those of the Duke of Zhou."Sheng responded, "Yi Yin, as a senior minister holding the important position of Aheng, failed to fully guide and assist Tai Jia when he succeeded to the throne before mastering the way of rulership. Banishing him to Tong Palace was similar to Yi Yi's actions - how can this be compared to the Duke of Zhou!"Lang Fu said, "Yi Yin, in his position as minister, could not directly correct his ruler. Fearing that the way of Cheng Tang would be lost, he placed Tai Jia in Tong Palace to work among common people, letting him understand the hardships of farming, before restoring him to the throne - this shows his loyalty."Sheng replied, "If Yi Yin had the power to depose and restore the ruler, why couldn't he simply guide him toward goodness? If Tai Jia was truly like Jie or Zhou, how could he have become a worthy ruler after just three years? If his nature was originally good and righteous, and his moral sense easily awakened, Yi Yin should have focused on providing guidance to develop royal virtue. How can a minister imprison his ruler and occupy his position? A minister serving his ruler should focus only on doing his utmost - how can one use wisdom and benevolence as pretexts to expose the ruler's faults! Regarding Tai Jia's case, I have already examined it. Tai Jia was actually a most worthy ruler. Because Yi Yin had served three generations without distinguished achievement, he feared losing the merit of being entrusted by the illustrious ancestor. Therefore, Tai Jia concealed his own brilliance and accepted Yi Yin's banishment in order to perfect Yi Yin's reputation for loyalty and integrity."

"Only extraordinary people can establish extraordinary deeds, which ordinary people cannot comprehend. This is like how Taibo thrice declined the throne, yet no one without virtue would receive such praise." Lang Fu replied, "Taibo thrice declined the empire, but his supreme virtue was not recognized until Confucius. Similarly, Tai Jia suffered slander throughout the realm, and only now with Your Majesty has his excellence been vindicated."After this, they engaged in conversation and composed poetry at the banquet, and were rewarded with gold and silk according to their ranks.

Li Lang, the Governor of Liaoxi, had been in his commandery for ten years, maintaining control over the region. Sheng was suspicious of him, and repeatedly summoned him, but he did not come. Because his mother was in Longcheng, he dared not openly rebel, so he secretly contacted Wei forces, planning to secure his own position, while requesting troops ostensibly to resist invaders. Sheng said, "This must be deception." He questioned Lang's messenger and confirmed his suspicions, then executed Lang's entire clan and sent General Li Han with cavalry to suppress him.When the army reached Jian'an, Sheng recalled Han. When Lang heard his family had been executed, he gathered over 3,000 households to fortify his position. Upon hearing that Han had turned back mid-journey, Lang assumed there must be internal turmoil and let down his guard. He left his son Yang to guard Lingzhi while he personally went to welcome the Wei forces at Beiping. Han, learning of this, attacked and captured Lingzhi. He then sent Meng Guangping of Guangwei to pursue Lang with cavalry, catching up with him at Wuzhong and beheading him.Initially, none of the ministers understood why Sheng had recalled Han. After Lang was executed, Sheng explained to his ministers: "I recalled Han precisely for this purpose. Having just turned rebel, Lang would be wary of official forces. He would either gather fellow rebels and plunder good people, or flee into the mountains and marshes, making it difficult to quickly suppress him. So I recalled the troops unexpectedly to make him lower his guard, then suddenly struck - this was bound to succeed." All the ministers said, "We could not have anticipated this."

When Li Han returned from Liaoxi and heard that Sheng had executed his commander Wei Shuang, he became frightened and deserted his army. Although he was initially blamed, his rank and position were later restored. Sheng explained to Attendant-in-Ordinary Sun Kai: "Han held command of three armies and bore the heavy responsibility of leading an expedition. He failed to uphold his duty unto death, and deserted without cause - according to military law, this is an unpardonable offense. However, during the previous emperor's time of crisis, when public sentiment was divided, when family members forgot their kinship, and when close advisers lost their loyalty, Han, despite being a pardoned criminal, served with all his might and demonstrated the utmost loyalty and sincerity that shone as bright as day. Therefore, I chose to recognize his selfless service and forgive his mountainous crime."

Sheng abandoned the title of Emperor and called himself "Commoner King." Wei attacked Youzhou, capturing and taking away Governor Lu Pu. Meng Guangping was sent to provide assistance, but arrived too late.

Sheng led an army of 30,000 to attack Goguryeo, successfully raiding their Xincheng and Nansu fortresses. He scattered their stockpiles and relocated more than 5,000 households to Liaoxi.

Sheng held an audience with hundreds of officials from Liao in the East Hall, examining their skills and abilities, and promoted twelve outstanding individuals. He ordered all departments to each nominate one person of civil or military talent capable of assisting in governance. He established his son, the Duke of Liaoxi Ding, as Crown Prince and issued a general amnesty for all crimes except those punishable by death.He hosted a banquet for his ministers at the Xinchang Palace. Sheng said, "Let each of you express your aspirations, and I will consider them." Ding Xin, the Minister of Seven Military Affairs, who was fifteen years old and Sheng's nephew (sister's son), stepped forward and said, "My wish is that those in high positions remain humble and maintain their elevation without becoming dangerous." Sheng laughed and said, "Minister Ding is young, yet how did he come to speak with such wisdom!"Sheng ruled his subordinates with severity and intimidation, was arrogant and distant, and harbored many suspicions, which is why Ding Xin's words addressed these issues.

Sheng launched a campaign against the Kumo Xi, capturing many prisoners before returning. Left General Murong Guo, along with Palace General Qin Yu, Duan Zan, and others, plotted to use the palace guards to attack Sheng. The plot was discovered, and they were executed along with over 500 others.Former General and Marquis of Sihui Duan Ji, along with Yu's son Xing and Zan's son Tai, took advantage of the unrest among the people and created a disturbance in the palace at night with drums and shouting. When Sheng heard of the uprising, he led his personal guards into battle, but his forces were scattered. Soon after, an assassin wounded Sheng in the darkness. He was carried to the front hall, where he issued orders to the palace guards and summoned his uncle, the Prince of Hejian Xi, to discuss succession matters. However, Sheng died before Xi arrived. He was twenty-nine years old and had ruled for three years.He was posthumously titled Emperor Zhaowu, his tomb was named Xingping Mausoleum, and his temple name was Emperor Zhongzong.

Sheng was born into humble circumstances and experienced displacement in his youth. As he grew up, his family faced many difficulties, and he experienced both danger and safety, hardship and peace. Learning from [Emperor] Bao's weakness but failing to break from it, he became severe in his governance and harsh in his punishments. He would eliminate even the slightest suspicion before it could take root, and prevent any potential threat before it could emerge.As a result, both high and low officials lived in fear, and no one felt secure. Even loyal relatives became estranged, and old ministers were all eventually destroyed. His inability to show kindness and maintain close relationships ultimately led to his downfall. This happened in the fifth year of Long'an.

Biography of Murong Xi:Xi's courtesy name was Daowen, and he was the youngest son of [Murong] Chui. He was initially enfeoffed as the Prince of Hejian. During the crisis of Duan Sugu, many princes were harmed, but Xi was spared because he was particularly close to Prince Chong of Gaoyang. When Lan Han usurped power, he made Xi the Duke of Liaodong to maintain ancestral sacrifices.When Sheng first ascended the throne, he reduced Xi's rank to Duke and appointed him as Commander-in-Chief of All Military Affairs Both Inside and Outside, Grand General of Cavalry, Left Vice Director of the Department of State Affairs, and Commander of the Central Army. Xi accompanied military campaigns against Goguryeo and the Khitan, where he consistently demonstrated superior bravery among all generals. Sheng remarked, "My uncle is brave and vigorous, possessing the spirit of our ancestor [Murong] Huang, though he falls short in terms of grand strategy."

When Sheng died, Empress Dowager Ding, considering the many difficulties facing the state, believed they should install a mature ruler. While public opinion favored Prince Yuan of Pingyuan, Empress Dowager Ding preferred Xi. She therefore deposed Crown Prince Ding and welcomed Xi into the palace.When court officials urged him to take the throne, Xi initially yielded to Yuan, but Yuan firmly declined in favor of Xi. Xi then usurped the position of emperor. He executed senior officials including Duan Ji and Qin Xing, along with three generations of their families. Yuan was forced to commit suicide due to suspicions against him. (Yuan's courtesy name was Daoguang, and he was the fourth son of [Murong] Bao).Xi issued a general amnesty for all crimes except those punishable by death, changed the era name to Guangshi, renamed the Northern Yan Platform to Great Shanyu Platform, and established Left and Right Assistants whose ranks were below the Ministers of State Affairs.

Earlier, Xi had an illicit relationship with Empress Dowager Ding, which was why she supported his ascension to the throne. Later, when Xi favored Lady Fu, Empress Dowager Ding became resentful and began cursing him. She conspired with her nephew Ding Xin, the Minister of Seven Military Affairs, to depose Xi. When Xi learned of this, he became furious and forced Empress Dowager Ding to commit suicide, though he buried her with imperial honors, and executed Ding Xin.

While Xi was hunting at Beiyuan, Gao He, the Magistrate of Shicheng, killed Zhang Xian, the Chief of Police, and closed the city gates against Xi. Xi quickly rode back with his cavalry, whereupon Gao He's followers threw down their weapons. Xi entered the city and executed them. Afterward, he summoned the elders from various provinces, commanderies, and the Eight Departments of the Shanyu to the Eastern Palace to inquire about their hardships and grievances.

Xi built the Longteng Garden, which was over ten li in circumference, employing 20,000 laborers. Within the garden, he constructed Mount Jingyun, with a base of 500 paces wide and a height of 17 zhang. He also built the Xiaoyao Palace and Ganlu Hall, with hundreds of connected rooms and interconnecting pavilions and towers. He dug the Tianhe Canal to bring water into the palace.For his favored consort Lady Fu, he had the Quguang Sea and Qingliang Pool excavated. During the intense heat of late summer, the soldiers and laborers were not allowed to rest, and more than half of them died from heat exhaustion.When Xi was traveling south of the city, he stopped under a large willow tree. He seemed to hear someone calling out, "Your Majesty, please stop." Xi took this as a bad omen and ordered the tree cut down. A snake over a zhang long emerged from within the tree.

He elevated his favored consort Lady Fu to the position of Empress and granted amnesty for all crimes except those punishable by death.

Xi launched a northern attack against the Khitan and defeated them severely.When Consort Fu died, she was posthumously titled Empress Min. Her father Fu Mo was posthumously granted the title of Grand Chancellor and the noble title of Duke Wenxian. The two Fu women (Empress Fu and Consort Fu) were both beautiful and attractive. They enjoyed going out incognito to feasts and parties, which Xi did not forbid. Their requests were always granted, and all major decisions regarding punishments, rewards, and state affairs were made through their influence.Earlier, when Consort Fu was ill, a man from Longcheng named Wang Wen claimed he could cure her. Shortly after, she died. Xi was enraged by Wang's false claims and had him dismembered and burned at the Public Carriage Gate.Later, Empress Fu enjoyed hunting expeditions, and Xi accompanied her. They traveled north to Mount Bailu, east past Qingling, and south to the ocean. The common people suffered from these excursions, and over 5,000 soldiers died from wolf attacks or freezing.When Goguryeo raiders attacked Yan Commandery and killed over a hundred people, Xi launched a campaign against Goguryeo, taking Empress Fu with him. They used siege vehicles and tunnels to attack Liaodong. Xi declared, "When we level the enemy city, I will enter with the Empress in an imperial carriage; the soldiers are not permitted to climb the walls first." As a result, the city was well-prepared, and they could not capture it. Heavy snow and rain fell, causing many soldiers to die, so they withdrew.

He built the Hongguang Gate, modeled after the Fengyang Gate of Ye city, with three tiers of levels.

Xi and Lady Fu launched an attack against the Khitan. Fearing their large numbers, Xi wanted to retreat, but Lady Fu refused to listen. They abandoned their supplies and equipment to make a swift attack on Goguryeo instead, traveling over 3,000 li. The soldiers and horses became exhausted and frozen, with dead bodies lining the route. They attacked Mudi City but failed to capture it and had to return.

He executed all of Bao's sons. He built large cities at Fei Ru and Su Jun. He appointed Chou Ni'ni as Grand General Who Guards the East and Governor of Ying Province, stationed at Su Jun; made Shangyang Gong Yi the General Who Guards the West and Governor of You Province, stationed at Lingzhi; and appointed Minister Liu Mu as Grand General Who Guards the South and Governor of Ji Province, stationed at Fei Ru.

For Lady Fu, he built the Chenghua Palace, twice as high as Chengguang Palace. Earth was carried from the North Gate, and its price matched that of grain. The military officer Du Jing brought a coffin to the palace gates and submitted a strong remonstrance. Xi was furious and executed him.Lady Fu once craved frozen fish in late summer and fresh rehmannia root in mid-winter. Officials were severely punished and even executed when they failed to provide these items - such was her cruelty.When Lady Fu died, Xi wailed and jumped in grief as if he had lost his parents. He held her corpse and caressed it, saying "Your body has grown cold, your life has ended!" He then collapsed unconscious and only recovered after a long while. After the funeral preparations were complete, he reopened her coffin to have intercourse with her. He wore mourning clothes and ate only gruel.He ordered officials to mourn inside the palace and Buddhist monks to wear plain clothes. Officials were ordered to inspect mourners - those who shed tears were considered loyal and filial, while those who didn't were punished. As a result, officials were terrified and forced themselves to cry using bitter substances.Zhang, wife of Murong Long and Xi's sister-in-law, was beautiful and clever. Xi wanted her to be buried with Lady Fu and sought to execute her on false charges. He found fault with her embroidered boots containing old felt, and ordered her death. Her three daughters begged for mercy, but Xi refused.He ordered everyone from high officials to commoners to build the tomb, depleting the treasury. The tomb was surrounded by metal for several li, and inside were painted images of the Eight Ministers. Xi said, "Build it well, for I will enter this tomb later," which observers considered inauspicious. His Right Vice Director Wei Qiu and others feared being buried alive as sacrifices, so they bathed and waited for death. Lady Fu's tomb was named Zhengping Mausoleum.Xi walked barefoot with disheveled hair following Lady Fu's funeral procession. The hearse was so tall that the North Gate had to be destroyed for it to pass through.

The elders secretly said to each other: "The Murong clan is destroying itself - it will not last long."

The General of the Middle Guard Feng Ba and General of the Left Guard Zhang Xing had previously fled due to certain incidents, disgusted by Xi's cruel governance. They formed an alliance with Ba's cousin Wan Ni and twenty others, supporting Murong Yun as their leader. They gathered over 5,000 laborers from the Imperial Workshop and fortified themselves behind closed gates.When the Palace Attendant Zhao Luosheng fled to report this, Xi said dismissively, "These are mere rats and thieves. I will execute them when I return." He gathered his armored troops and hurried back to deal with the crisis.He arrived at Dragon City at night and attacked the North Gate but failed. After his defeat, he fled to Longtengyuan and hid in the forest in disguise. He was captured by someone and Yun had him killed. He and his sons were buried together north of the city. He was twenty-three years old and had ruled for six years.Yun buried him in Lady Fu's tomb and posthumously titled him Emperor Zhaowen.

Murong Chui usurped power in the eighth year of Emperor Xiaowu's Taiyuan reign. The regime lasted through four generations until Xi, spanning a total of 24 years, and was finally destroyed in the third year of Emperor An's Yixi reign.Earlier, there had been a children's rhyme that went: "A bundle of gao (dried plant), burning at both ends; a bald-headed child will come to destroy Yan." The character 'gao' has 'grass' on top and 'he (grain)' below - when both ends burn, the grass and grain are gone, forming the character 'gao'. Yun's father was named Ba, with the childhood name "Baldy." He had three sons, with Yun being the youngest. Xi was indeed destroyed by Yun, just as the rhyme had predicted.

Biography of Murong Yun:Murong Yun, courtesy name Ziyu, was the adopted son of Bao. His grandfather He was from a minor branch of the Goguryeo people and claimed to be a descendant of the Gaoyang clan, thus taking Gao as their surname.Yun was deep and thoughtful, with great capacity for planning. He was reserved and spoke rarely, causing people of his time to consider him foolish. Only Feng Ba recognized his ambition and capability and became his friend.When Bao was Crown Prince, Yun served in the Eastern Palace for his martial skills and was appointed Court Gentleman. He defeated Murong Hui's army. Bao favored him, granted him the surname Murong, and enfeoffed him as Duke of Xiyang.

After Xi was buried with Lady Fu, Feng Ba approached Yun to discuss their plans. Yun expressed fear, saying "I have been ill for years, as you all know. Please consider someone else." Ba pressed him, saying: "The Murong clan is in decline. The ruler of Hejian is cruel and violent, bewitched by an evil, lustful woman and violating natural order. The people can no longer bear this suffering - nine out of ten households wish for change. This is heaven's time to end their rule. You are from the distinguished Gao family - how can you remain another's adopted son? Such opportunities are rare - once in a thousand years. How can you refuse?"He helped Yun to his feet. Yun said: "I have long been ill and withdrawn from worldly affairs. Now you push me to undertake this great endeavor. My hesitation is not for myself, but because I fear my inadequate virtue will not be enough to save the people."After Ba and others insisted, Yun assumed the position of Heavenly King, restored his surname to Gao, issued a general amnesty for all crimes below capital offenses, and established the reign name "Zhengshi." He named the state Great Yan.He appointed Feng Ba as Palace Attendant, Commander of All Military Affairs Within and Without, Great General Who Conquers the North, Official of Equal Standing with the Three Excellencies, Supervisor of the Imperial Secretariat, and Duke of Wuyi. He enfeoffed over fifty people as various ranks of nobility and rewarded soldiers with grain and silk according to rank. Xi's former officials were restored to their positions.He installed his wife Lady Li as Queen and his son Peng as Crown Prince. When the Cavalry Commander Muyu Liang plotted rebellion, Yun executed him.

When Yun was in the East Hall, his favored attendants Li Ban and Tao Ren entered carrying swords hidden under papers, claiming they had matters to report. Li Ban drew his sword to strike at Yun, who defended himself with a table. Tao Ren then advanced and killed him.Feng Ba moved Yun's body to the Eastern Palace and posthumously titled him Emperor Huiyi.Yun had always been aware that he lacked achievements and merit, yet was pushed into power by powerful men. He harbored constant fear, and thus favored and nurtured strong warriors as his confidants. Li Ban, Tao Ren, and others were put in charge of the palace guard and entrusted with key military positions. He rewarded them with millions each month and shared his daily life with them, including meals and living quarters. In the end, this led to his downfall.

Commentary by the Historical Officer:When four stars gathered in the east, Jin's power was already divided; when five horses floated south, the mighty northern frontier was disturbed. The court changed repeatedly, and troubles never ceased.Murong Chui possessed extraordinary talent and struck fear into the Jin dynasty. When his ambitions aroused suspicion, he sought refuge under lenient rule. Yongfu received him with courtesy, and Daoming employed him with full trust. However, his falcon-like nature was hard to restrain, and his wolf-like heart remained wild.When discipline failed in Huainan, plots were hatched by three nephews. When forces split in Hebei, the omen of five trees appeared. He killed Feilong and fled far, crossing Shimen for a long journey. This led to the Di people following him, and the Ye army escaping at night. He gathered forces from Zhao and Wei, commanding heroes.With remaining elite troops, he defeated 50,000 at Hequ. With secret naval strategies, he won over seven commanderies at Liyang. He reclaimed old territories in Liaoyin and established a new regime in Zhongshan, imitating imperial ceremonies in full measure.Duke Chong'er returned to Jin with help from five ministers; King Goujian deceived Wu with 5,000 troops. How could one with achievements different from these two hegemonies, and forces less than one division, uproot mountains and command wind and clouds! Though the people of Wei forgot their destruction and spread word to eastern states, and Ren Hao's excess shamed western neighbors, they trusted the Fu clan's deception rather than becoming threats to the Jin house.

Bao gained promotion through inflated reputation and governed with strict formality. There was resentment within his inner circle while powerful enemies pressed from outside. Though his cruelty did not extend to others, his evil was enough to destroy himself.Sheng showed filial piety and brotherly love, maintained both civil and military virtues, concealed his brilliance while eliminating enemies, and blamed himself while yielding high-risk positions - he was truly an admirable barbarian in a corrupt age.Xi was not fit to be a ruler, gaining his position through depraved virtue. He found pleasure in the beauty of Li Rong in his bedchamber, and was captivated by his dark-haired wife's appearance. He sailed light boats on Quguang Sea and gazed toward Jingyun Mountain, adorned buildings to satisfy his arrogant heart, and exhausted himself with laments over his small territory. The ancestral sacrifices were destroyed, and he was eliminated by the Feng clan.

Eulogy:The barbarians encroached,  
Mountains and rivers boiled with turmoil.  
Heaven had not regretted the calamity,  
Men could not match their strength.Swift in their advance,  
First to cry out would prosper.  
Daoming was mighty,  
Whipping the heroes into submission.He swept away Yan and destroyed Wei,  
His blade brought eternal destruction.  
Great thieves secretly shifted power,  
Grand names were thus stolen.Bao's heart bred chaos,  
Sheng cleared family troubles.  
Xi reached extremes of arrogance and lust,  
People harbored resentment and regret.Evil brought personal doom,  
Disaster could not be escaped.