Comparison of Texts between the Accounts of Han 韓 in the Sanguo zhi 三國志, in the Fragments of the Weilüe 魏略, and in the Hou-Han shu 後漢書

Mark BYINGTON (transl.) and Gina BARNES (comp.)

Introduction

In terms of protohistoric interactions between the China Mainland and the emerging Pen/Insular states of the third century CE, no documents are more important for shedding light on the Pen/Insular peoples than the Chinese dynastic histories. These texts describe several polities on the Korean peninsula: Ko-Chosŏn 古朝鮮 in the northern peninsula before the establishment of the Han 漢 Dynasty commandery of Lelang 樂浪, and then the Three Han (Sam-han 三韓), which existed contemporaneously with Lelang in the southern peninsula: Pyŏnhan 升韓, Chinhan 辰韓, and Mahan 馬韓.

Two dynasties in particular had a role in documenting events and cultural practices on the Korean peninsula: the Late Han Dynasty (25–220 CE) and the Wei Dynasty (220–265). The Wei was one of the Three Kingdoms (Wei 魏, Wu 吳, and Shu 蜀)¹ established after the fall of Han; court histories of all three are incorporated into the Sanguo zhi (“Records of the Three Kingdoms”). The commentary (by Pei Songzhi 裴松之, 372–451) to the Sanguo zhi (compiled in the late third century by Chen Shou 陳壽, 233–297) includes fragments of a now extinct text, the Weilüe (“A Brief History of Wei”, compiled between 239 and 265 by Yu Huan 魚豢). When in the fifth century Fan Ye 范曄 (398–445) compiled his Hou-Han shu (“History of the Later Han”), he was able to base on a lot of earlier dynastic histories and chronicles of the Later Han now extinct, but still extant at least until the Liang 梁 (502–557) or – as can be derived from the bibliographical sections of the official Histories of these dynasties – survived until Sui 隋 (581–618) or even Tang 唐 (618–907) Dynasty. To make matters more complicated, one of the histories Fan Ye had based his description of the last decades of the Later Han on was the Sanguo zhi by Chen

¹ Not to be confused with the Korean Three Kingdoms (300–688 CE): Koguryŏ 高句麗, Paekche 百濟 and Silla 新羅.
Shou, who himself may have based on the *Dongguan Han ji* (東觀漢記, “Records on the Han [Dynasty] from the Eastern Pavilion”), the earliest history of the Later Han compiled by officials of the Han Court.

This is evident from the way the same incidents are recorded in each: the *Sanguo zhi* entry gives much more detail than the *Hou-Han shu* entry, the latter seemingly an abbreviated version of the former. Where texts overlap, the information is generally correlative, with differing emphases but few contradictions. The *Weilüe* entries are cited especially in the *Sanguo zhi* as coming from the *Weilüe*, indicating the use of this latter text to fill in early details as can be seen below.

The translations offered here consist of the ethnographic accounts in each of the *Sanguo zhi*, the *Weilüe*, and the *Hou-Han shu*. These translations have previously been published in *Early Korea* 2 (2009), 125-154. The full original texts in Chinese plus the translations are given there. Here the entries have been separated by text and ordered chronologically. The dates are derived from evidence within the texts themselves as they describe phenomena known to have happened from records other than those dealing with the peninsular polities. The comparison of the contents of the documents may highlight specific problems of interpretation of the ethnographic data.

The separation of entries in the manner below brings up some special problems:

— Some of the contradictions between the *Sanguo zhi* and *Hou-Han shu* texts are trivial (straw vs. leather sandals), but an important deviation is that the *Sanguo zhi* states that Pyŏnjin 弁辰 (a variant of Pyŏnhan) and Chinhan have similar language, laws and customs, but the *Hou-Han shu* states they have different language and customs.

— The ruler title listings for Mahan are clear, but for Chinhan and Pyŏnhan they are confused. The *Weilüe* gives ruler titles for Chinhan that are listed for Pyŏnhan in the *Sanguo zhi*. Conversely, no ruler titles are given for Chinhan in the *Sanguo zhi* and Pyŏnhan in the *Weilüe*. Is it the case that both polities used the same titles?

— The polity listings for Mahan are also clear, but they seem to be combined for Chinhan and Pyŏnhan. Each of these entities are stated to have had 12 polities, but the list given for Pyŏnjin in the *Sanguo zhi* has 26 polities, with two of those annotated as possible duplicates.² Within these 26, Saro 斯盧

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² For the names of the small polities, see end of text.
is listed, which was definitely a Chinhan polity, many others are prefaced with “Pyŏnjin” and so are attributable.

— The people of Chinhan claim descent from refugees from the Qin Dynasty in China who were given land by Mahan; Mahan did not exist at the time of Qin, but refugees at that time did colonize Chosŏn, which later became Lelang. Since the Sanguo zhi also speculates that the Chinhan were related to Lelang, perhaps it was those Qin descendants in Lelang that took refuge to the east of Mahan.

Compiler’s notes:

— Generally, each line of text below is ideally given in a separate paragraph. Note that the Weilüe seems to condense information into one line that is given more than one line in the Sanguozhi.
— The lines have been reorganized into chronological order indicated by dates given in the text and by the Translator’s judgment that the main descriptions of the Samhan date to the mid-third century.
— Lines of text have also been moved from their original place to correspond with information given in the other documents.
— Square brackets denote additions by the Translator.
— “xx” entries indicate the passages that are unclear in the records themselves as determined by the Translator.
— Dates have been translated by the Translator into the Western calendar from reign dates given in the original texts; the BC/AD dates of Byington 2009 have been presented here as BCE/CE.
— The footnote annotations in Byington (2009) have not been reproduced here; see that translation for discussion of the text.

Reference


Comparison of the historical texts

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<th>Sanguo zhi</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fourth century BCE</td>
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The Weilüe says that in ancient times Jizi’s descendant, the Marquis of Chosŏn, witnessed the decline of Zhou.
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Fourth century BCE, cont.

When [the ruler of] Yan 燕 adopted the title of King (323 BCE) and wanted to invade the lands to the east [i.e. Chosŏn], the Marquis of Chosŏn also took the title of King and desired to rouse his troops to attack Yan in return, intending thereby to honour the Zhou house.

But his Grandmaster Ye 礼 remonstrated with him, so [this plan] was laid aside.

He sent Ye westward to dissuade [the king of] Yan, who called off [his plans] and did not attack.

But later [Chosŏn’s] heirs became increasingly arrogant and cruel, so Yan sent the general Qin Kai 秦開 to attack [Chosŏn’s] western regions, seizing over 2000 里 of territory up to Manpanhan 滿潘汗, which became its border, and Chosŏn subsequently weakened.

Third century BCE

When Qin 秦 unified the world (in 221 BCE), it had Meng Tian 蒙恬 build a long wall reaching to Liaodong 遼東.

At this time the Chosŏn king Pu 否 came to the throne.

He feared that Qin would attack him, so he decided to submit to Qin but did not dare to attend court.

When Pu died his son Chun 準 came to the throne.

Second century BCE

After more than twenty years Chen She 陳涉 and Xiang Yu 項羽 rose, and the world was in turmoil.

The people of Yan, Qi 齊, and Zhao 趙 suffered hardships and gradually fled to Chun, who set them up in his western regions.

When the [emperor of the Chinese] Han [empire] made Lu Wan 卢綰 the king of Yan, the Pei 滄 River became the border between Chosŏn and Yan.

When [Lu] Wan 卢綰 rebelled and went over to the Xiongnu 匈奴 (in 195 BCE), the Yan man Wei Man 衛滿 took to flight, dressing in barbarian style and, crossing the Pei River eastward, went to Chun and submitted to him.

He told Chun he sought to reside on his western border, to take in refugees from the Middle Kingdom and become Chosŏn’s border guard.

Chun trusted and favoured him, granting him the title of Erudite, presenting him with a jade staff, enfeoffing him with 100 里 of land, and commanding him to guard the western border.

[Wei] Man attracted masses of refugees, whose numbers gradually increased. As a deception he sent a man to inform Chun that Han [Chinese] troops had arrived on various routes and begged leave to enter the court as a guard, whereupon he presently returned and attacked Chun.
### Comparison of Texts between the Accounts of Han 韓

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<tr>
<td>Second century BCE, cont.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Marquis Chun, having usurped the title of King, was attacked and driven out by the Yan refugee Wei Man.</td>
<td>Chun fought with [Wei] Man but was unsuccessful.</td>
<td>Earlier, when the Chosŏn king Chun was defeated by Wei Man, he took several thousand of his remaining followers and fled by sea.</td>
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<tr>
<td>He settled in the land of Han and called himself the King of Han.</td>
<td>[Chun] took his officials and fled by sea.</td>
<td>He attacked Mahan and defeated it, then set himself up as the King of Han.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The <em>Weilüe</em> says that his sons and relatives who remained in the state [xx of Chosŏn?] therefore adopted the surname Han. Chun ruled on the seas and did not engage in communication with Chosŏn.</td>
<td>His lineage was later discontinued, but there are today still those among the Han people who perform ritual sacrifice for him.</td>
<td>Chun’s line was later cut off, but the Mahan people again set themselves up as the kings of Chin 辰. [N.B. see third century below].</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### First century BCE

During the period of the Han [dynasty] they were subordinated to Lelang commandery, to which court they paid obeisance each season.
In the time of Wang Mang’s reign (20-23 CE), Ch’i of Yŏmsa served as Chinhan’s right Chief, and heard that the land of Lelang was excellent and its people well off and happy, so he fled and wanted to submit.

As he left his village he saw a boy scaring sparrows in a field.

His language was not that of a [Korean] Han person.

Upon inquiry, the boy said, “We are [Chinese] Han people and my name is Hulai 戶來.
Some 1500 of us were cutting timber when we were captured by the Han, and we were all made to cut our hair and become slaves.
This was three years ago.”

Ch’i said, “I am just now about to submit to Lelang.
Would you like to go along?”

Hulai replied “Yes”, and Ch’i of Chinhan therefore took Hulai to Hanzi 含資 District.
The district informed the commandery, and the commandery then made Ch’i an interpreter.
Then at Cenzhong 萩中 he [with a Chinese force] boarded a large boat in order to enter Chinhan and take back Hulai’s comrades who had submitted [to Chinhan].
Some 1000 of them were still left, the other 500 having already died.

Ch’i then told Chinhan, “You must return the 500 people, for if you do not, Lelang will send 10,000 troops in ships to come and attack you.”
Chinhan said “The 500 are already dead.
We can only send indemnities for them.”

Then they sent 15,000 people of Chinhan and 15,000 bolts of cloth from Pyŏnhang.

Ch’i received them and immediately returned.
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<td>23–125 CE, cont.</td>
<td>The commandery reported Ch’i’s merits and presented him with official cap and fields and manor.</td>
<td>[Emperor] Guangwu 光武 enfeoffed Somasi as the Fief Lord of Han [China’s] Yŏmsa [township] and made him subject to Lelang commandery, having them present themselves in court each season.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Second century CE

His sons and grandsons [continued to receive this favour] for several generations until the fourth year of Emperor An’s 安 Yangguang 延光 reign (125 CE) when [the entitlement] was discontinued.

At the end of the reigns of emperors Huan 桓 and Ling 露 (ca. 180s), the Han and Ye people grew strong and the commandery districts could not control them, so many people migrated to the Han polities.

During the Jian’an 建安 reign (196–220 CE), Gongsun Kang 公孫康 divided off the abandoned territories to the south of Tunyou 屯有 District and established the commandery of Daifang 帶方. He sent Gongsun Mo 公孫模 and Zhang Chang 張敞 to gather up the refugees and raised troops to send against the Han and Ye.

At the end of the reign of Emperor Ling (r. 168–189 CE), the Han and Ye grew strong, and the commanderies could not control them.

There were hardships and rebellion among the people, and there were many [residents of the commandery] who fled to the Han.
The former inhabitants gradually came [back to the commanderies], after which the Wa and Han eventually became subject to Daifang. The [land of the] Han lies to the south of Daifang, bounded on the east and west by the sea; it adjoins the [land of the] Wa on the south and covers an area of about four thousand lǐ.

Third century CE

There are three kinds [of Han], the first being Mahan, the second Chinhan, and the third Pyŏnhan.

Twelve of the [xx Chinhan/Pyŏnhan] polities are subordinate to the Chin King.

The position of Chin King is usually filled by men of Mahan, who succeed one another over generations. The Chin King cannot set himself up as king.

The Weilüe says that this illustrates that they [xx Chinhan / Pyŏnhan?] were people who came in from elsewhere, therefore they were controlled by Mahan.

There are three kinds of Han: the first is Mahan, the second Chinhan, and the third Pyŏnjin. In all they have 78 polities, among which is the polity of Paekche. Larger polities have over ten thousand households, while smaller ones have several thousand families. They each lie between the mountains and the sea, and their combined land covers over 4000 lǐ, bounded by the sea on the west and east.

[The three together] formerly comprised the polity of Chin. Mahan being the largest [of the three], they all took one of [the Mahan] as the Chin King, who ruled all of the lands of the three Han from his capital in the polity of Mokchi. At first all of the various polities took Mahan people to be their kings.
Pyŏnhan and Chinhan together have 24 polities. Large polities have 4,000 or 5,000 families, while small ones have 600 or 700. In all there are 40,000 or 50,000 households.

There is also the Chuho, who live on a large island in the sea to the west of Mahan.

Their people are rather short and small, and their language is not the same as that of the Han. They all shave their heads like the Xianbei.

Their only clothes are of leather, as they are good at raising oxen and pigs, and the clothes have a top but no bottom, so it is almost as though they were naked. They come and go by boat, buying and selling in the markets of Han.

Chinhan was anciently the state of Chin. Chinhan lies to the east of Mahan. At first there were six polities, but they gradually separated into twelve.

Its elders have for generations said that long ago refugees came to the Han polities to avoid service in Qin, and Mahan separated some of its territories on its eastern borders and gave it to them.

Their language is not the same as that of Mahan, as they refer to a state as a country, bows as crescents, thieves as bandits, and drinking spirits as imbibing wine. They refer to one another as “confrere.”

In this they are similar to Qin people, so these are not just the names of things used in Yan and Qi. Some now refer to Chinhan as Qin-Han.
They refer to people of Lelang as Ajan 阿残.
People of the east say “A” 阿 when referring to themselves, suggesting that Lelang people were originally their remnant peoples.
They have towns with walls and palisades.

[xx listed for Pyŏnjin: sinjı, bŏmb'uk 陰側, pŏnye, sarbae, āch'a. No others listed for “Chinhan”].

Their land is rich and beautiful, good for planting grain and growing rice.

They know how to cultivate the silkworm, and they produce a fine silk cloth.

They ride oxen and horses and have them pull carts.
In the customs and practices of marriage they [observe appropriate] distinctions between men and women.
They use large bird feathers to send off their dead, the intent being to allow the deceased to fly upward.
It is their custom when travellers meet on the road always to stop and yield the way to each other.
Their country produces iron, and the Han, Ye, and Wa all come to [trade for] it.

They also provide [iron] to the two commanderies.
In their various markets they use iron to purchase goods, the same as coins are used in China.
Their custom is to enjoy singing, dancing, and drinking spirits. They have a zither that is shaped similar to a zhu 筝, and when plucked it also produces pleasant notes.

They have walled towns and palisades, houses and chambers.
The various small detached villages each have chieftains.
The greatest are called sinjı 臣智, the next being bŏmb'uk 儉側, then pŏnye 傅紙, then sarbae 桿矣, and then āch'a 邑借.
Their land is rich and beautiful, good for producing the five grains.
They know how to cultivate the silkworm, and they produce a fine silk cloth.
They ride oxen and horses and have them pull carts.
In their marriage practices they have rites.

Travellers yield the road to one another.
Their country produces iron, and the Ye, Wa, and Mahan all come to barter for it.

In all of their transactions they use iron as currency.
Their custom is to enjoy singing, dancing, and drinking and playing the zither.
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<td>Third century CE, cont.</td>
<td>When a baby is born they like to make its head narrow, so they always press it with stones.</td>
<td>Mahan lies in the west, and it has fifty-four polities.</td>
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</table>

When a baby is born they press stones to its head to make it narrow, so now Chinhan people all have narrow heads. [Mahan] lies in the west.

Its people are indigenes. They plant crops, know sericulture, and produce silk cloth.

Each [polity] has a chieftain, the most powerful calling themselves *sinji*, while the lesser ones are called *upch’a*.

They produce large chestnuts as big as pears, and they also produce fine-tailed chickens, all of which have tails more than 5 *chī* long.

For their residences they build earthen chambers with thatched roofs.

They are shaped like tomb mounds and the doors are in their upper portions.

Whole families live therein....

When in their country it happens that officials order the construction of city walls, the various strong young men all pierce the skin on their backs, through which they run a large rope, then they use this to attach themselves to a wooden pole about a *zhang* in length, and they spend the day singing as they work.

They do not regard this as painful, but rather use it to spur themselves to work and they consider it moreover to be healthy.

Their customs have little by way of law or discipline.

They do not follow the etiquette of kneeling and bowing...

having no distinction between old and young or male and female.

They do not regard gold, silver, or fine brocade as of value.

They do not know how to ride oxen or horses.

They make brocade cloth and produce large chestnuts as big as pears, and they have long-tailed chickens with tails 5 *chī* in length.

They build earthen chambers shaped like tomb mounds, on top of which they make a door.

They do not know how to kneel or bow, and they do not distinguish between old and young or male and female.

They do not value gold or fine fabric, and they do not know how to ride oxen or horses.
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Their oxen and horses are used entirely [as sacrifices] to send off the dead. They consider stone beads as precious valuables, sometimes sewing them into their clothing as decorations, or sometimes hanging them from their necks or ears. They wear nothing on their heads, but coil their hair up into wedge-shaped knots, like radiant soldiers. They wear cloth robes, and on their feet they wear leather sandals. Their people are by nature fierce and brave.

It is their practice, when they complete the planting of seed in the fifth month, to hold a sacrifice to the gods and spirits. The people all sing and dance and drink spirits day and night without rest. When they dance, several tens of people rise together and follow one another, stamping the ground, bending and rising, their hands and feet responding to one another.

The musical rhythm is similar to the [Chinese] Bell Dance. In the tenth month when the farm work is done, they [celebrate in this manner] again. They do this again in the tenth month when the farm work is done.

They believe in gods and spirits and a person is appointed in each of their central townships to oversee the sacrifice to the spirit of heaven, whom they call the Lord of Heaven.

The various central townships each select one person to oversee the sacrifice to the spirit of heaven, whom they call the Lord of Heaven. They also set up **sodo** 塗塗, erecting a large log from which they suspend bells and drums to serve the spirits.

Each of the various polities also has a separate village, which they call a **sodo**, where they set up a large log, from which they suspend bells and drums to serve the spirits. Anyone who is in flight and reaches one of these places is not forced to return, so [many in Mahan] are given to thievery.
The rite of setting up a *sodo* is similar in ways to that of Buddhist stupas, but there are differences in what they consider to be good or evil.

The various polities located in the northern regions near the commanderies are rather familiar with ritual propriety, while those located at a distance assemble together like prisoners or slaves. They have no unusual things of value, and their animals and plants are basically the same as those of the Middle Kingdom.

There men sometimes tattoo their bodies.

In their burials they have inner coffins, but lack outer coffins. They live scattered between the mountains and the sea, and do not have city walls. Although the central townships of the polities have leaders, their villages are all scattered, so they cannot readily exercise control over them.

In all there are more than fifty [Mahan] polities, including [xx names]. The larger polities have more than 10,000 households, while the smaller ones have a few thousand. The [Mahan population] as a whole comprises over 100,000 households. The Chin king governs from the polity of Wǒlčhi 月支.

Sometimes the *sinji* add special titles, such as Sin Un’gyŏnjibo 臣雲遣支報 Anya Ch’ukči Pun 安邪踔支漸 and Sin Iaburye 臣離兒不例 Kuya Chinji Yŭm 拘邪秦支廉. Among their offices are Wei’s Fief Lord Conforming to the Good, Allied Marquis, Leader of Court Gentlemen, Defender, and Leader of One Hundred.
Pyŏnjin also has twelve polities, and the twelve polities also have kings. They likewise have various small detached villages, each having a chieftain. [xx same as Weilüe listing for Chinhan]: The greatest are called sinji, the next being bŏmch’uk, then pŏnye, then sarhae, and then ŭpch’a. Their polities are .... [xx a mix of both Pyŏnhan & Chinhan polities? 26 including two duplicates]
The Pyŏnjin reside intermixed with the Chinhan. They also have walled towns. Their clothing and residences are the same as those of Chinhan, and their languages, laws and customs are similar. but they differ in their sacrifices to gods and spirits. Their always build their kitchens to the west of the doorway. Their people are all large-framed, their clothing is clean, and they wear their hair long. They make a wide fine cloth. Their laws and customs are especially rigid and strict. Their Tongno 濟處 polity lies adjacent to the Wa.

During the Jingchu reign 景初 (237–240 CE), Emperor Ming 明 [of the Wei 魏 Dynasty] secretly sent the Daifang Governor, Liu Xin 劉昕, and the Lelang Governor, Xianyu Si 鮮于嗣, across the sea to stabilize the two commanderies.
The *sinji* of the various Han polities were presented with seals and cordons of Fief Lords, while their subordinates were presented with paraphernalia for Fief Leaders. It was the habit of their people to enjoy robes and caps, so when the common people proceeded to the commandery to pay respects to the court they all made their own robes and caps.

In all, over 1000 of them carried their own seals with cordons and wore their own robes and caps.

The Regional Retainer, Wu Lin 吳林, seeing that Lelang had originally governed the Han polities, divided off 8 polities of Chinhan and gave them to Lelang.

But as there were inaccuracies on the part of the interpreters, the Han of Sinch’aeck’ŏm臣幘沾 became angry and attacked Daifang’s Qili 崎離 Camp.

At that time, the Governor, Gong Zun 弓遵, and the Lelang Governor, Liu Mao 劉茂, raised an army to attach them.

Zun died during the battle, but the two commanderies presently subdue the Han.

**Polity names according to the Sanguozhi:**

Mahan polities: Wŏnyang 爰襄, Mosu 牟水, Sangoe 桑外, Lesser Sŏksak 小石索, Greater Sŏksak 大石索, Uhyumot’ak 侖休牟涿, Sinbunhwal臣清沽, Paekche 伯濟, Songnobilσa 速盧不斯, Irhwa 日華, Kot’anja 古誕者, Kori 古羅, Noram 怒藍, Wŏlchi 月支, Charimoro 曹離牟盧, Sowigŏn 素謂乾, Kowŏn 侖藥, Mangno 莫盧, Piri 卑離, Chŏmnibī 侖離卑, Sinhŭn臣榮, Chich’im支侵, Kuro 狗盧, Pimi 卑離, Kamhaepiri監奚卑離, Kop’o 科蒲, Ch’iriguk 致利鞠, Yŏmono 月夢, Arim 兒林, Saro 駟盧, Naebiri 內卑離, Kamhae 感奚, Mallo 萬盧, Pyŏkpiri 部卑離, Kusaodan 白斯烏旦, Illi 一離, Pulmi 不彌, Uban 友半, Kuso 狐素, Ch’ŏmnŏ 捷盧, Morobiri 牛盧卑離, Sinsodo臣蘇塗, Mangno 莫盧, Korap 古羅, Imsoban 臨素半, Sinunsin臣雲新, Yŏraebiri如來卑離, Ch’osandobiri楚山塗卑離, Illan 一離, Kuhae狗矣, Purun不雲, Pulsabunya不斯濁邪, Wŏnji爰池, Kŏnma 乾馬, and Ch’ori楚離.
Pyŏnjin politics – 11 are prefaced with “Pyŏnhan”, so we can guess they belong to Pyŏnhan and the rest belong to Chinhan: