

UDC 327

## Identifying the causes of Huan Wen's northern expedition

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### Abstract

The article is devoted to the study of the historical reasons for Huan Wen's northern expedition, which was associated with an attempt to regain control over the northern territories of the Jin dynasty after their loss during the Sixteen Kingdoms period. Huan Wen launched three Northern Expeditions to resolve the ethnic conflicts between the north and south of the Eastern Jin dynasty. His expeditions were genuine; during the campaigns against Qin and Yan, the Jin army faced hardships, which prevented them from crossing the Ba River and attacking Ye City, respectively. The Qiao Guolong family of the Huan clan, once a prominent Confucian family of the Eastern Han dynasty, transformed into the Xing family of the Sima clan of the Western Jin dynasty, making Huan Wen a newcomer to the scene. Facing low familial status and frequent ridicule, Huan Wen had no support in the court and could only elevate the status of the Huan clan within the Eastern Jin aristocracy through military exploits in the Northern Expeditions. Huan Wen's Northern Expeditions were not aimed at usurping the throne, as certain words and petitions from him cannot be used as evidence of his intention to usurp the throne. Huan Wen's actions of deposing and enthroning were considerations for the Eastern Jin dynasty's imperial throne, while seeking the Nine Bestowments was to establish a good reputation. It was found that the main reason for Huan Wen's Northern Expeditions was his enthusiasm to reclaim the Central Plains, and his spirit of bold advancement is commendable.

### For citation

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### Keywords

Eastern Jin dynasty; Huan Wen; Northern Expeditions.

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## Introduction

Military campaigns of the southern Chinese kingdoms in the northern Chinese lands very rarely ended in complete success. More often than not, the advantage was on the side of the northern troops going to conquer the southern Chinese lands. One of the small and rare exceptions was the northern campaign against the Mongol Yuan dynasty, carried out in 1367–1368. leader of the Chinese popular uprising Zhu Yuanzhang, founder of the Ming Dynasty (1368–1644). As for the military leader Huan Wen 桓温, it should be noted that he occupies a special place among the statesmen of the Eastern Jin era. This circumstance is connected with his successful campaigns against the northern “barbarian states”, which for a number of reasons were not completed and did not lead to the return of the northern lands, but still showed the power of the southern Chinese army of the early Middle Ages. The fragmented North of China, captured by nomadic and semi-nomadic ethnic groups, was shaken by a series of palace coups, continuous military conflicts and peasant uprisings.

## Main part

The relevance of identifying the reasons for Huan Wen's northern expedition lies in studying the historical context and factors that influenced the decision of the Eastern Jin ruler to send troops to the north [Book of Jin, 1978]. This allows us to better understand the motives and goals of the expedition, as well as its consequences for the development of the state and the region. The Eastern Jin dynasty moved to the Jiangnan region after the Yongjia Rebellion, causing ethnic conflicts. The Northern Expeditions, led by generals including Huan Wen, aimed to expand territory but were unsuccessful. Some scholars suggest Huan Wen had ambitions to usurp the Jin dynasty, but others argue against it. Further research is needed on the reasons for the expeditions [Book of Jin, 1985].

The purpose of the article is to describe the reasons for Huan Wen's northern expedition, which are of historical significance. The following methods are used in the work: chronological method, problem-chronological method, periodization method, method of retrospective (retrospective) analysis (historical retrospective), method of prospective analysis, historical-genetic method.

First of all, it is necessary to say a few words about the specific historical and historical-cultural background on the basis of which Huan Wen's campaign was prepared and carried out. This campaign was undertaken during the reign of the young Eastern Jin Emperor Mu-di (personal name - Sima Dan, years of life 343-361, reign 344-361 AD), who at the time of the second campaign Huan Wen was 13 years old, and his regents (his mother was Empress Chu Xuanzi of the noble northern Chu clan, 324–384 AD; the southern Chinese dignitary He Chong, 292–346 AD; Cai Mo, 281–351 AD and later – Yin Hao, 303–356 AD). All three northern campaigns of General Huan Wen were carried out along three different routes [Bielenstein, 1996]. The route of Huan Wen's first northern campaign consisted of three parts; it can be conditionally called the northwestern campaign. As for Huan Wen's second northern campaign, it can be conditionally designated as the central northern campaign, because After crossing the Yangtze in the Xiangyang region, Huan Wen did not go to the west, where Chang'an was located, but to the central region of China, where the city of Luoyang was located. Huan Wen's third northern campaign can be called the northeastern campaign, because... the starting point of his troops was already Jiankang, the capital city of Eastern Jin. Let us consider in more detail the second campaign of Eastern Jin to northern China. It began in August 356, when General Huan Wen, who had achieved the title of great military leader (da sima), advanced his troops from the city of Jiangling in the direction of Luoyang – the capital of two all-Chinese empires of the past - the Later Han and the Western Jin. The

distance between these cities is about 540 km. The biography of Huan Wen (Jinshu, Juan 98) describes a nostalgic episode where Huan Wen recalls his early childhood spent in Northern China. The reason for Huan Wen's second campaign in northern China was the rebellion of the talented 26-year-old barbarian general Yao Xiang (331–557 AD), who had previously (in 351 AD) transferred with his father and his troops from the collapsed Later Zhao kingdom to serve in Jin as a Jin general and assistant to the border governor Xie Shang, with whom he developed friendly relations. Gradually, Yao Xiang gathered large military forces around him and showed his military talents, which became the reason for the envy of Yin Hao, the new governor of Jin [Yiqing, 2016].

From the biography of Yao Xiang in Jin Shu (Juan 116) it is known that Yao Xiang was the elder brother of Yao Chang, the future founder of the large kingdom of Later Qin. On September 16, 356, Huan Wen's troops covered a huge distance of more than 500 km, approached the Yishui River (south of Luoyang) and defeated the troops of General Yao Xiang. The latter quickly retreated to the north and took refuge in the city of Pingyang (south of modern Shaanxi province). Huan Wen's troops were unable to catch up with him. In 357, Yao Xiang died while attempting to storm the city of Chang'an, the capital of the Early Qin kingdom. After the defeat of Yao Xiang, General Huan Wen took Luoyang, guarded by the Early Qin garrison, by storm. This city has long been considered the center of the Celestial Empire. After the return and restoration of Luoyang, Huan Wen planned to move the capital of Eastern Jin from southern China's Jiankang to its original location. However, the Jiankang court rejected this proposal. In addition to capturing Luoyang, Huan Wen defeated a number of rebel commanders and sent their heads to the capital of Eastern Jin, and also took over three thousand subjugated families to his region of Jingzhou. For the successful punitive expedition against Yao Xiang, Huan Wen received the title of Nanjun Gong and gradually concentrated power in his hands at the court of Eastern Jin. The city of Luoyang remained under Jin rule for 9 years, this was the first period of direct control of the Eastern Jin city of Luoyang. In 364 AD the city was taken by the troops of the Xianbei kingdom of Early Yan [Чжидань, 2017].

Let's discuss the Reasons for Huan Wen Stationing Troops at Ba River and Fangtou. Huan Wen led campaigns against Former Qin and Former Yan, but chose to halt his advance at Ba Shang and Fangtou respectively, despite criticisms from historians. The reason for his decisions is analyzed in the following passage.

As for Huan Wen's strength at Ba Shang during his first Northern Expedition one should mention that during his first Northern Expedition, General Huan Wen's forces reached Ba Shan. The exact number of soldiers is unknown, but sources estimate it to be between 50,000 and 100,000. Huan Wen's army of forty thousand suffered exhaustion and losses in battles with the Qin army over a long period.

Southern dynasties relied on water transport for their northern expeditions, including Huan Wen's campaign against the Former Qin. However, there was a risk of food shortages, and Huan Wen's strategy to deal with this was to obtain provisions from the enemy. He also planned a three-sided attack on the Former Qin, but only his army remained in its originally deployed position, and reinforcements were lost. Huan Wen's strength was insufficient to subdue Chang'an, and he faced a numerical disadvantage against both sides' armies. If he had continued to cross the Ba River, he would have inevitably fought alone with little chance of success.

If we talk about the reasons for the stationing of Huan Wen's troops in Fantou during the Northern Expedition against Former Yan, it is important to take into account that in the fourth year of Emperor Fei's Taihe reign, Huan Wen led 50,000 troops, including Huan Chong and Yuan Zhen, in a Northern Expedition against Former Yan. The Jin army defeated the Yan army and reached Fangtou in September. Huan Wen did not directly attack Ye City despite Xi Chao's advice, which suggested

attacking the city directly to scare the enemy and achieve victory. Xi Chao also suggested stationing troops at the river and waiting for reserves to be fully prepared before advancing.

Xi Chao suggested two strategies to Huan Wen when his army was near Juye, planning to excavate a new waterway. However, both proposals had flaws. The first proposal advocated concentrating forces and directly attacking Ye City, which was impossible due to the severe drought. The second proposal was to station troops in the He and Ji areas and wait until next summer, which was too delayed. Huan Wen's decision not to cross the Ba River and to advance on Chang'an was criticized by historians. During the Northern Expedition, Huan Wen refused to directly attack Ye City, drawing further criticism [Альберт, 2019].

Yuan Zhen's lack of cooperation delayed Huan Wen's Northern Expedition, as he failed to open the Shimen water gate. Former Yan intentionally blocked the waterway and cut off the Jin army's food supply, with Former Qin also attacking from the rear. Huan Wen's decision to halt at Fangtuo was due to operational difficulties and lack of strength, rather than insincerity. Huan Wen had a long-standing commitment to reunify China and relocate the capital back to Luoyang.

Huan Wen was a member of the Huan clan of Longkang in the State of Qiao. The Huan clan was prominent during the Eastern Han Dynasty but suffered a decline after Huan Fan's execution during the turmoil of Cao Shuang's coup. Huan Kai, the seventh generation member, likely suffered the same fate as Huan Fan. Huan Hao, the eighth generation member, concealed his ancestors' history and rose to the rank of Gentleman of the Palace in the Western Jin Dynasty.

Huan Yi was the ninth generation of the Huan clan and held a modest position as the magistrate of Quqiu County after relocating to the south. He befriended prominent scholars and became a part of the literati, known as one of the Eight Dada. He received favor from the imperial family and was ennobled as the Baron of Wanning County. Huan Yi helped the court during the rebellions of Su Jun and Zu Yue but was assassinated by Han Huang. After his death, his descendants were young and impoverished.

Huan Wen married the Emperor's daughter and was appointed Marquis of Wanning and Prefect of Langya, with recommendations from Yu Yi and He Chong. However, he faced ridicule and marginalization among the Eastern Jin aristocracy due to his military background, lack of intellectual prowess, and association with a lower-ranked family. Despite his military achievements, Huan Wen's career development was limited, and he could only secure a place in the aristocracy through the northern expeditions.

The "Book of Jin" places Huan Wen and Wang Dun together at the end of the biographical section, suggesting they were seen as similar rebellious figures. Historians have debated whether Huan Wen intended to usurp the throne, and further analysis will explore his words, actions, and requests [Тянь Юйцин, 2013].

The "Book of Jin" account suggests that Huan Wen wanted to achieve something significant to avoid being mocked by the accomplished emperors Sima Zhao and Sima Shi. He also wanted to avoid leaving a negative impression. Huan Wen felt inadequate in his efforts to achieve a positive reputation and avoid a negative one, so he balanced between seeking lasting fame and avoiding lasting infamy [Чжидань, 2017].

Li Ciming's claim that Huan Wen's praise of Wang Dun suggests treasonous intentions is inappropriate as it reflects public opinion of Dun's character. Huan Wen disliked being compared to Dun but admired associating with Liu Kun, whom he chose as a role model. Additionally, Huan Wen's loyalty to the Jin Dynasty is illustrated by his campaign against Shu, where he chose to be loyal to the country over preserving himself [Yiqing, 2016].

Huan Wen planned to lead his troops northward after Shi Jilong died, but his request for a water

and land expedition was ignored by the court. He proclaimed his intention to march northward and reached Wuchang with an army of four to five hundred thousand. Yin Hao feared that Huan Wen would depose him and tried to stop him with the Zouyu flag, causing chaos. Huan Wen had submitted numerous memorials over the years for a northern expedition, but the court consistently ignored him. The court entrusted the opportunity for a northern expedition to Chu Pou, who suffered a major defeat at Daibi. Huan Wen then made advances with a partial army in the west.

Huan Wen petitioned the court for a northern expedition but was ignored. He prepared supplies privately and submitted his resignation when the court still refused to allow him to mobilize troops. He did not act stubbornly and voluntarily abandoned the long-planned northern expedition after being persuaded by Sima Yu. His "submission of resignation and preparations for action" was not a defiance of the imperial decree. It was a necessary step taken by generals in urgent situations to ensure victory in battle.

Huan Wen deposed Sima Yi and appointed him as Duke of Haixi due to his incompetence and evil deeds. Emperor Jianwen praised Huan Wen for following the will of heaven and attending to him personally. Huan Wen did not execute Xie An and Wang Tanzhi and even appointed Xie An as a minister. On his deathbed, Huan Wen recommended Xie An and Wang Tanzhi to succeed him. This shows Huan Wen's legitimacy and his respect for others

Huan Wen, who was critically ill, requested the Nine Regalia to gain extraordinary honors and a lasting reputation. After his death, he received a grand burial with nine sets of ceremonial robes, a carriage with phoenixes, and royal chariots, indicating that he was highly regarded. This raises questions about why such a grand funeral was held for him if he was a traitor.

## Conclusion

Thus, during the discussion, it was established that the reasons for Huan Wen's northern expedition were related to an attempt to regain control of the northern territories of the Jin dynasty after their loss during the Sixteen Kingdoms period. This included fighting other states such as Later Zhao and Later Qin, as well as attempts to regain lost lands.

Historians consider Huan Wen a usurper because his son, Huan Xuan, also usurped the throne. Wang Fuzhi believes Huan Wen contributed to his son's treason. Huan Wen's focus on northern expeditions and suppressing rebels created conditions for Huan Xuan's rise to power.

Wang Fuzhi suspected that Huan Wen's northern expeditions aimed to usurp the throne, similar to Liu Yu's actions. However, there is not enough evidence to support this claim. Huan Wen fought bravely in each expedition, and his goal was to reclaim lost territory. A political enemy may have falsely accused him of wanting to usurp the throne.

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## Причины и мотивы северной экспедиции Хуань Вэня

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### Аннотация

В статье описываются исторические причины, повлиявшие на то, что Хуань Вэнь принял решение об осуществлении северной экспедиции. Установлено, что это была попытка восстановить контроль над северными территориями династии Цзинь после их утраты в период Шестнадцати королевств. Хуань Вэнь организовал три северные экспедиции для разрешения этнических конфликтов между севером и югом династии Восточная Цзинь. Во время кампаний против Цинь и Яня армия Цзинь столкнулась с трудностями, которые помешали им переправиться через реку и атаковать город. Семья Цяо Голун из клана Хуань, когда-то известная конфуцианская семья династии Восточная Хань, утратила свои исторические корни и Хуань Вэнь лишился поддержки. Его низкий статус стал для него препятствием, он не имел поддержки при дворе и его единственным вариантом для восстановления утраченного авторитета было только совершение военных подвигов в Северных экспедициях. Они не были целиком и полностью направлены на узурпацию престола, поскольку в пользу этого аргумента выступают только устные заявления самого предводителя. Истинными причинами Северной экспедиции Хуань Вэня связаны с его желанием вернуть территории, утраченные династией Цзинь.

### Для цитирования в научных исследованиях

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**Ключевые слова**

Династия Восточная Цзинь; Хуан Вэнь; Северные экспедиции.

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