

Chapter 9

Tang and the Uighurs: An Unstable Alliance

The second Turkish Empire ended in 745 when its last ruler was eliminated by the Uighur leader Guli Peiluo (Qulligh Boila?¹), who had assumed the title of qaghan the previous year and immediately been recognized by Xuanzong. Qulligh Boila then went on to occupy all the former Turkish territory north of the Gobi Desert and establish his headquarters at the foot of the Ötükän Mountains.² This Uighur or third Turkish Empire lasted until 840.

In this chapter, we shall see how the Uighurs remained at peace with China during the remainder of Xuanzong's reign and played an important role in assisting the Tang court to suppress the An Lushan rebellion. The uneasy alliance between Tang and the Uighurs persisted during the post-rebellion period. Though often burdensome, it was advantageous to Tang at a time when the dynasty remained weakened by provincial warlordism, and when Tibet presented a much more formidable external threat to its territorial integrity than did the Uighurs.

The Uighurs, who were competing with Tibet in Central Asia, also found it to their advantage. Relations between Tang and the Uighurs thus constituted a new variant on the perennial interplay between Chinese regimes and their nomadic neighbors.

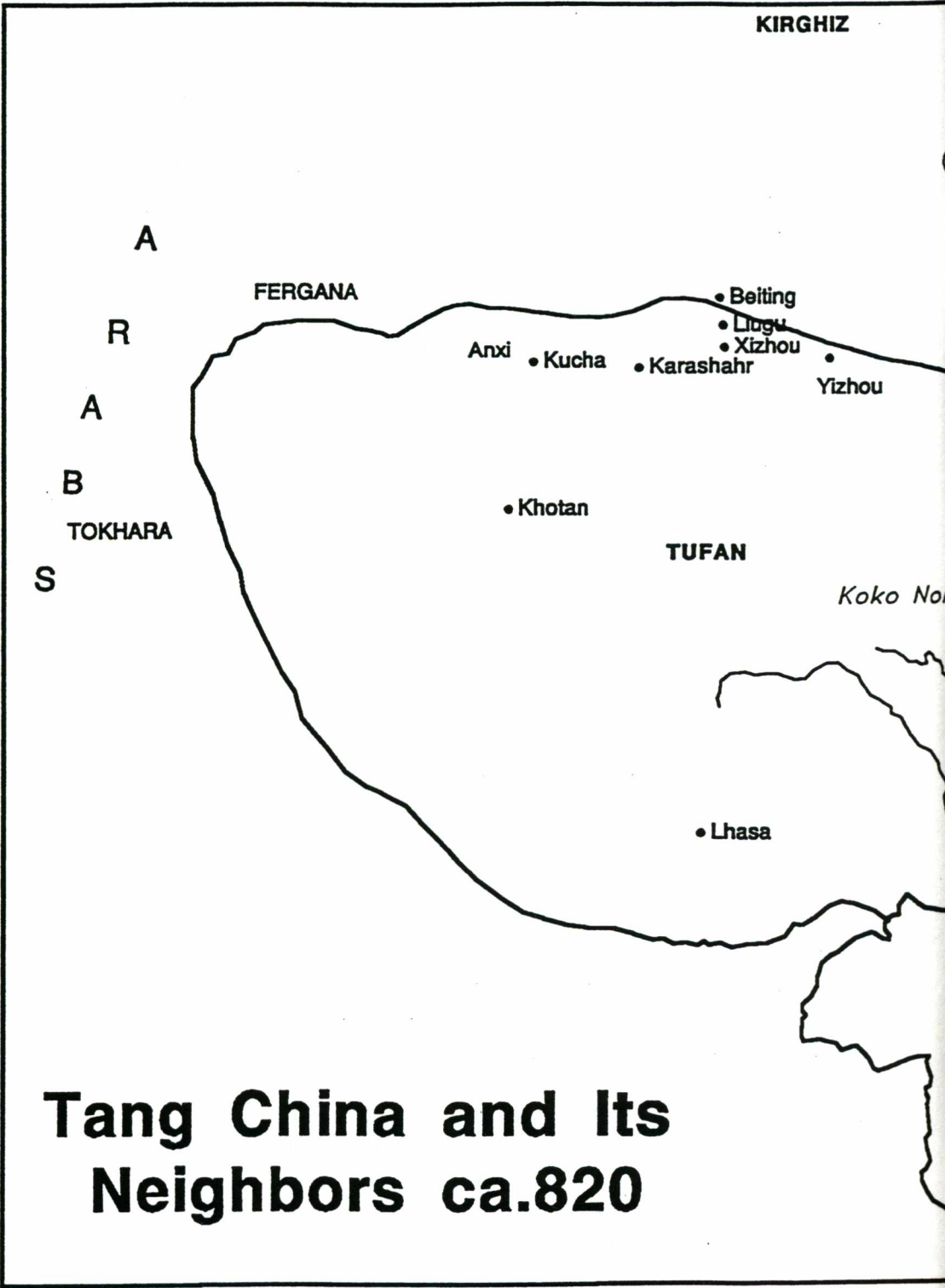
The Tradition of Alliance Between China and the Uighurs Before 745

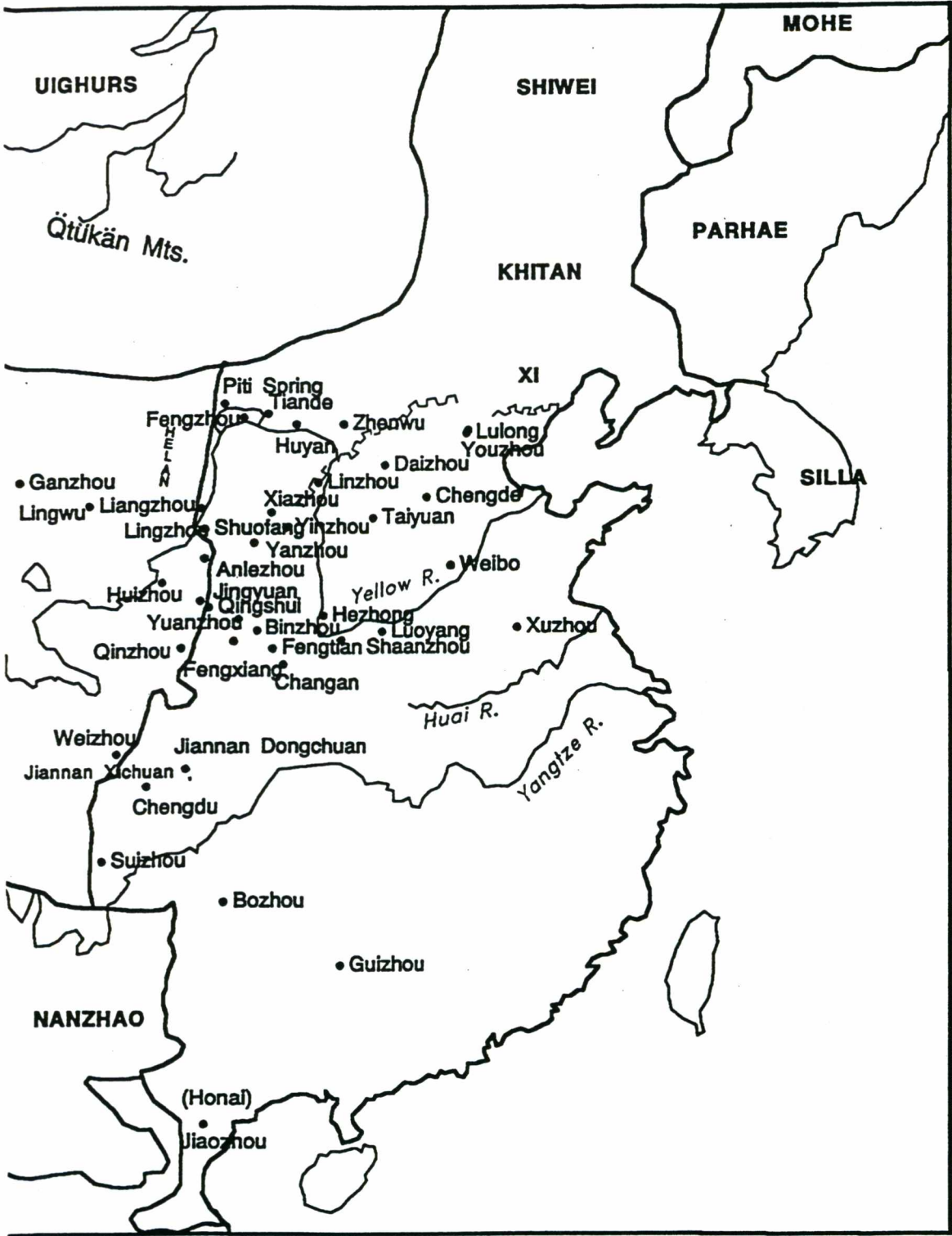
The alliance between the Uighurs and Tang had its roots in earlier times.³ The Uighurs emerged from the Tiele, a confederacy of Turkish speaking tribes, known already in Han times as the Dingling (based on an earlier pronunciation of the same name). As the Tiele or Gaoche (High Carts) they played a role in the competition between Northern Wei and the Rouran. When the first Turkish empire was founded by the Ashina clan of the Tujue Turks in 552, the Tiele were brought under its rule. In 605 they rebelled against the Western Turks and established a qaghanate of their

¹ Hamilton 1988, p. 139.

² Haneda 1957, pp. 181-92.

³ On this see also Mackerras 1972, p. 8.





own, and in 608 they assisted Emperor Yang in defeating the Tuyuhun. However, the Tiele qaghanate dissolved when the Western Turks revived. The Tiele again became subject to the Western Turks by 619.⁴

At the beginning of Tang, the Uighurs became a power of importance as the leading tribe of the Nine Surnames, a confederacy of Tiele tribes. The Chinese term "Nine Surnames" (*jiuxing*) first appears in 630. It corresponds to the term "Toquzoghuz" in the Turkish inscriptions.⁵ In 627-628, the Uighurs joined forces with the Xueyantuo and other Tiele tribes in a revolt against their Turkish rulers. This revolt was crucial for Taizong in his conquest of the Eastern Turks in 630. The Xueyantuo founded their own qaghanate around 628, but in 646 the Uighur and other Tiele tribes rose in revolt against the tyrannical rule of the Xueyantuo qaghan. This enabled Taizong to repeat his success of 630 and overthrow the Xueyantuo, whom he perceived as the new threat succeeding that of the Tujue Türks.

Between 647 and 679, the Uighurs and other Tiele were under the Chinese *jimi* administration. The Uighurs privately retained their own system of ranks and the title of qaghan,⁶ but both in theory and in reality the Uighurs were subjects within the Chinese empire. The Uighurs joined a Tiele rebellion against Tang in the early 660's, but for most of the time they acted as an important military force on the side of Tang in frontier affairs, in exchange for which Tang intervened in an internal power struggle in 648 to maintain the unity of the Uighurs.⁷

In the competition between Tang and the Turks after the restoration of the Second Turkish empire, the various Tiele tribes followed different strategies for self-protection. According to the Turkish inscriptions, after Qutluğ founded the second Turkish empire, the Turks were surrounded by hostile peoples, among them the Chinese in the south, the Khitan in the east, and the Toquzoghuz, that is, the Nine Surnames of the Tiele, in the north, headed by a certain Baz Qaghan. After a series of battles, the Toquzoghuz were brought under Turkish rule.⁸ Some of the Uighurs and other

⁴ Ma Changshou 1957, pp. 34-6.

⁵ There are quite a few studies of the Nine Surnames, among which see Pulleyblank 1956, pp. 35-42; Haneda 1957, pp. 325-94; Hamilton 1962.

⁶ *JTS* 195, p. 5196; *XTS* 217A, p. 6113; *ZZTJ* 198, p. 6245.

⁷ *JTS* 195, p. 5197; *XTS* 217A, p. 6113; *ZZTJ* 199, p. 6262; p. 6263.

⁸ Cen Zhongmian 1958, pp. 857-926. For an English translation of the inscriptions, see Tekin 1968. For Baz Qaghan, see Cen Zhongmian 1958, p. 881; pp. 895-6; Tekin 1968, p. 265.

Tiele tribes—the Qibi, the Sijie and the Hun—came to settle on the Chinese frontier in Ganzhou and Liangzhou after 690, and were in communication with the Tang court. The later qaghans of the Uighur empire were descendants of the Liangzhou chieftains. These Tiele tribes were again used by the Chinese army as a military force during Xuanzong's time. Around 715, the Uighur chief Fudifu was appointed Vice Military Commissioner of Hexi and Commander of the Chishui Army.⁹ In 716, the Bayirqu of the Nine Surnames killed Bäg Chor Qaghan of the Turks. The Uighur and other Tiele tribes who had previously been under the Turks came to submit to Tang and were settled near the Dawu Army north of Daizhou.¹⁰

The Uighurs who had been in Ganzhou and Liangzhou did not engage in any hostilities against the Chinese until 727. A conflict arose at that time mainly through the mismanagement of a Chinese frontier general, Wang Junchuo. Earlier, while holding a lower rank in the Liangzhou border area, Wang had not been treated with much respect by the Uighurs and other Tiele tribes in the region. After he was promoted to the rank of Military Commissioner of Hexi, he adopted a high-handed policy towards these tribes and they sent secret envoys to the Tang court to complain of him. When he learned of this, Wang reported that these tribes intended to rebel.

Xuanzong sent an imperial commissioner to investigate the matter and the Tiele were found guilty. The Uighur chieftain and the chieftains of other three Tiele tribes were exiled. The court then appointed Fudinan of the Uighurs as the Area Commander of Hanhai. However, this did not prevent further confrontations. Hushu, a distant nephew of the exiled Uighur chief, organized his people to take revenge on Wang Junchuo. They laid an ambush when he returned from an attack on the Tibetans. Wang and one of his assistants were killed and the rebels blocked the route from Anxi to Chang'an. Pursued by the Liangzhou troops, Hushu fled back to the north of the Gobi with his people.¹¹

After 727, Hushu's son Qulligh Boila succeeded him as the leader of the Uighurs. As we have seen, he ruled as qaghan from 744 to his death in 747. It was under him that the Uighurs put an end to the second Turkish

⁹ Haneda 1957, pp. 174-8.

¹⁰ Cen Zhongmian 1958, pp. 374-98.

¹¹ *JTS* 103, p. 3192; 195, p. 5198; *XTS* 133, p. 4547; 217A, p. 6114; *ZZTJ* 213, pp. 6779-80; Haneda 1957, pp. 179-81.

empire.¹² The fact that he was immediately recognized by Tang seems to indicate that the traditional alliance between the Uighurs and Tang was stronger than the breach that had occurred during the time of his father.

Suzong: Securing the Uighur Alliance

When Suzong assumed the throne at Lingwu during the An Lushan rebellion in 756, he faced a very difficult situation. Apart from the small bodyguard that had accompanied him on his flight from Mawei and the local garrison, the only major Tang military force that was still loyal and effective and within reach were the armies from Shuofang under Guo Ziyi and Li Guangbi. Before the fall of Tongguan, they had been successfully campaigning on the rebels' flank in Hebei but were now recalled. Troops were also summoned from Anxi and Ferghana, with whose king, as we have seen, a marriage alliance had been made in 744, and rich rewards were promised to other city states in the Western Regions if they would send help. The arrival of these troops, including a contingent of Arabs, is recorded at the beginning of 757. More importantly, in the eighth month of 756, the Uighur qaghan Moyanchuo (Bayan Chor? r. 747-759) and the Tibetan *btsan-po* both sent envoys requesting a marriage alliance and offering assistance to defeat the rebels. Suzong responded quickly and positively to the Uighur offer but not to that of Tibet.¹³

It is not difficult to understand why the Chinese actively sought help from the Uighurs, but tried to keep the Tibetans at arm's length. Before the rebellion, large Chinese armies had been stationed on the northwest frontier to resist any Tibetan invasion and, as we shall see in Chapter 10, Tibetan forces were already pressing into the vacuum created by their withdrawal to oppose the rebel approach to Chang'an. The Uighurs, on the other hand, had been traditional allies of Tang against the Tujue Turks. Though they had now become the dominant power on the Mongolian steppe, the Uighurs had shown no sign of territorial ambitions against China. Securing their cooperation offered Tang the possibility of using their strong cavalry for the counterattack against An Lushan's forces, as well as for resisting Tibetan incursions. It was also important to forestall any alliance between the Uighurs and provincial separatists inside China.¹⁴

In order to obtain military assistance from the Uighurs, the Chinese

¹² Haneda 1957, pp. 181-92.

¹³ ZZTJ 218, p. 6992; p. 6998; CFYG 973, p. 11434; 979, p. 11504.

¹⁴ Jagchid Sechin 1971, p. 22; Ma Junmin 1984, p. 69.

adopted several unusual measures. In the ninth month of 756, Suzong made the great grandson of Gaozong, Li Chengcai, the Commandery Prince of Dunhuang, and sent him and General-in-Chief Pugu Huairen to the Uighurs to cultivate their friendship and ask for military assistance. The qaghan was pleased and adopted his own sister-in-law as daughter and married her to Li Chengcai. Suzong gave the title of Princess Bilgä to the Uighur princess in order to show his favor to her adoptive father-in-law.¹⁵ The court sent Pugu Huairen to carry out that mission because he was descended from the Buqu tribe related to the Uighurs which had come to be under the Area Command of Jinwei in Taizong's time. He had inherited the position of Area Commander from his grandfather and father.¹⁶

Though Suzong also received troops from Ferghana, Khotan, Tokhara and other nearby states, as well as from the Arabs and unspecified southern "barbarians,"¹⁷ the Uighur assistance proved to be by far the most important. Toward the end of 756, the Uighur qaghan led his troops to join the Tang general Guo Ziyi in defeating an anti-Tang force of Tongra and other tribesmen on the banks of the Yellow River. When the qaghan met Guo in the Huiyuan Valley north of the Yellow River, he paraded his troops and made Guo pay respect to his wolf pennons before he would see him.¹⁸

Despite this arrogance, in 757 Guo Ziyi suggested that Tang request more Uighur cavalry. In response, the qaghan sent his Heir Apparent and 4,000 crack troops to join the Chinese. The Uighur Heir Apparent and the Prince of Guangping, the future Emperor Daizong, made a pact of brotherhood with him.¹⁹ The Tang troops, joined by the Uighurs and troops from Ferghana, Khotan and the Arabs, recovered Chang'an.

After the recapture of Chang'an, in order to persuade the Uighurs not to carry out the pillage that had been promised to them, the Prince of Guangping prostrated himself in front of the Uighur Heir Apparent, who was on horseback. The Uighur Heir Apparent returned the prostration and

¹⁵ *JTS* 195, p. 5198; *XTS* 217A, p. 6115; *ZZTJ* 218, p. 6998; 219, p. 7005. For more on Li Chengcai, see Mackerras 1972, p. 128, note 14.

¹⁶ *JTS* 121, pp. 3477-8; *XTS* 224A, pp. 6365-6.

¹⁷ *JTS* 10, p. 247; *XTS* 6, p. 158; *ZZTJ* 218, p. 6998; 219, p. 7010; p. 7014; *CFYG* 973, p. 11434.

¹⁸ This is according to *XTS* 217A, p. 6115; Mackerras 1972, p. 17; pp. 55-7. According to other accounts in *JTS* 120, p. 3451; *XTS* 137, 4600; *ZZTJ* 219, p. 7007, the qaghan did not personally participate in the campaign. See also Haneda 1957, pp. 194-5.

¹⁹ *JTS* 195, p. 5198; *XTS* 217A, p. 6115; *ZZTJ* 220, pp. 7032-3.

agreed not to plunder the city, but to continue the campaign against the rebels by advancing east to Luoyang. Seeing this, commoners, soldiers and non-Chinese present all said: "The Prince of Guangping is a real master of both Chinese and Yi [barbarians]!"

The eastern capital, Luoyang, was recovered soon after. There the Prince of Guangping was unable to restrain the Uighurs, who engaged in savage plunder for three days. The people of the city had to pay heavy bribes before the pillage could be stopped.²⁰ Tang provided rich rewards for the Uighurs' assistance and conferred the noble title of prince on the Uighur Heir Apparent, along with an annual payment of 20,000 rolls of silk.²¹

To further reward the Uighurs, the court in 758 conferred the title of Qaghan on Bayan chor, and at the request of the Qaghan a Tang princess was sent to marry him. This was Princess Ningguo, the daughter of Suzong himself. At her emotional farewell the princess said tearfully to the emperor: "The affairs of the state are serious. Even should I die, I shall not regret going."²² The marriage of Princess Ningguo to Bayan chor was the first time in Chinese history that a Chinese emperor sent his own daughter, not just someone from the imperial clan, to marry a non-Chinese ruler. This shows the great importance that the court attached to its relationship with the Uighurs.²³ The emperor also sent the Prince of Rong's daughter to accompany Ningguo as a secondary wife.

After Bayan chor Qaghan died, his officials wanted Princess Ningguo to be buried with him, but the princess refused on the grounds that this was not a Chinese custom. A compromise was made according to which she observed the nomadic custom of slashing her face and weeping loudly. She returned to Tang in 759, since she had not born a child to the qaghan, whereas the daughter of the Prince of Rong remained, and became the wife of the next qaghan. The Uighurs called her Younger Princess Ningguo.²⁴ The Uighur Qaghan Bayan chor also asked to contract a marriage for his younger son, the future Mouyu (Bögü?²⁵) Qaghan. Suzong sent Pugu

²⁰ *JTS* 10, p. 247; 195, p. 5199; *XTS* 217A, pp. 6115-6; *ZZTJ* 220, pp. 7034-5; p. 7041.

²¹ *JTS* 195, pp. 5199-200; *XTS* 217A, p. 6116; *ZZTJ* 220, pp. 7043-4; *CFYG* 965, p. 11350.

²² Mackerras 1972, p. 62.

²³ Kuang Pingzhang 1935, p. 49.

²⁴ *JTS* 195, p. 5200; p. 5210; *XTS* 83, p. 3660; 217A, pp. 6116-7; p. 6125; *ZZTJ* 220, p. 7059; 221, p. 7076.

²⁵ Haneda 1957, p. 203.

Huaien's daughter to marry him.²⁶

In 758 and 759, the Uighurs again joined the Chinese in battles, this time against An Lushan's son, An Qingxu, and were generously rewarded.²⁷ A horse-silk trade was established. Starting from this time, the Uighurs regularly sent embassies with large numbers of horses, forcing the Chinese to take them in exchange for an agreed price in Chinese silk.²⁸

The Uighurs had several motives for assisting Tang. First, they would get to attack some of the Tiele people who were serving under An Lushan. Before he rebelled, An Lushan had included the Tongra, a Tiele tribe, in his armies. They had been serving under An up to the time of An's capture of Chang'an but then deserted him and moved northward to arouse the six Hu (Sogdian) prefectures in the Ordos against Tang. They were eventually defeated by Tang and Uighur troops at the end of 756.²⁹ Second, the Uighurs preferred to ally themselves with Tang rather than with Tibet, for they understood that alliance with Tibet was not of much economic benefit to them. By assisting Tang they could retain the material benefit of subsidies and compel the Chinese to keep up the lucrative horse-silk trade which provided them with constant supplies of Chinese silk for use in their intermediary trade between east and west.³⁰ Third, the prestige which Chinese titles and marriage alliances conferred upon them would also enhance the moral authority of the Uighur rulers in dealing with their own people. A stable relationship with China was especially necessary during the early period of expansion when Bayan chor Qaghan was trying to establish his hegemony on the steppe and was engaged in constant warfare with such other tribes as the Qarluq and Kirghiz farther west.

It appears that from this time on the Uighurs also incorporated the Khitan and Xi into their realm.³¹ Both Khitan and Xi acknowledged the Uighurs' overlordship by accepting their seal of office, and by sometimes acting as spies on their behalf. The Xi king married an Uighur lady some time before the late 770's. The Uighurs sent supervisors to ensure the payment of annual tribute. This did not prevent the Khitan and Xi from

²⁶ *JTS* 195, p. 5202; *XTS* 217A, p. 6117; *ZZTJ* 222, p. 7131.

²⁷ *JTS* 195, p. 5201; *XTS* 217A, pp. 6116-7; *ZZTJ* 220, p. 7060; 221, p. 7072; *CFYG* 973, pp. 11434-5.

²⁸ *JTS* 195, p. 5207; *XTS* 50, p. 1339; 217A, p. 6120; *CFYG* 999, p. 11727.

²⁹ *ZZTJ* 218, p. 6986; pp. 6997-8; 219, p. 7007. See also Moses 1976, p. 78.

³⁰ Jagchid Sechin 1971, pp. 22-3.

³¹ Haneda 1957, pp. 197-202.

sending regular "tribute-bearing" missions to the Tang court via Youzhou after the An Lushan rebellion.³² Located in the northeast the Khitan and Xi were now separated from the territory under direct Tang control by the independent Military Commissioners of Hebei and relations with them became mainly the latter's responsibility. Chinese sources provide very limited information, but the frontier appears to have become much more peaceful than it had been in the time of Xuanzong. Without the incentive to win military honors from the Tang court that had inspired An Lushan, the military governor at Youzhou kept a close watch on the frontier, but refrained from adventurous probings beyond it, while the nomads also refrained from raids.

Daizong: The Appeasement Policy's Effect and Expense

Daizong came to the throne in the spring of 762. Soon after, he sent an envoy to the Uighurs to renew friendship and solicit military assistance against the last of the rebel rulers, Shi Chaoyi. The Uighurs were then under Bögü Qaghan (r. 759-779), who as prince had married the daughter of Pugu Huairen. The most aggressive toward Tang of all the rulers of the Uighur empire, he demanded more subsidies and greater equality in status from them.

When Daizong's envoy met the qaghan, he found that the Uighurs under Bögü Qaghan had been enticed by Shi Chaoyi to come to China for plunder, taking advantage of the death of Xuanzong and Suzong. By then the Uighur troops had already passed the three Shouxiang Fortresses in Shuofang. The envoy immediately sent a report to the court, upon which Daizong sent Pugu Huairen, father-in-law of the qaghan, to meet Bögü Qaghan in Taiyuan in the hope of persuading him to remain true to the alliance with Tang. Pugu succeeded in diverting the Uighurs from their invasion of Tang and making them join instead in suppressing Shi Chaoyi. The qaghan assumed personal command of his troops and joined the Tang forces in retaking Luoyang, then still under rebel occupation. Shi Chaoyi fled and following a series of defeats committed suicide in early 763, thus ending the disastrous period of the An Lushan rebellion.³³

Even while agreeing to assist Tang, Bögü displayed his arrogance.

³² *JTS* 180, p. 4678; 199B, p. 5354; p. 5356; *XTS* 212, p. 5972; p. 5980; 219, p. 6172; *THY* 96, p. 1710.

³³ *JTS* 121, pp. 3479-81; 195, pp. 5202-4; *XTS* 217A, pp. 6117-9; 224A, pp. 6367-8; *ZZTJ* 222, pp. 7131-40.

When he arrived to join the campaign in 762, he was met by the Tang Prince of Yong, the future Dezong. An Uighur official insisted that the Prince should perform a ceremonial dance in front of the qaghan on the grounds that the qaghan had the status of a younger brother of the Tang Son of Heaven, which would oblige the Prince to pay his respects to his uncle, the qaghan.

Yao Zi'ang, a Tang official, sought to excuse the prince on the grounds that he was in mourning for the late emperors Xuanzong and Suzong, so it was not proper for him to perform a ceremonial dance. He also argued that the Prince of Yong, as the heir apparent, was a future Son of Heaven, and could not carry out such a rite in front of a foreign ruler. Upon hearing this, the Uighur official arrested Yao and three other Chinese officials, and gave each one hundred strokes of the rod. Two of them died as a result.³⁴ Although the Prince of Yong stopped his officials from attempting to retaliate since Tang needed the Uighurs' assistance, he remembered the humiliation and later as emperor tried to break off the alliance with the Uighurs.

During the campaign against Shi Chaoyi, the Uighurs engaged in heavy plunder. After they had taken the eastern capital, Luoyang, they pillaged the city and killed many people. At the capital, the Uighurs abused the Chinese officials, attacked the gate of the imperial city and broke into the Court of State Ceremonials. On their way back they plundered the people of the surrounding areas.³⁵

Despite all these disturbances, Daizong still extended official ranks and enfeoffment to the Uighurs. Both the qaghan and his wife, the qatun, were given honorific titles. Other high Uighur officials were given titles of nobility. Together they received a total office lands' income of 20,000 households.³⁶ The court did not feel able to take a strong position toward the Uighurs.

In the unstable situation that prevailed at the time, there was always the possibility that the Uighurs might abandon the alliance and join the Tibetans or some other anti-Tang force. In 763, as a result of private feuds and a lack of trust and understanding within the Tang government,

³⁴ *JTS* 195, pp. 5203-4; *XTS* 217A, p. 6118; *ZZTJ* 222, p. 7133; *CFYG* 997, pp. 11703-4.

³⁵ *JTS* 134, p. 3690; 195, p. 5204; *XTS* 155, p. 4884; 217A, p. 6119; *ZZTJ* 222, p. 7135; pp. 7140-2.

³⁶ *JTS* 195, p. 5204; *XTS* 217A, p. 6119; *ZZTJ* 223, p. 7145; *CFYG* 965, pp. 11350-1. *JTS* 195 says that the tax income was from 2,000 households but *XTS* 217A and *CFYG* 965 record the number as 20,000. Other sources do not give any number.

Pugu Huaïen did not lead his troops to assist the court when it faced the crisis of the Tibetan invasion, and in 764 he rose in rebellion against Tang. His connections with the Uighurs, which had served Tang well in the past, he now turned to his own advantage. He found ready support not only from the Uighurs but also from Tibet, and led them as part of a joint force against the Tang capital. He retreated when he encountered a determined defending army under the command of Guo Ziyi.³⁷

The following year, he again led a combined force of Uighurs, Tibetans, Dangxiang Qiang and Tuyuhun against Chang'an. When Pugu fell ill and died suddenly en route, the Uighurs and the Tibetans disputed the leadership. Taking advantage of this discord in the enemy camp, Guo Ziyi succeeded in persuading the Uighurs to leave the Tibetans, and after a sworn covenant was made between Guo and the Uighurs the two joined forces, inflicting a heavy defeat on the Tibetans in two battles. Thus was the danger for Chang'an relieved.³⁸

To reward the Uighurs for returning to join Tang against the Tibetans as well as to pay for Uighur horses, the court had to give up as much as 100,000 rolls of silk. As a result, the treasuries were empty, obliging the court officials to give up their salaries. In the following months, the emperor had to use the taxes paid for exemption from corvée labor to pay the officials and then had to tax the officials' income from this source for three months in order to supply the Uighurs.³⁹

The policy of alliance with the Uighurs was of vital importance in turning a potential enemy into an ally, first against Shi Chaoyi and then against the Tibetans, but it was achieved at a high price. Some modern scholars have, therefore, questioned the merits of Daizong's acquiescent attitude.⁴⁰ It would certainly have been ideal if the court could have relied on its own forces to suppress the rebels, but the Tang court was so weak that it was desperate for help from any possible source. Faced with Tibetan aggression, it could not afford to have the Uighurs as yet another enemy. It had to make peace and ally itself with the less threatening power in order to maintain the dynasty.

³⁷ *JTS* 121, pp. 3477-8; *XTS* 224A, pp. 6365-6; *ZZTJ* 223, p. 7166; pp. 7167-9. For details of Pugu Huaïen's career and rebellion, see Peterson 1970-71, pp. 423-55; 1979, pp. 490-1.

³⁸ Mackerras 1972, pp. 26-9.

³⁹ *JTS* 195, pp. 5206-7; *ZZTJ* 223, p. 7184; Mackerras 1972, p. 84.

⁴⁰ Mackerras 1972, p. 35; Moses 1976, p. 79.

Also, during the early part of his reign, Daizong continued to face the problem of both a severe shortage of funds and the challenge from the semi-independent warlords at a time when the court was only beginning to rebuild a military force under its own control.

In contemporary records of the court discussions we do not find objections raised against the compromise made by the court, although the marriage alliance policy was criticized in an unofficial way. Upon the return of Princess Ningguo to Tang in 759, Du Fu wrote a poem lamenting: "We hear that even the Uighurs were defeated [in the battle with the anti-Tang rebels]; So the marriage alliance did not turn out to be advantageous."⁴¹ Rong Yu, a prefect in the early 780's, wrote a poem implying that it was shameful that China had to rely on women to achieve peace.

In the history of Han
The clumsy plan was *heqin* [marriage alliance].
The state depended on an enlightened ruler
But security was entrusted to women.
How could one plan to use beautiful faces
To calm the barbarian turmoil?
Among the bones underground for a thousand years
Who were the supporting ministers?⁴²

Daizong continued all the measures of appeasement almost to the end of his reign. In 769, at the request of the Uighurs, Daizong bestowed the title of Princess Chonghui on another daughter of Pugu Huairen and married her to the qaghan as his second wife. Twenty thousand rolls of silk were given. Because of his lack of financial resources, Daizong taxed some mules and camels from the dukes and court ministers and gave them to Princess Chonghui for her transport.⁴³ In 772, when an Uighur prince who had been in the Tang Imperial Guard was about to die, he was given the title of commandery prince and the royal surname Li. The cost of his funeral was borne by the Tang court.⁴⁴ In 777 the wife of an Uighur Chief Minister was rewarded with the posthumous title of Consort of the Min State (*minguo furen*).⁴⁵

⁴¹ Mackerras 1972, p. 137, note 70.

⁴² *QTS* 270, p. 674.

⁴³ *JTS* 11, p. 293; *XTS* 217A, p. 6120; *ZZTJ* 224, p. 7208.

⁴⁴ *JTS* 11, p. 299; *CFYG* 976, p. 11461.

⁴⁵ *CFYG* 976, p. 11462.

The court made great efforts to accommodate the Uighurs in the horse-silk trade. The Uighurs yearly sent 100,000 horses, for which they were paid over a million rolls of silk. China's financial resources were exhausted and were in arrears every year.⁴⁶ Since Tang could not afford to pay for all the horses sent to China, many of the Uighur envoys stayed in the Court of State Ceremonials in Chang'an waiting for the payment and causing the Chinese a great deal of trouble in Chang'an.

The Chinese sources record in detail the "illegal" deeds of the Uighurs: in 771 or 772 they came out of the Court of State Ceremonials without permission into the market places, kidnapped children and beat the Chinese officials who tried to stop them. Three hundred Uighur cavalrymen even attacked the gates of the imperial city. Again in 772, they came out of the Court of State Ceremonials, performed brutal deeds in the marketplace and abused the magistrate of Chang'an.⁴⁷

In 773, Daizong decided to buy all the horses, probably with the purpose of inducing the Uighur envoys to leave, but an Uighur envoy brought in 10,000 more horses for trade. The officer in charge suggested that the court buy 1,000 only. Guo Ziyi was afraid that this would offend the Uighurs and therefore offered to donate one year's salary to pay for all the horses. Daizong did not agree and decided to only increase the number purchased to 6,000.⁴⁸ The Uighurs did not, however, seem to be satisfied.

In 774 the Uighur envoys in Chang'an again came out of the Court of State Ceremonials and killed some Chinese civilians. They were arrested by the Chinese officers but Daizong set them free without any punishment.⁴⁹ The next year they again came out, killing some Chinese. After they were imprisoned, other Uighurs broke into the jail and rescued them. Daizong once more ignored the incident.⁵⁰

To reinforce their bargaining position with the Chinese, in 775 the Uighurs made an incursion into Xiazhou,⁵¹ and in 778 they raided Taiyuan, plundering Chinese livestock. Daizong did not question the Uighurs about the invasion. Soon another conflict occurred when the Uighur en-

⁴⁶ *JTS* 195, p. 5207; *XTS* 51, p. 1348; 217A, p. 6120.

⁴⁷ *JTS* 195, p. 5207; *XTS* 217A, pp. 6120-1; *ZZTJ* 224, p. 7218; p. 7219; *CFYG* 997, p. 11704.

⁴⁸ *JTS* 120, p. 3464; 195, p. 5207; *XTS* 137, p. 4607; 217A, pp. 6120-1; *ZZTJ* 224, p. 7221; p. 7224.

⁴⁹ *ZZTJ* 225, p. 7228; *CFYG* 997, p. 11704.

⁵⁰ *JTS* 195, p. 5207; *XTS* 217A, p. 6121; *ZZTJ* 225, p. 7232; *CFYG* 997, p. 11704.

⁵¹ *ZZTJ* 225, p. 7236.

voys were robbed as they passed Hezhong at the southeastern bend of the Yellow River on their way back home. This time the provocation was on the part of the Chinese.⁵²

Toward the end of his reign Daizong tried to take a firm stand. He decided to strengthen frontier defenses against the Uighurs and gave a secret order to Zhang Guangsheng, the Commander of the Zhenwu Army (in present Tuoketuo county, Inner Mongolia), to work out a plan to ward off the Uighurs.⁵³

Dezong: Deterioration in Tang-Uighur Relations, 779-787

After Dezong came to the throne in the middle of 779, he chose to make an alliance with Tibet rather than the Uighurs. He still harbored resentment toward the Uighurs. The memory of the humiliation he suffered in 762 as prince at the hands of the Uighur qaghan was still fresh. Before 787 he did not make particular efforts to cultivate the alliance, which as a result deteriorated.

Soon after the death of Daizong in 779, the Sogdians, who were very influential in Uighur state politics, persuaded Bögü Qaghan to take advantage of the situation while China was in mourning to launch a military incursion. The qaghan mobilized his entire nation for an expedition. But he was opposed firmly by his Chief Minister Dun Mohe Dagan (Ton? Bagha Tarqan⁵⁴), who preferred keeping a friendly relationship with Tang.

The Chief Minister's opposition to the qaghan seems also to have resulted from his anti-Sogdian and anti-Manichean attitude. The Manichean religion was favored by the qaghan.⁵⁵ Failing to dissuade the qaghan from the campaign, Bagha Tarqan staged a coup d'état, killed the qaghan and two or three thousand of his followers, including many Sogdians, and established himself as qaghan (r. 779-789). He sent an embassy to Tang, expressing, according to the Chinese records, his wish to continue to be a Tang subject. In response, Dezong sent Yuan Xiu as a commissioner to give the certificate of appointment as qaghan to Bagha Tarqan.⁵⁶

The establishment of Bagha Tarqan as qaghan could have been good for Tang, since he was opposed to an aggressive policy, but Dezong

⁵² *JTS* 195, p. 5207; *XTS* 217A, p. 6121; *ZZTJ* 225, pp. 7250-2.

⁵³ *JTS* 127, p. 3573.

⁵⁴ Hamilton 1988, p. 140.

⁵⁵ Mackerras 1972, p. 36.

⁵⁶ *JTS* 195, pp. 5207-8; *XTS* 217A, p. 6121; *ZZTJ* 226, p. 7282.

did not take the opportunity to develop a better relationship. In 780, when the Uighur envoys, who had previously been in Chang'an, were on their way back home, they stopped at the border post of the Zhenwu Army for several months. They were headed by Tudong, who was Bagha Tarqan's uncle. When they heard of the coup d'état, the Sogdians among them did not want to go back to the new qaghan, but being under close watch by Tudong, they could not flee. They tried to persuade Zhang Guangsheng, the Commander of the Zhenwu Army, to attack Tudong and his followers.

As mentioned above, Zhang had previously been instructed by Daizong to work out a plan to ward off the Uighurs. He presented three memorials, suggesting that the court take advantage of the situation and eliminate the Uighurs at Zhenwu. Dezong did not agree to his proposal, but Zhang went ahead anyway, making an attack on the Uighur party in the eighth month of 780. As a result, Tudong and his people, 900 in all, were killed. Under pressure from the Uighurs, Dezong recalled Zhang Guangsheng and reduced him in rank as punishment.⁵⁷ Zhang knew Dezong's personal hatred of the Uighurs. The fact that he dared commit such a massacre may imply the court's acquiescence.

Despite others' urging vengeance on the Chinese, Bagha Tarqan was not willing to start any direct confrontation with Tang. Instead, he requested through the Tang envoy that Tang should pay its debt in the horse-silk trade of 180,000 rolls of silk immediately as compensation. This suggests the instability of his position even early in his rule. In 782, Dezong ordered the payment of 100,000 rolls of silk, and 100,000 *liang* of gold and silver for the Uighur horses.⁵⁸

During the time of the revolts of the Military Commissioners in 781-786 touched off by Dezong's firm policy towards the semi-autonomous regional commands, the Uighurs were enticed to aid Zhu Tao, the Military Commissioner of Youzhou. Zhu Tao had married an Uighur lady and the Uighurs helped him in several battles, presumably with the primary purpose of obtaining plunder.

Mackerras conjectures that the Uighur leader who supported Zhu Tao was probably related to Zhu's Uighur concubine or belonged to the faction which wanted to avenge Zhang Guangsheng's massacre, and that tribal allegiances were at the root of this curious case of Uighur assistance. Mackerras further surmises that a local leader probably did it behind

⁵⁷ JTS 11, 326; 127, pp. 3573-4; XTS 217A, pp. 6120-1; ZZTJ 226, pp. 7287-8.

⁵⁸ JTS 127, p. 3575; XTS 217A, p. 6122; ZZTJ 227, pp. 7330-1.

Bagha Tarqan Qaghan's back.⁵⁹ His conjecture is plausible, since there were often conflicts between a nomadic ruler and his followers over their attitudes towards China. In any case, the Tang court sent an envoy to the Uighur ruler after the submission of Zhu Tao in 784 to patch up the relationship. The Uighurs then sent envoys to Tang.⁶⁰

Alliance with the Uighurs Against Tibet, 787-804

Dezong's policy of alliance with Tibet proved to be a failure when the Tibetans kidnapped Chinese officials in the treaty conclusion ceremony in 787.⁶¹ Yet in 787, when the Uighurs asked for a marriage contract with Tang, Dezong refused, for he was still brooding over his resentment for the humiliation of 762. Li Mi, Chief Minister, urged the emperor to consider a policy of resuming alliance with the Uighurs against Tibet, as well as alliances with the Nanzhao kingdom, the Arabs and India. He saw the Tibetans as more to be feared than any of these other peoples. It was also Li Mi who suggested in 784 that the Tang court should not reward the Tibetans with land as promised.

Li Mi had fifteen discussions with the emperor, in which he persisted in this line of argument. He realized that the Uighurs were at that time eager to contract a marriage with a Chinese princess, and therefore suggested that the court should lay down the following conditions for such a marriage alliance: 1) the Uighurs should call themselves subjects of Tang; 2) the qaghan should have the status of a son to the Tang emperor; 3) each Uighur embassy should not exceed 200 people; 4) the horses sent to Tang for trade should not exceed 1,000 annually; 5) the Uighurs should not escort Chinese and foreign merchants outside the Tang frontiers.

Dezong expressed his doubts over the possibility of Uighur acceptance of such a proposal on the grounds that Tang had been on bad terms with the Uighurs, and that when the Uighurs heard about the "False Treaty of Pingliang" of 787, they might very well refuse the Tang request for peace. If they did, Dezong feared that Tang would be laughed at by the "barbarians." He doubted that having previously been a brother state of Tang, the Uighurs would want to accept vassal status.

Li Mi seems to have known very well how much the Uighurs desired a peace agreement. Finally Dezong was persuaded and was delighted

⁵⁹ Mackerras 1972, pp. 39-41.

⁶⁰ *Lu Xuangong Hanyuanji* 10, pp. 65-6; *CFYG* 980, p. 11514.

⁶¹ See Chapter 11.

when he heard that the qaghan had agreed to all five conditions. The Emperor thereupon promised to send his own daughter, Princess Xian'an, to marry the qaghan and paid 50,000 rolls of silk for the Uighur horses.

The alliance was resumed. The Uighurs showed enthusiasm for the change. In 788 Bagha Tarqan Qaghan sent an embassy of a thousand to Tang to receive the Chinese princess. During their stop in Zhenwu on the Tang border, when the Xi, Khitan and Shiwei attacked Zhenwu, the Uighurs helped Tang mount a counter-attack. When they arrived at the Tang court, their envoys presented the qaghan's memorial, expressing his wish to help Tang to defeat the Tibetans. The qaghan requested to change the name of the Uighurs in Chinese characters from Huihe to Huihu, since the character *hu* meant swift birds of prey, like falcons. A court minister accompanied the other Tang officials who were sent to escort Princess Xian'an to the Uighurs. He was sent to bestow honorary titles on Bagha Tarqan and on Princess Xian'an as his qatun.⁶²

There may be some exaggeration in the account in the *Zizhi Tongjian* of Li Mi's conversations with the emperor and of the importance of his role in the peace agreement with the Uighurs, in which we read that he claimed to have a good personal relationship with the Uighur Chief Minister and so was confident that he could persuade the Uighurs to accept Tang's conditions for peace. One should note that the Uighurs had their own reasons for making peace. Also, the *Zizhi Tongjian* incorporated a major part of its information from the *Yehou Jiazhuan*, a family biography of Li Mi, written by his son Li Fan, who may have intentionally glorified his father's role.⁶³ Nonetheless, we should not dismiss the whole of the account as fiction and reject conceding any role for Li Mi.⁶⁴

The year 788, when the marriage alliance was made between the Chinese and the Uighurs, was a significant turning point in the history of Tang's relations with the Uighur empire. Before her death in 808, Princess Xian'an married four Uighur qaghans in succession.⁶⁵ Until 840, when the Uighur empire collapsed under the attacks of the Kirghiz, there was no military confrontation between Tang and the Uighur empire.

⁶² *JTS* 130, p. 3629; 195, p. 5208; 199B, p. 5354; *XTS* 217A, pp. 6123-4; *ZZTJ* 233, pp. 7501-6; pp. 7514-5; p. 7516.

⁶³ *ZZTJ* 231, p. 7456; *Junzhai Dushuzhi* 9; Mackerras 1972, p. 3; p. 156, note 159; Dien 1974, p. 236.

⁶⁴ Lü Simian (1959, pp. 313-4) holds that the account by Li Mi's son is not reliable and therefore dismisses the role of Li Mi.

⁶⁵ *XTS* 217A, p. 6126.

Moreover, the peaceful relationship between Tang and the Uighurs joined the two as the common enemy of Tibet in the Western Regions. The Uighurs had early on been interested in the Western Regions. In 758, they defeated the Kirghiz, occupied some of their territory and cut off Kirghiz communication with Tang. This pushed the Kirghiz into seeking alliances with the Qarluq as well as the Tibetans and Arabs in pursuit of international trade and the lines of communication to gain access to such trade.⁶⁶

For their part, the Chinese had learned in 781 that some of their armies in the Western Regions were still holding out against the Tibetans, when Li Yuanzhong, the Military Commissioner of Beiting, found he could send messengers to Chang'an via Uighur territory.⁶⁷ This route provided a way around the Tibetan stoppage of the Silk Road to Chang'an. It also provided the Uighurs with an opportunity to exercise control over both Beiting and communications between the Western Regions and Tang.

Beiting was a strategically important place on the Silk Road, and whoever occupied the city would obtain economic benefits. Once they took control of the place, the Uighurs imposed exorbitant fees on the merchants engaged in this trade. The Shatuo people, who were of Turkish origin and had been dependents of Beiting, and the three tribes of the Qarluq and the so-called White-clothed Turks who had been subjects of the Uighurs, strongly resented Uighur rule and secretly submitted to the Tibetans.

The Uighurs had their first direct clash with the Tibetans in 789. In the winter of that year the Tibetans, with the assistance of the Shatuo and other Turks, attacked Beiting and brought it under their control. In the autumn of 790 the Uighurs mobilized a large number of troops, said to be every adult male in the nation and, joined by a Chinese army commanded by Yang Xigu, the Protector-general of Beiting, launched an expedition to recover Beiting. But this campaign ended in a disastrous failure. For some unknown reason, Yang Xigu was later murdered by the Uighur general, thus ending Chinese control in the area.

In 791 the Uighurs succeeded in driving back a Tibetan invasion of Lingzhou and retaking Beiting, and they continued their successful attacks

⁶⁶ Li Futong 1963, pp. 60-1; Beckwith 1987, pp. 147-8.

⁶⁷ The Chinese sources display some confusions about the date 781, at least according to an opinion common among modern scholars, see Haneda 1957, pp. 212-3; Mackerras 1972, p. 163, note 199.

on the Tibetans in the following year.⁶⁸ This conflict between the Uighurs and Tibet over Beiting unquestionably eased Tibetan pressure on China.

The Uighur Alliance Kept: Reasons and Effects, 805-840

After the death of Dezong in 805, the Tang court kept up the Uighur alliance despite perturbations caused by Uighur behavior. Whenever Uighur delegations passed the Tang frontier on their way to the Chinese capital or to engage in trade, the Chinese were on their guard for fear of disturbances. They always received and sent the Uighurs off under surveillance by strong military escorts.⁶⁹ When the Uighurs made raids along the way, only a few Chinese frontier officials were able to stop them.⁷⁰

The Tang court, nevertheless, tried to maintain the peace. Between 805 and 839, there were five Uighur rulers on the throne. All routinely received investiture with the title of qaghan from the Chinese.⁷¹ When a qaghan died, the Chinese court very often observed the rite of suspending court business for three days. Civil and military officials ranking third level and above went to the Court of State Ceremonials to mourn the deceased qaghan.⁷² Diplomatic embassies went back and forth frequently.⁷³

The Uighurs, for their part, only accepted vassal status in a nominal way. Just like the Xiongnu and the Turks, they had their own ideological perspective on their position vis-à-vis the Chinese. The Shine-usu inscription begins: "The wise qaghan, born from heaven to govern the people."⁷⁴ The Chinese part of the Karabalghasun inscription also refers to the Uighur ruler as "Heavenly Qaghan",⁷⁵ the title Tang Taizong had assumed for himself. Even the Chinese at home acknowledged the Uighur ruler's assumption of such a title. The imperial edict to the Uighur ruler written by Bai Juyi on behalf of Emperor Muzong in 821 says to the man Bai must still deep in his soul have thought of as a barbarian chief:

Though you honor yourself as the favored Son of Heaven, it does not yet match up to the fullness of your merit. Though you honor yourself as

⁶⁸ Haneda 1957, pp. 217-21; Beckwith 1987, pp. 152-7.

⁶⁹ ZZTJ 244, p. 7870.

⁷⁰ JTS 180, p. 4675; XTS 212, p. 5978; ZZTJ 244, p. 7885.

⁷¹ Haneda 1957, pp. 301-2.

⁷² CFYG 976, pp. 11462-6.

⁷³ Mackerras 1969, pp. 231-8.

⁷⁴ Wang Jingru 1938, p. 26.

⁷⁵ Haneda 1957, pp. 308-9.

Heavenly Qaghan, it does not yet fully express your excellence. It is right that we bestow on you a splendid title in order that you can boast your fame to later generations.⁷⁶

The letter not only recognized the title of Heavenly Qaghan, but also tried to woo the Uighurs and make them believe that the Chinese conferring that title on their ruler could enhance their prestige. The letter does not insist on a Chinese claim to superiority, which shows a tremendous change in the Chinese attitude towards the Uighurs between Taizong's time and the later Tang period.

Fully aware of the Uighurs' strength and their actual equal status in the mutual relationship, the Chinese realistically maintained a distrustful, suspicious and cautious attitude toward them. In a court discussion with Xianzong in 809, Li Jiang, then a Hanlin academician, opposed a bellicose policy towards the Hebei separatist Wang Chengzong for fear that the Uighurs and the Tibetans would take advantage of the situation and launch attacks which would place the Tang troops fighting in Hebei in great danger. In 810, Bai Juyi, then serving as a remonstrator official, made the same argument in a memorial.⁷⁷

In 813, when the Uighurs requested a marriage contract, Xianzong at first refused on the grounds that the marriage would be very costly and that he was preoccupied with expensive internal campaigns against the independent Military Commissioners. In the winter of the same year, the Uighurs attacked the Tibetans in Liugu and several thousand Uighur cavalry men reached Piti Spring, near West Shouxianqiang Fortress. The Chinese frontier official was alarmed when he reported this development to the court, but it appears that the Uighur expedition was indeed intended only against the Tibetans.⁷⁸

At the court, Li Jiang, Chief Minister from 811 to early 814 and now Minister of Rites, proposed that the Uighur request for a marriage be

⁷⁶ *Baishi Changqing Ji* 33, p. 167.

⁷⁷ *Baishi Changqing Ji* 42, pp. 225-6; *ZZTJ* 238, p. 7664; p. 7673.

⁷⁸ *JTS* 148, p. 3996; *ZZTJ* 239, pp. 7701-2. Haneda (1957, pp. 221-2) argues that the Uighur arrival at Piti Spring was to press Tang to agree to a marriage contract. Mackerras (1972, p. 44) and Beckwith (1987, pp. 164-6), however, do not agree. Beckwith maintains that this demonstration was intended more for the Tibetans than for the Chinese. It was a response to an event four years earlier when the Tibetans went via Piti Spring to plunder an Uighur embassy in the Dashi valley. Given the overall balance of power between the three states, China, Uighur, and Tibet, Beckwith's opinion is the more credible one.

accepted lest the Uighurs invade or make an alliance with the Tibetans. Moreover, according to Li, the Tang frontier defense system was so weak that peace was much preferable to hostility. A marriage alliance would have three advantages: 1) it would bring peace to the frontier and allow the troops there to build up their strength; 2) it would allow the court to concentrate on dealing with internal rebels; and 3) an alliance with the Uighurs would stir up more distrust and hatred between the Uighurs and Tibet, of which Tang could take advantage.

However, Xianzong still did not agree, since the marriage would cost as much as five million strings of cash. Li Jiang insisted that spending tax revenues for the marriage would be less costly than starting a war with the Uighurs. In 820, toward the end of his reign, when China's internal situation had become calm and Tibet was making continuous attacks, Xianzong finally changed his mind and permitted the marriage to go forward.⁷⁹

Mackerras holds that the difficulty in coming to a decision was because of a struggle within the court between Li Jiang and his enemy, the powerful eunuch Tutu Chengsui, who was a great advocate of the use of military force in settling problems, and that it was Tutu's fall that resulted in the change on Xianzong's part.⁸⁰ It is possible that Li Jiang and Tutu had different opinions regarding the marriage, but we should note that the Chinese sources never mention Tutu's supposed intention to use military force to settle the Uighur problem, nor do they record him as opposed to the marriage. Tutu was charged with the responsibility of eliminating the military governors of Hebei, and it may be that it was his demands for funds to carry out this task that made Xianzong delay in agreeing to the marriage proposal.

The marriage finally took place in 821 under the next emperor, Muzong. Tang sent Princess Taihe, the daughter of Xianzong, to the Uighur qaghan. The Uighurs sent a large delegation to receive the princess.⁸¹ The marriage strengthened the peace between the two states, but by this time the need and the willingness of Tang to rely on the Uighurs for suppressing internal disorders had lessened. When, shortly after the marriage, the Uighurs offered to assist Tang in suppressing some internal reb-

⁷⁹ *JTS* 195, pp. 5210-1; *XTS* 152, p. 4843; 217A, pp. 6126-7; 217B, p. 6129; *ZZTJ* 239, p. 7704; 241, p. 7779.

⁸⁰ Mackerras 1972, p. 45; pp. 176-7, note 268.

⁸¹ *JTS* 195, pp. 5211-2; *XTS* 217B, pp. 6129-30; *ZZTJ* 241, pp. 7791-2.

els, the court discussed the matter and decided to refuse, recalling with bitterness how on previous occasions the Uighurs had demanded exorbitant compensation for such help. Emperor Muzong sent an envoy to stop the Uighurs, who had already reached Fengzhou and did not wish to return. Only when Tang gave them 70,000 rolls of silk, did they leave.⁸² In the end, the court decided to come to terms with the rebellious separatists.

How could the alliance have survived as long as it did despite all the distrust on both sides? The reasons, which are complex, reflect the interests of both the Chinese and the Uighurs within the particular international and domestic situations each faced.

For their part, the Chinese were well aware that the Uighurs were involved in frequent struggles with Tibet and other non-Chinese peoples over control of the Western Regions, and were also competing persistently with each other for commercial reasons. If the court was to benefit from a situation which set "barbarians against barbarians," it made sense for it to keep up good relations with the Uighurs.

The horse-silk trade functioned to keep the Uighurs a relatively peaceful neighbor. The court continued the horse-silk trade at considerable expense: the total amount of silk that was paid as the price for the Uighur horses from 780 to 829 was over 2,012,000 rolls.⁸³ It has often been considered an onerous burden without much benefit for China. The Tang accounts indicate that the Chinese considered the horse-silk trade as a favor that they extended to the Uighurs, while the Uighurs believed that the Chinese owed them a debt for their past military assistance which they had to repay by buying horses.⁸⁴

A letter written by Bai Juyi on behalf of Xianzong to the Uighur qaghan in about 809 says that according to the document sent by the Uighurs, they were to send 6,500 horses, but the horses that had arrived and had been branded amounted to 20,000 and were worth 50,000 rolls of silk, but that China could only pay 25,000 rolls of silk for these 20,000 horses. The letter also expresses the wish to have a fixed agreement concerning the horse-silk trade so as to keep a good relationship with the Uighurs.⁸⁵

⁸² *JTS* 195, p. 5212; *XTS* 217B, p. 6130; *ZZTJ* 242, p. 7815.

⁸³ Mackerras 1969, pp. 238-9.

⁸⁴ For these disputes, see *JTS* 146, p. 3962; *XTS* 151, p. 4819; 159, p. 4951; *ZZTJ* 224, p. 7201; p. 7208; *CFYG* 980, p. 11513.

⁸⁵ *Baishi Changqing Ji* 40, p. 217.

During the decade 820-830 alone, a time when the Uighurs were in decline, the silk paid from China exceeded the amount during the much longer time when the Uighurs were strong. Mackerras believes that the difference in the amount of trade for that period and other periods might not be so great as the sources indicate. Records for other periods might not be complete. He also thinks that the Chinese paid for unwanted horses out of their fear of the Uighurs.⁸⁶ Moses suggests that it was their ignorance of the Uighur decline, and their ongoing fear of the Uighurs that made the Chinese continue to send them enormous amounts of silk.⁸⁷

One should not forget, however, that China always needed horses, especially after losing its good pastures in the Longyou region to Tibet as a result of the An Lushan rebellion. Purchase seems to have been the way selected by the Tang government to meet this demand. The questions then are how many horses Tang needed, and whether it could afford to buy as many as it wanted. In 787, when Tang decided to change its pro-Tibetan policy to one of seeking an alliance with the Uighurs, one of the supporting arguments for the change was that China was in need of horses. Li Mi, the advocate of the pro-Uighur policy, said that if Tang adopted the policy of the Uighur alliance, the price of horses inside China would decrease by ten times (90 per cent) within a few years.⁸⁸ In 815 and 816, according to the Chinese records, a large quantity of silk was given to the Uighurs in payment for horses.

Mackerras holds that it was because the court deemed it wise to pay up as a means of discouraging the feared invasion.⁸⁹ But the fact was that in 816 the court did need to buy horses for a campaign to suppress an internal rebellion started by a Military Commissioner. It sent eunuch envoys to purchase horses in the Hequ region (in modern Shanxi) with 20,000 rolls of silk. Upon the arrival of Uighur horses, the court paid 60,000 rolls of silk for them.⁹⁰ In 842, when the court decided to attack the Uighurs, it had to purchase horses from other non-Chinese along the border.⁹¹

It is, therefore, plausible to conclude that China kept the horse-silk

⁸⁶ Mackerras 1969, pp. 219-20.

⁸⁷ Moses 1976, p. 82.

⁸⁸ ZZTJ 233, p. 7501.

⁸⁹ Mackerras 1969, p. 219.

⁹⁰ XTS 50, p. 1339; THY 72, p. 1304.

⁹¹ Li Wenrao Wenji 14, p. 79; Drompp 1986, pp. 206-7.

trade not only because the trade would make the Uighurs a peaceful neighbor, but also because China itself did need horses, though it often could not afford to purchase a great number of them.

On the side of the Uighurs, in 779 and 790, there were succession crises,⁹² which might have made each of the contenders for power over the Uighur state to hope for peace with Tang. Also, the Uighurs would have wanted to maintain peaceful relations with Tang because of their own competition with Tibet, as we have seen. Several battles between the Uighurs and Tibetans took place between 808 and 821.

The first two decades of the ninth century were, under Baoyi Qaghan (r. 808-821), a time of renewed strength and prosperity for the Uighur empire.⁹³ Their dominion expanded to its greatest east-west extent, and cities like Beiting, Xizhou, Kucha and Karashahr became dependencies of the Uighurs. All of these cities were important posts on the Silk Road.⁹⁴

The conflict between the Uighurs and Tibet over Beiting may have made the Tibetans decide to conclude the peace treaty with Tang in 821. Following their sworn treaty with China in 821, the Tibetans made a peace agreement with the Uighurs and with the Nanzhao kingdom as well.⁹⁵ From then on, hostilities between the Uighurs and Tibet seem to have lessened.

Perhaps the most fundamental reason for the Uighurs' making peace with China was that through their contacts with China they underwent a gradual transformation from their nomadic life to a more settled, city life-style. Earlier the Uighurs, unlike the Turks, had kept up rather peaceful relations with China, and during their time of empire the military assistance they gave Tang made the Chinese rulers eager to accommodate their demands for trade, provision of goods and marriage contracts. Although the immediate motive of the Chinese was to purchase military assistance and peace in the frontier regions rather than to deliberately try to change the nature of the nomads, in the long run, these measures did have such an effect.

⁹² Haneda 1957, pp. 234-8; Moses 1976, p. 81.

⁹³ He is known as *Ai tängriḡä qut bulmïsh alp bilgä* Qaghan in the inscription of Karabalghasun. Hamilton 1988, p. 141.

⁹⁴ Haneda 1957, pp. 220-30; Mackerras 1972, p. 12; Beckwith 1987, pp. 163-7.

⁹⁵ Li Fang-kuei 1955, pp. 22-3; Richardson 1969, p. 35; Szerb 1983; Beckwith 1987, p. 167.

In his study of the Xiongnu empire, Barfield points out the success of the Xiongnu's China policy, which was aimed at exploiting the Han state from a distance, and which also set up a model for the later nomadic empires of the Turks and the Uighurs. He correctly concludes: "Without the Chinese economy to exploit, there could have been no great Xiongnu state."⁹⁶ He also points out that the Uighurs were successful in employing the same outer frontier strategy of exploiting China at a distance.⁹⁷

There was, however, one important inherent weakness in this strategy, as Pulleyblank observes: Chinese goods could also represent a dangerous form of economic seduction, and one which could destroy the basis of nomadic military superiority. He further points out that the attraction of Chinese goods did in fact result in changes within the Xiongnu economy and society, which were reflected in their going over to city-building and development of a limited practice of agriculture.⁹⁸ Barfield also concludes that city building with storage of goods as one of its purposes was a factor leading to the fall of the Uighur empire.⁹⁹

The seductive power of Chinese goods was well recognized by both the Chinese and non-Chinese from early Han times onward. Zhonghang Yue, a Chinese of the Han dynasty who had defected to the Xiongnu, once gave the reasons for the advantage held by the nomads over the agricultural Chinese. He noted that the Xiongnu population did not amount to that of a single commandery of Han, yet they could coerce the Chinese because their food and clothing were different, and they needed nothing from the Chinese. He warned that if the *chanyu* changed his customs and grew to like Chinese goods, the Chinese could make the Xiongnu submit without burdensome expenditure.¹⁰⁰ For their part, the Han Chinese believed that they could use Chinese goods to seduce the nomads and weaken their power, and therefore Jia Yi, the famous Han thinker, suggested the policy of "five baits," namely to provide material goods to the Xiongnu in order to corrupt them.¹⁰¹

The Turks realized that they should keep their distance from the Chinese, fully aware of the seductive effect that Chinese goods could have

⁹⁶ Barfield 1981, p. 59.

⁹⁷ Barfield 1989, p. 151.

⁹⁸ Pulleyblank Forthcoming.

⁹⁹ Barfield 1989, pp. 157-60.

¹⁰⁰ *SJ* 110, p. 2899; *HS* 94A, p. 3759.

¹⁰¹ Yü Ying-shi 1967, pp. 36-7.

on nomads, as is graphically described in one of the Old Turkish inscriptions.¹⁰² They intentionally kept their mobility. When Bilgā Qaghan of the second Turkish empire wanted to build walled towns, his minister Tonyuquq rejected the idea firmly on the grounds that the Turkish population was small, not equal to one percent of the Tang Chinese. But they could constantly resist Tang precisely because they moved about, and therefore, when they were strong they could advance their forces and plunder, and when they were weak they could hide away in the mountains and forests. Though the Tang had large armies, they had no way to employ them. He warned that if the Turks built towns, settled down and changed their old customs, once they suffered a defeat, they would certainly be swallowed up by the Chinese.¹⁰³

The Uighurs felt secure in their own identity and took seriously to heart the lessons on the dangers of settled culture. Von Gabain points out that the Uighurs were confident of their power and ability to combine a nomadic and city life-style. Their founding father, Bayan chor, built a capital city, and the Uighurs built palaces and towns.¹⁰⁴ Villages and agricultural production also developed.¹⁰⁵ The presence of such things was noted by the Arabic traveler Tamim ibn Bahr, who visited the capital of the Uighurs and saw that

this is a great town, rich in agriculture and . . . full of cultivation and villages lying close together. The town has twelve iron gates of huge size. The town is populated and thickly crowded and has markets and various trades. Among its population the Zindiq religion [Manichaeism] prevails.¹⁰⁶

The *Zizhi Tongjian* concludes that it was because of the rich rewards from the Chinese that the qaghan began to build palaces and as a consequence the Uighur customs deteriorated due to the newly luxurious life-style.¹⁰⁷ City building must have gradually resulted in a loss of mobility, thus weakening the basic advantage of the nomads. But city-building became a

¹⁰² "The Kül Tigin Inscription." See Tekin 1968, pp. 261-2.

¹⁰³ *JTS* 194A, p. 5174; *XTS* 215B, p. 6052; *ZZTJ* 211, p. 6722.

¹⁰⁴ Von Gabain 1949; Mackerras 1972, p. 13.

¹⁰⁵ Mackerras 1972, pp. 13-4. For more information concerning the changes the Uighur empire underwent, see Feng Jiasheng and others 1981, pp. 23-31.

¹⁰⁶ Minorsky 1947, p. 283.

¹⁰⁷ *ZZTJ* 226, p. 7282.

necessity for them in order to store the goods they were accumulating.

The influence of the Sogdians was also a very important factor in the process of transition. The Sogdians were famous for their role in international trade on the Silk Road. Their role as intermediary merchants can be traced as far back as the Han dynasty. Such intermediary commerce had, therefore, long since become a way of life for the Sogdians. During the period of the Turkish empire, the Sogdians exerted important influences, both economic and political, on the Turkish rulers.¹⁰⁸ In the time of the Uighur empire, their influence continued and became even more profound and penetrating. Many modern historians give evidence for this influence.¹⁰⁹

Although the Sogdians in 779 encouraged Böğü Qaghan to launch a military attack on Tang, for the most part, their role seems more to have been to stimulate Uighur interest in trade with China. The large quantities of silk that the Uighurs received through trade with China obviously could not all be consumed within the empire. Most of the silk products must have been re-exported to other states, or even sold to the Chinese frontier troops.¹¹⁰ Many Sogdian and Uighur merchants took up residence in Chang'an and became money-lenders.¹¹¹ As their economy and state power depended more and more on trade with China, the Uighurs would naturally come to prefer peace rather than war.

It remains a question whether their conversion to Manicheanism "civilized" the Uighurs and reduced their belligerence.¹¹² Böğü Qaghan was converted to the religion, perhaps through Sogdian priests, when he was in Luoyang in 763. In the trilingual inscription at Karabalgasun on the River Orkhon, Manicheanism is praised as a civilizing influence because it turned the Uighurs from a people who practiced "the abnormal custom of blood sacrifices into a region of vegetarians, from a state which indulged in excessive killing to a nation which exhorts righteousness." In the long run, the religion may have functioned to reduce the belligerence of the empire, but certainly not in the short run. Böğü Qaghan was the most aggressive in his policy towards China of all the Uighur qaghan. His

¹⁰⁸ Pulleyblank 1952; Mori Masao 1967, pp. 61-93.

¹⁰⁹ Feng Jiasheng and others 1981, pp. 28-9; Mackerras 1972, p. 10; Barfield 1989, pp. 157-60.

¹¹⁰ Jagchid 1971, pp. 21-4.

¹¹¹ Mackerras 1972, pp. 48-9.

¹¹² For example, Grousset (1970, p. 122) holds that the conversion to Manicheanism made the Uighurs less aggressive.

reliance on the Sogdians and his consequent favoring of their religion caused resentment among his own people and led to his downfall in 779 when Dun Mohe Dagan overthrew the rule of Bögü Qaghan.¹¹³

End of the Uighur Empire: China Abandons the Alliance, 840-847

Between 832 and 840, a series of succession crises among the Uighurs gravely weakened their empire. In 840, an Uighur general led 100,000 Kirghiz cavalry to attack the Uighur qaghan. The empire had already suffered a natural disaster, and this crushing blow caused its final collapse. The Uighurs dispersed.

One branch moved westward to the Hexi region, Kucha and the Qarluq area.¹¹⁴ Two other groups decided to go southward to China. One of them was headed by prince Wamosi (Ormïzt), Chief Ministers Chixin and Pugu, and Prince Najiechuo (Naghïd Chor). Another was led by Ögä Qaghan, enthroned in early 841. These two groups were rivals.¹¹⁵

Chief Minister Li Deyu (in office 833-834; 840-847) played an important role in the decision-making process during this period, and on behalf of Wuzong, he drafted many important orders and letters pertaining to relations with the non-Chinese,¹¹⁶ which provide us with detailed information for the study of the events of this period.

Ormïzt's group arrived at the fortified town of Tiande, (near the great loop of the Yellow River),¹¹⁷ in the autumn of 840 and asked to submit to Tang. The imperial commissioner of the Tiande Army reported this to the court. Uncertain of the real intentions of the Uighurs, the court gave orders to reinforce the frontier defense.¹¹⁸ In the following year, the Imperial Commissioner of the Tiande Army, Tian Mou, and the Army Supervisor proposed an attack on this group with Tang troops being joined by the Tuyuhun, Shatuo Turks and Dangxiang, all traditional enemies of the Uighurs.

¹¹³ Von Gabain 1949; Haneda 1957, p. 307; Mackerras 1972, pp. 9-10; p. 36; pp. 152-3, note 146; Feng Jiasheng and others 1981, pp. 34-6; Liu, S. N 1985, pp. 193-4.

¹¹⁴ Haneda 1957, pp. 265-71; Moriyasu 1977, pp. 105-30; Feng Jiasheng and others 1981, pp. 39-61; Yang Shengmin 1991, pp. 208-22.

¹¹⁵ Drompp 1986, p. 13.

¹¹⁶ For a detailed study of Li's role in Tang-Uighur relations during this time, see Drompp 1986; for a detailed textual study of relations between Tang and the Uighurs from 840 to the end of Tang, see Haneda 1957, pp. 249-64.

¹¹⁷ ZZTJ 239, p. 7700.

¹¹⁸ ZZTJ 246, p. 7947; p. 7953; Haneda 1957, pp. 241-2; Drompp 1986, pp. 10-1.

In the discussion at court, many agreed with this bellicose policy. Li Deyu, on the other hand, argued that the Uighurs had previously performed meritorious services for China and that therefore Tang should deal peacefully with them and make them submissive. The basic point in Li's argument was that the Tiande armies were not strong enough to launch an attack and if they were defeated, the walled town itself might be lost. At the same time, he believed that Tian Mou's plan was motivated by his wish for personal revenge against the Uighurs. Li insisted that no attacks should be launched, since the Chamberlain of the Court for State Ceremonials who was on a mission to investigate the situation, had not yet returned from the frontier, and no one was sure of the Uighurs' real situation.

Wuzong decided to follow Li's advice.¹¹⁹ In his letter to Ormïzt, Li Deyu, on behalf of the emperor, urged Ormïzt to support the newly established qaghan and withdraw from the Chinese frontier.¹²⁰

Toward the end of 841, conflicts sprang up within Ormïzt's group. Ormïzt informed Tian Mou of Chixin's intention to attack across the Tang frontier and, having enticed them into his encampment, Tian Mou killed Chixin and Pugu. Naghïd Chor fled eastward to Youzhou, hard against the Chinese frontier. Li Deyu suggested military action against him.

In the spring of 842, armies under the Lulong Military Commissioner, now on good terms with the central government, decisively defeated Naghïd Chor. His troops received assistance from the Khitan and Xi, who now turned to Tang. Naghïd Chor fled but was captured and killed by Ögä Qaghan.¹²¹ The Khitan were given Tang official titles in 842.¹²² Urged on by Li Deyu, the court decided to accept Ormïzt's submission. He was given official titles, his troops were reorganized as the Guiyi Army and the Li surname was bestowed on him and his brothers.¹²³ In 843, he asked for permission to return to the Tang capital from the frontiers, and his troops, the Guiyi Army, were ordered to disband. But the army refused to obey and, because considered rebellious, many of them

¹¹⁹ Haneda 1957, pp. 241-2; *Li Wenrao Wenji* 13, pp. 68-9; Drompp 1986, pp. 20-5.

¹²⁰ *Li Wenrao Wenji* 5, pp. 25-6; Drompp 1986, pp. 28-31.

¹²¹ *JTS* 180, pp. 4677-8; *XTS* 212, p. 5980; *ZZTJ* 246, pp. 7959-62; Haneda 1957, pp. 243-8; Drompp 1986, pp. 56-8; pp. 108-11, notes 150, 151.

¹²² *JTS* 180, p. 4678; 199B, p. 5354; *XTS* 219, p. 6172.

¹²³ *Li Wenrao Wenji* 13, p. 73; *ZZTJ* 246, pp. 7960-3; pp. 7965-6; Drompp 1986, pp. 58-65.

were executed.¹²⁴

Relations between the Tang court and Ögä Qaghan were more complex. The qaghan and his followers crossed the Gobi Desert to arrive at the Tiande Army on the Tang frontier in the winter of 841-842. The Chinese Princess Taihe, who had gone to marry the former Uighur qaghan, asked the Tang court to invest Ögä as qaghan and Ögä also sent a request for permission to settle in Tiande.¹²⁵ Holding the Princess as a hostage, Ögä Qaghan repeatedly made requests for Tang supplies of food, for permission to borrow a frontier town, for Tang to hand over Ormïzt, and for support in recovering his political power. He also expressed concern for the Manicheans within China, whose temples in southern China had been closed by the Tang government.

Yet there is no evidence in the record to suggest that he really intended to submit to the Chinese. In response to all these requests, Tang only agreed to provide some grain. The court at first planned to recognize the qaghan's position. In the third month of 842, an envoy was sent to deliver a diploma of appointment as qaghan to Ögä, but he was ordered to proceed at a leisurely pace and to wait until Ögä had firmly established his power before completing his mission. However, Ögä made constant raids on the Chinese frontiers. The envoy never did reach the Uighurs.

Evidently, the court did not intend to accept the Ögä Qaghan as the Han had accepted the Southern Xiongnu, the Sui the Eastern Turks under Qimin qaghan, or Tang Taizong the Eastern Turks. Instead, it urged the qaghan to leave the Chinese frontier and return to the region south of the Gobi. Since Ögä feared an attack by Naghïd Chor, the court eliminated the Naghïd Chor's group so that the qaghan would feel secure in returning to his land. It also sent full payment for the purchase of the horses he had delivered, hoping that the Uighurs would leave once they got the payment.¹²⁶

Ögä refused to leave. His people continued to engage in raids on the Chinese border areas.¹²⁷ It is clear that the Uighurs made these raids because they needed food supplies to survive. Seeing the weakness of the Uighurs, Li Deyu now proposed the use of force. This was also urged by Du Mu, the famous prose stylist, then holding office as Secretariat Drafter

¹²⁴ *Li Wenrao Wenji* 7, p. 39; *ZZTJ* 247, p. 7973; p. 7976; Drompp 1986, pp. 245-8.

¹²⁵ Haneda 1957, pp. 238-41; Drompp 1986, pp. 37-8.

¹²⁶ *Li Wenrao Wenji* 5, pp. 21-2; pp. 22-3; *ZZTJ* 246, pp. 7959-63; Drompp 1986, pp. 43-50; p. 56; pp. 116-22; pp. 131-4.

¹²⁷ *ZZTJ* 246, p. 7963.

(*zhongshu sheren*).¹²⁸ Li Deyu was also worried over the possibility of a Uighur-Tibetan alliance.

In the court discussions held in the latter part of 842, Li Deyu's aggressive policy was opposed by his factional rival Niu Sengru, a former Chief Minister, but now with no actual power, who favored a defensive policy. Wuzong agreed with Li. The court decided to launch an attack the following spring with Ormïzt in command of the Qibi, Shatuo and Tuyuhun tribesmen, and the Military Commissioner of Lulong leading the Chinese troops, joined by the Xi, Khitan and Shiwei in the northeast.¹²⁹

An imperial letter written by Li Deyu and addressed to the Princess Taihe said that the Uighurs had recklessly invaded and plundered Chinese borders. It went on: "You are their queen, able to command. If the Uighurs cannot accept your command, then this is [tantamount to] renunciation of our good marriage connections. From today hence, they must not use you, Our Paternal Aunt, as an excuse."¹³⁰ The letter was in fact a declaration severing the relationship between the Uighurs and the Chinese.

Early in 843, the Chinese inflicted a decisive defeat on Ögä. Ormïzt, as Uighur Bandit-Suppression Commissioner of Southwest Direction (*Huihu xinanmian zhaotao shi*), joined in. Ögä Qaghan fled northeast to the Heichezi Shiwei. Princess Taihe returned to Tang and 20,000 Uighurs submitted to China. After this victory, Tang ordered that all the properties inside China owned by Uighurs and all of the Manichean temples built mainly for the Uighurs should be confiscated.¹³¹

By 842 the Kirghiz had already taken control over Beiting, Anxi and five tribes of Tatars.¹³² In 843, after Ögä's defeat, Wuzong intended to ask the Kirghiz to return Anxi and Beiting, but Li Deyu did not agree on the grounds that Tang did not have enough troops to station there and that material goods should not be expended for the sake of an empty name. When the Kirghiz expressed the wish to have Tang confer on their leader the title of qaghan and to move to the former Uighur territory, the emperor was afraid that this would lead to demands from the Kirghiz like those earlier made by the Uighurs.

¹²⁸ *JTS* 147, p. 3986; *XTS* 166, p. 5097.

¹²⁹ *Li Wenrao Wenji* 14, p. 75; *ZZTJ* 246, pp. 7966-7; Drompp 1986, pp. 148-50. For the specific points raised by Li Deyu and Niu Sengru on this matter, see Drompp 1986, pp. 177-84.

¹³⁰ Drompp 1986, p. 160.

¹³¹ *Li Wenrao Wenji* 3, p. 13; *XTS* 217B, p. 6133; Drompp 1986, pp. 236-7.

¹³² *ZZTJ* 246, p. 7968.

Li Deyu argued that if Tang wanted to use the Kirghiz force to defeat the Uighurs, they had better recognize their leader as qaghan. The emperor agreed.¹³³ Li Deyu then had a letter sent on behalf of the emperor to the Kirghiz, urging them to destroy the Uighurs and promising to confer the imperial title on their chieftain.¹³⁴

In 845, the court decided to send a mission to the Kirghiz to confer the title of qaghan on their ruler. The mission was stopped when Wuzong died. The new emperor Xuanzong removed Li Deyu from his post, and abandoned the plan of title conferment.¹³⁵ Soon after in 847, however, Xuanzong returned to the original plan. This move was perhaps intended to encourage the Kirghiz to overthrow the Uighurs, since only a month before the departure of the mission, Tibet had joined the Uighurs in making an incursion into Hexi.¹³⁶

Ögä Qaghan was killed in 846, either at the hands of his Chief Minister or of the Heichezi Shiwei, who had initially provided him with refuge and had then fallen out with him.¹³⁷ Other Uighurs had migrated to the Western Regions and settled down, engaging in agriculture as well as pastoralism and trade. No longer steppe nomads, their threat to the agricultural society of China had disappeared.

The Kirghiz, for their part, kept up a peaceful relationship with China. Unlike other nomadic peoples, such as the Turks, the Uighurs or the Khitan, who exploited Chinese support to sustain their state power, the Kirghiz never developed a state organization and never posed much threat to China. The reason may lie in the fact that their political center was geographically distant from China, so that they could or would not develop a secondary state on the periphery of China. They were not interested in, or familiar with, the techniques for dealing with an agricultural society.¹³⁸

In Central and East Asia's international politics, the alliance between China and the Uighurs, even when the latter were still part of the Tiele people, was conspicuously different from Chinese relations with

¹³³ ZZTJ 247, pp. 7973-4; Drompp 1986, pp. 283-6.

¹³⁴ ZZTJ 247, pp. 7975-6; *Li Wenrao Wenji* 6, pp. 26-7; Drompp 1986, pp. 276-82.

¹³⁵ XTS 217B, p. 6150; Drompp 1986, p. 332.

¹³⁶ XTS 172, p. 5204; ZZTJ 248, p. 8030; Drompp 1986, pp. 332-3.

¹³⁷ ZZTJ 248, p. 8025; Haneda 1957, pp. 262-4; Drompp 1986, pp. 333-4.

¹³⁸ Barfield 1989, pp. 164-5.

other peoples. Although often subjugated to the Tujue power, the Tiele kept their cultural identity, and were often allies of the Chinese against the Turks. The Tiele helped Sui win a decisive victory over the Tuyuhun in 608-609, and in 627-628 the rebellions of the Tiele against their Turkish rulers provided an excellent opportunity for Taizong to exploit in his conquest of the Eastern Turks. Taizong's success in the conquest of the Xueyantuo in 646 should also be attributed partly to the rebellion of the Uighurs against the Xueyantuo.

From 647 to 679, like the submitted Turks, thirteen Tiele tribes, including the Uighurs, were brought under the Chinese *jimi fuzhou* system. Though they sometimes rebelled the Uighurs played an important role in Tang frontier campaigns as a supporting force. During the second Turkish empire, while some Tiele were incorporated by the nomadic power, others came over to China to settle on the frontier. Finally, under Qulligh Boila in 744, the Uighurs succeeded in overthrowing the Tujue and replacing them as the dominant power on the steppe. They soon grew to be a strong steppe power, and even subjugated the Khitan and Xi peoples in Manchuria.

Compared with the Turks in the time of their first and second empires, the Uighur empire during its century-long existence had a very different pattern of relationship with China. The Uighurs did not resort to war or raids as often. They had demonstrated their military superiority in their military assistance to Tang's suppression of the An Lushan rebellion, and as a consequence were able to make Tang provide large subsidies and keep up the horse-silk trade, which developed on a much more stable basis than in the time of the earlier Turkish empires.

The alliance was kept going because the Chinese and Uighurs had a common enemy in Tibet, as they had in the Turks earlier. The alliance was mostly due to Tang initiatives, especially including its highly tolerant attitude towards the Uighur demand for equality and the series of compromises it made. The Chinese provided large subsidies, kept up the horse-silk trade, and on three occasions sent daughters of the emperor himself to marry the qaghans. At a high price, the policy diverted the Uighurs from becoming an enemy and kept them as allies.

Although Tang and the Uighurs followed the formalities of the tribute system, with regular political investiture of the Uighur rulers by the Chinese emperors and frequent tributary delegations from the Uighurs, thus maintaining the outward appearance of Chinese superiority, in reality the Chinese accepted the Uighur empire as an equal power. The Chinese

sometimes even had to accept an inferior status.

It is important to note that although the Chinese accommodation to the Uighurs was primarily for the purpose of purchasing military assistance and maintaining peace in the frontier regions, in effect it functioned as a catalyst in the economic and social transition of the Uighur empire from a nomadic into a more sedentary society. In addition to reducing their propensity to raid Chinese territory, this made the Uighurs rely more on the Chinese economy than had any previous nomadic power.

When the Uighur empire finally collapsed under the attacks of their traditional enemy, the Kirghiz, the Khitan and Xi also turned against their Uighur overlords. At this point, Tang was anxious to dispose of the Uighurs as quickly as possible. The court accepted the Uighurs under Ormïzt only when this group was weakened by internal disputes, but Tang launched attacks with the assistance of the Khitan and Xi on other groups of Uighurs. It refused to take in the Uighurs under Ögä Qaghan, while keeping up relations with the Kirghiz who finally helped Tang to crush Ögä Qaghan. Remnants of the Uighurs settled in the oases of Central Asia and ceased to be a threat.