

## Chapter 10

### Tang, Tibet and Nanzhao in the Post-An Lushan Period

From the end of the An Lushan rebellion until the 820's, Tibet became the most formidable foreign threat to Tang. It occupied the Hexi and Longyou areas in modern Ningxia and Gansu, directly threatening the Tang capital, and cut off communications between China and the Western Regions. With the change of the balance of power in favor of Tibet, Tang's rulers struggled to cope with the Tibetan invasions on their own and through alliances with the Uighurs and the Nanzhao state. A number of treaties were made which are of interest for the history of foreign relations but which, except for the last one in 822, had little effect in maintaining peace. When Tibet finally declined in power, Nanzhao emerged as a new threat on the southwestern frontier.

#### Coping with the Tibetan Invasions, 756-764

When Suzong assumed the throne at Lingwu in 756, a new *btsan-po* in Tibet also began his reign. In 756 and 757, the *btsan-po* volunteered to provide assistance to Tang in suppressing the rebels and asked to contract a marriage.<sup>1</sup> While Tang made a matrimonial<sup>2</sup> and military alliance with the Uighurs, Suzong merely expressed his appreciation to the Tibetans and sent a mission to them in 757.<sup>3</sup>

The reason for Tang's distrust of the Tibetans was obvious. Soon after the outbreak of the rebellion, Tang's northwestern frontiers had been left vulnerable and exposed when all the major armies were withdrawn in order to confront the rebels. The Tibetan forces that had previously pressed against the frontiers were carried on into the vacuum by their momentum, and without much additional effort, expanded into the Chinese He-Long region. Almost overnight, Tang had seemingly lost all the advantage it had previously enjoyed over Tibet. In 756, Tibet captured several

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<sup>1</sup> *JTS* 10, p. 243; p. 246; *XTS* 216A, p. 6087; *ZZTJ* 218, p. 6992; *THY* 97, p. 1733; *CFYG* 973, p. 11434; 979, p. 11504.

<sup>2</sup> *JTS* 10, p. 244; 195, p. 5198; *XTS* 81, p. 3592; 217A, p. 6115; *ZZTJ* 219, p. 7005; *CFYG* 979, p. 11504.

<sup>3</sup> *JTS* 10, p. 246; *XTS* 216A, p. 6087; *CFYG* 979, p. 11504.

army stations and towns inside the Tang northwestern frontiers,<sup>4</sup> and by 763 had annexed all the land under the administration of the Military Commissioners of Hexi and Longyou.<sup>5</sup> On the southwestern frontier, Tibet allied itself with Nanzhao to capture Suizhou, and from the 750's to the 770's, Nanzhao remained an ally of Tibet.

A Tibetan embassy arrived at the Tang court in 762 with an offer of peace and Tang agreed to conclude a treaty. Unfortunately, there is no information in the sources about discussions that must have gone on at the Chinese court before this proposal was accepted. Presumably, there was a hope that such a treaty would slow or stop the Tibetan advance towards the Chinese capital.

On this occasion, Tibet made Tang accept Tibetan ritual practice. Suzong ordered Chief Ministers Guo Ziyi and two others to hold a banquet for the Tibetans in the Secretariat and to go to the Guangzhai Temple to conclude the sworn covenant. The Tibetan envoy insisted that according to Tibetan custom, if a sworn treaty was made by getting blood from the three victims and smearing it on one's lips, it should not be done in a Buddhist temple. He asked to have the ceremony performed again the next day in the Court of State Ceremonials in order to complete the requirements of the rituals of Tibet. Suzong agreed, with the hope of appeasing the "barbarians."<sup>6</sup> Even though the Chinese accepted the Tibetan request, there was deep distrust of and hostility toward the Tibetans. Well aware of the Tibetan threat, Guo Ziyi repeatedly warned the court of the necessity to prepare for war.<sup>7</sup>

No sooner had the oath been taken than the Tibetans launched a formidable offensive. In 763, they detained two Chinese envoys of high rank and did not send them back until two years later.<sup>8</sup> In the autumn, the Tibetans pressed forward toward the Tang capital with their own troops

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<sup>4</sup> ZZTJ 218, p. 7011.

<sup>5</sup> JTS 196A, p. 5236; XTS 216A, p. 6087; ZZTJ 218, p. 7000.

Cen Zhongmin in *Sui-Tang Shi* has a table of when the Chinese prefectures were lost to Tibet, see his 1957, pp. 275-6.

<sup>6</sup> JTS 196A, pp. 5236-7; XTS, 216A, p. 6087; ZZTJ 222, p. 7118; CFYG 981, p. 11528. Previously scholars have misread the texts at this point and have taken them as evidence that blood sacrifice was a Tibetan custom. Stein (1988, pp. 134-5) argues convincingly that the animal sacrifices carried out by the Tibetans on the occasion of treaties with the Chinese were performed in order to conform to Chinese custom and were not a relic of native Tibetan practice from pre-Buddhist times.

<sup>7</sup> ZZTJ 222, p. 7143.

<sup>8</sup> JTS 196A, p. 5237; XTS 216A, p. 6087; ZZTJ 222, p. 7143.



and contingents of Tuyuhun and Qiang. Emperor Daizong had to flee to Shaanzhou before he could organize any resistance. A Tang general rebelled, hoping to establish a Tang prince as emperor and have him surrender to the Tibetans. The plan failed and the prince was sent to Daizong and executed.<sup>9</sup>

In the tenth month, however, the Tibetans, guided by the surrendered Prefect of Jingzhou, entered Chang'an. The prefect and the Tibetan general Ma Chongying<sup>10</sup> established Li Chenghong, Princess Jincheng's brother, as emperor, started a new reign title, and appointed Chief Ministers and other court officials. During their fifteen day occupation, they plundered the city and burned down many of its houses. The Tibetans were going to take with them Chinese officials, women and artisans, but the plan failed when they had to withdraw in haste out of fear of a Tang counterattack led by Vice Marshal Guo Ziyi.<sup>11</sup> Chenghong was exiled and soon died.<sup>12</sup>

Although the Chang'an crisis was over, the Tibetans achieved success on another front: they captured some prefects on Tang's southwestern border.<sup>13</sup> According to the Tibetan Ngan Lam Stag Sgra Klu Khong Inscription, the military campaigns that Tibet carried out against China had compelled the Emperor Suzong to offer a perpetual yearly tribute of fifty thousand rolls of silk, and when the next emperor Daizong did not continue the tribute the Tibetans launched the attack on Chang'an.<sup>14</sup>

The Tibetan invasion of Chang'an exposed a basic problem within the Tang government: the mistrust between the emperor, represented by

<sup>9</sup> *JTS* 11, pp. 273-4; 107, p. 3270; *XTS* 82, p. 3614; *ZZTJ* 223, pp. 7150-1.

<sup>10</sup> Li Fang-Kuei conjectures that Ma Chongying was the Chinese name of Ngan Lam Stag Sgra Klu Khong. See his 1956, pp. 1-8.

<sup>11</sup> The above sequence of events follows the account in *ZZTJ* 223, pp. 7150-4. *ZZTJ* says that Chenghong was the grandson of Prince Bin, Li Shouli. See also *CFYG* 39, p. 439; 358, p. 4248. But this must be mistaken because, according to the following sources, Chenghong was the son of Shouli. See *JTS* 86, p. 2834; 196A, p. 5237; *XTS* 81, p. 3592. Chenghong's sister was Princess Jincheng, who was the daughter of Li Shouli.

<sup>12</sup> *JTS* 86, p. 2834; *XTS* 81, p. 3592; *ZZTJ* 223, p. 7158.

<sup>13</sup> *ZZTJ* 223, pp. 7158-9.

<sup>14</sup> Richardson 1952, p. 21; Sato 1959, pp. 523-6; Wang Yao 1982, pp. 91-2. Wang Yao says that the annual payment of fifty thousand rolls of silk was agreed to by the Chinese in order to obtain Tibetan assistance in suppressing Zhu Ci's rebellion. This is impossible because the rebellion took place between 786 and 787, which was during Dezong's reign, and according to the inscription the payment was made before the Tibetan invasion of Chang'an.

his eunuch adviser, and the military. Under Daizong, the eunuch Cheng Yuanzhen assumed great power. Cheng eliminated those who opposed him or threatened his position, including the famous general Guo Ziyi, who was removed from his post at this time.<sup>15</sup> When the Tibetans invaded, Cheng Yuanzhen at first kept the emperor from learning of the imminent danger. Guo Ziyi was reappointed, but was able to muster only a small force of twenty cavalymen and could not prevent the Tibetan advance on the capital.<sup>16</sup> When Daizong sent orders to the various armies in the east to come to the rescue, the powerful general Li Guangbi and others in command of large armies did not come because of their resentment of the eunuchs.<sup>17</sup>

The critical situation at court and the urgency of reform were forcefully expressed in a memorial by Liu Kang, Erudite of the Chamberlain for Ceremonials (*taichang boshi*), who urged Daizong to execute Cheng Yuanzhen, drive out all the eunuchs and issue an edict of self-blame so as to summon rescuing troops. In response to this pressure, Daizong dismissed Cheng Yuanzhen from all his posts in 763.<sup>18</sup> But after his return to the capital, Daizong entrusted Yu Chaoen with command of the Palace Armies and the Shence Army, thus further increasing the power of the eunuchs.

### **Tibetan Support for Pugu Huairen's Rebellion in 764-765 and the Treaty of 765**

Soon after the Tibetan occupation was over, another crisis occurred. When Pugu Huairen rose in rebellion in 764, the Tibetans joined him in moving against the Tang capital. However, their joint force retreated after encountering Guo Ziyi.<sup>19</sup>

Despite this latest betrayal, in the third month of 765 Tang concluded another sworn covenant for peace with Tibet but, on the advice of Guo Ziyi, distrusted Tibetan intentions and prepared to defend the capital against yet another attack.<sup>20</sup>

The Tibetans did indeed soon again join Pugu Huairen, along with the Uighurs, Dangxiang Qiang and Tuyuhun in an expedition aimed at

<sup>15</sup> *JTS* 120, pp. 3455-6; *XTS* 137, p. 4603; *ZZTJ* 222, p. 7130.

<sup>16</sup> *JTS* 120, pp. 3455-6; *ZZTJ* 223, pp. 7150-1.

<sup>17</sup> *JTS* 110, pp. 3310-1; *XTS* 136, p. 4590; *ZZTJ* 223, p. 7155.

<sup>18</sup> *JTS* 11, p. 274; *ZZTJ* 223, pp. 7155-6.

<sup>19</sup> *JTS* 121, pp. 3477-8; *XTS* 224A, pp. 6365-6; *ZZTJ* 223, p. 7166; pp. 7167-9.

<sup>20</sup> *JTS* 196A, p. 5239; *XTS* 216A, p. 6088; *ZZTJ* 223, p. 7174; *CFYG* 980, p. 11512.



Chang'an. As mentioned in the last chapter, when Pugu fell ill and died, the Chinese persuaded the Uighurs to change sides, allowing Tang to inflict a heavy defeat on the Tibetans in two battles. Thus was the threat to Chang'an relieved.<sup>21</sup>

### China on the Defensive, 766-778

After the confrontation during Pugu Huairen's rebellion, Tibet and Tang again exchanged envoys and negotiated for peace in 766 and 767, though Tibet continued to launch raids on the border.<sup>22</sup> In the fourth month of 767 the Chinese concluded a covenant with a Tibetan envoy in the Xing Tang Temple.<sup>23</sup> This was the third time within five years that the two sides had held an oath-taking ceremony, and for the third time nevertheless failed to maintain any lasting peace. Following raids on Lingzhou in the ninth month, a Tibetan mission arrived at the Tang court accompanied by the Chinese envoy to Tibet, through whom the *btsan-po* requested demarcation of the border at Fenglin Pass. Daizong did not, however, give any reply to him.<sup>24</sup>

From then until 778, shortly before the end of Daizong's reign, several more peace missions were exchanged, while Tibet continued to make frequent border incursions, mostly in autumn during the Chinese harvest season when the Tibetan horses were well fed. Though the Tibetan court apparently had the intention of making peace, the Tibetan frontier generals preferred constant raids. The situation was such that "no sooner have the ritual gifts of Tibet reached the court than the beacon fires are lit right up to the suburbs of the capital."<sup>25</sup>

To cope with the Tibetan incursions, Chief Minister Yuan Zai, who was familiar with the northwestern frontier situation, since he had formerly been Prefect of Xizhou, suggested in 773 that Tang build walled towns in Yuanzhou (in modern Ningxia). He also repeatedly suggested the removal of the capital to Hezhong (in southern Shaanxi), both moves being intended to assure a better defense. His suggestions were opposed by a Military Commissioner on the grounds that a scholar's advice should not be trusted on such an important affair. In the end, nothing was done. Yuan

<sup>21</sup> Mackerras 1972, pp. 26-9.

<sup>22</sup> *JTS* 11, p. 284; 196B, p. 5243; *XTS* 6, p. 172; *ZZTJ* 224, p. 7190.

<sup>23</sup> *JTS* 11, pp. 286-7; *XTS* 216B, p. 6091; *ZZTJ* 224, p. 7195; *CFYG* 980, p. 11512.

<sup>24</sup> *JTS* 196B, p. 5243; *XTS* 216B, p. 6091; *ZZTJ* 224, p. 7196; *CFYG* 997, p. 11704.

<sup>25</sup> *CFYG* 992, p. 11656.

lost favor and was ordered to commit suicide in 777.<sup>26</sup>

For the most part, the Chinese assumed a passively defensive position. Their military force was far less strong than that of the Tibetans. In 774 when holding discussions with Daizong, Guo Ziyi talked about the Tibetan problem with tears running down his cheeks. He offered to resign as commander because of his inability to defend the country, but the emperor would not allow it.<sup>27</sup>

### **Dezong: Alliance with Tibet, 779-783**

On his accession, Dezong made a drastic change in policy towards Tibet. During Daizong's time the Tibetans had sent several diplomatic missions proposing peace while engaging in constant hostilities on the borders. Daizong's response was to detain the envoys and send war captives to exile in the south. Soon after assuming the throne, instead of just passively defending the borders, Dezong took the initiative in making peace. He sent a friendly mission to Tibet headed by Wei Lun, ordered frontier troops not to make provocative attacks, and returned more than 500 Tibetan prisoners.<sup>28</sup> Wei Lun later used his experience as envoy to Tibet to offer advice and make proposals about Tibetan affairs.<sup>29</sup>

The change of policy may have resulted from two considerations. One was that peace with Tibet would alleviate the severe situation on the frontier so that the Chinese troops could be redeployed to suppress internal rebellions staged by provincial governors. Another was that to Dezong the Uighurs were a worse enemy than the Tibetans and, since he could not afford to have both as enemies at the same time, he had better win over the Tibetans. As mentioned in Chapter 9, he held a personal grudge against the Uighurs because in 762, before ascending the throne, he had suffered a great humiliation at their hands.

Before Wei Lun arrived in Tibet, however, the Tibetans had already made an alliance with Nanzhao and launched a major offensive on Tang's southwestern border. In the ensuing battles, Tang won a major victory.<sup>30</sup> The peace proposal put forward then by Tang received a positive response and produced an immediate result in the Tibetans' refusal to as-

<sup>26</sup> *JTS* 118, pp. 3411-2; *XTS* 145, pp. 4712-3; *ZZTJ* 224, p. 7224.

<sup>27</sup> *JTS* 120, pp. 3464-5; *XTS* 137, pp. 4607-8; *ZZTJ* 225, p. 7226.

<sup>28</sup> *JTS* 12, p. 323; 196B, p. 5245; *XTS* 7, p. 184; 216B, p. 6092; *ZZTJ* 226, pp. 7267-8; *THY* 97, p. 1734; *CFYG* 980, p. 11513.

<sup>29</sup> *JTS* 138, p. 3782; *XTS* 143, p. 4688.

<sup>30</sup> *JTS* 196B, p. 5245; *XTS* 216B, p. 6092-3; *ZZTJ* 226, pp. 7270-2.



sist a rebellious Chinese official in his attempt against the court in 780.<sup>31</sup>

To strengthen the peace, or perhaps pressed by Tibet, Wei Lun asked the emperor himself to compose the text of a sworn treaty. But Chief Minister Yang Yan objected, arguing that the two sides should not be put on an equal footing.<sup>32</sup> Except for this, Dezong was eager to accommodate the requests raised by the Tibetans. In the negotiations the Tibetans demanded to be treated as equals.

They made the following points: 1) because Tibet and Tang had a nephew-uncle relationship, Tibet should not be treated as a subject; 2) the demarcation line should be the Helan Mountains, west of Lingzhou; 3) each side should follow the rules stipulated in the Chinese decree of 708 requiring that when Tibetan and Tang envoys arrived at each other's capitals, the Tibetan *btsan-po* and the Chinese emperor should personally participate in the conclusion of any covenant. They also asked the Chinese to change some specific wordings in official correspondence to reflect the equality of the relationship between the two parties.<sup>33</sup>

In his reply Dezong agreed to all these demands. As Kaneko points out, from the Kaiyuan period on, the Tibetans had requested that Tang treat them as an equal power, but Tang's agreement to this came only in 781 with the change of wording in official letters.<sup>34</sup> As for the third request, since neither the Chinese emperor nor the Tibetan *btsan-po* actually participated personally in the ceremonies at the two capitals, one must ask the question whether the word *qin* "personally" simply meant that the ruler was represented by his ministers.

The court learned through the reports of the Chinese envoys that the Tibetans were having internal troubles. Tibetan Chief Minister Shang Jiexi (Zhang rGyal-zigs?<sup>35</sup>) took a militant attitude towards Tang, while minister Shang Jiezan (Zhang rGyal tshan) maintained that Tibet should decide on a demarcation line with Tang and make peace. The *btsan-po* had agreed with the latter and replaced Zhang rGyal-zigs with Zhang rGyal tshan.<sup>36</sup>

A peace treaty was concluded in 783. The Chinese sources provide

<sup>31</sup> *JTS* 118, pp. 3422-3; *XTS* 145, p. 4725; *ZZTJ* 226, p. 7279; p. 7281.

<sup>32</sup> *ZZTJ* 226, p. 7280.

<sup>33</sup> *JTS* 196B, p. 5246; *XTS* 216B, p. 6093; *CFYG* 981, p. 11528.

<sup>34</sup> Kaneko 1988, p. 97.

<sup>35</sup> Demiéville 1952, pp. 290-1, note 3.

<sup>36</sup> *JTS* 122, pp. 3502-3; 196B, p. 5246; *XTS* 216B, p. 6093; *CFYG* 980, pp. 11513-4.

much more detailed information concerning this treaty than for any previous agreements with Tibet. In the Chinese text of the oath, the Tang-Tibetan relationship is still referred to as between uncle and nephew, but the text also demonstrates the change of attitude by treating the Tibetans in a more serious way. Compared with the text of 732, which insisted on Chinese superiority, this text adopted a very pragmatic attitude, stating that China would renounce its former territorial claims, make firm the covenant and follow the treaty. The treaty provided for making a demarcation line straddled by a neutral territory, and stipulated that the places that theretofore had not had troops should not have new garrisons, nor should walled towns or fortifications be built, nor should there be plowing and sowing in the neutral territory.<sup>37</sup>

Three ceremonies were held in concluding the treaty. For the first ceremony, we have the most detailed information. It was held in the first month of 783 in Qingshui (in modern Gansu province), at that time within Tibetan territory. Each side despatched two thousand people to the ceremony with seven high-ranking officials participating in the oath taking. The Chinese side was headed by Zhang Yi, the Military Commissioner of Fengxiang and Longyou, a former Chief Minister. The Tibetans were led by the Chief Minister, Zhang rGyal tshan.

The Chinese sources say that Zhang Yi felt ashamed at having to make a treaty with Tibet. He tried to diminish the significance of the ceremony by suggesting that instead of the Chinese using an ox and the Tibetans using a horse as previously decided, they should use a sheep, pig and dog as sacrifices because the ox was the most prestigious sacrificial animal. He made the excuse that the Chinese could not plow without oxen and the Tibetans could not go anywhere without horses. Zhang rGyal tshan agreed. As a result, the Chinese used a dog and a white sheep and since no pig could be found there, Tibet used a wild ram.

On the Tibetan side, Zhang rGyal tshan also produced a text, which is no longer extant. After the blood sacrifice was carried out according to Chinese custom, Zhang rGyal tshan asked Zhang Yi to enter a tent at the southwest corner of the altar and burn incense to a Buddhist image and again swear an oath solemnizing the treaty.

The second ceremony was held in Chang'an between the Chief

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<sup>37</sup> For the treaty text, see *JTS* 196B, pp. 5247-8. For its translation, see Pan Yihong 1992a, pp. 155-6.



Ministers of both sides. The third was in Tibet.<sup>38</sup>

### **Tibetan Assistance in Tang's Suppression of the Rebellion of 783-784**

The peace treaty of 783 stabilized the frontier situation and made it possible for the Tang court to withdraw frontier troops and imperial armies and use them for the suppression of the internal rebellions by the semi-independent provincial governors in the northeast. This, however, also weakened the defenses of Chang'an. The Jingyuan troops rebelled in late 783 and, led by Zhu Ci, occupied Chang'an (Chapter 4). Dezong fled west to Fengtian.<sup>39</sup> He was forced to recall his armies from the northeast.<sup>40</sup>

During this crisis, Dezong also asked for military assistance from Tibet.<sup>41</sup> The Tibetans promised to assist, but this was not really because of the treaty of 783. Rather it was in response to a promise that Tang would make an annual payment of 10,000 rolls of silk,<sup>42</sup> and would cede to Tibet the territory of the Military Commissioners of Beiting and Anxi in the Western Regions.<sup>43</sup> The Chinese court had found out in 781 that the two Military Commissions there were still holding out against the Tibetans long after the An Lushan rebellion.<sup>44</sup>

The alliance with the Tibetans was difficult from the beginning.

<sup>38</sup> *JTS* 125, pp. 3547-8; 196B, pp. 5247-8; *XTS* 152, p. 4831; 216B, pp. 6093-4; *ZZTJ* 228, p. 7338; pp. 7343-4; p. 7347; *CFYG* 981, pp. 11529-30. The Chinese accounts say that there were seven Tibetan officials at the Qingshui ceremony, but the punctuation of the text creates some problems. According to the *Zhonghua Shuju* edition of the *JTS*, there are only six names of Tibetan officials. Some studies punctuate the text differently, see Bushell 1880, p. 488; Pelliot 1961, p. 43; Lee, Don Y 1981, p. 95.

<sup>39</sup> Liu Yat-ming 1970, pp. 127-31; Dalby 1979, pp. 582-4.

<sup>40</sup> Peterson 1979, p. 506.

<sup>41</sup> *ZZTJ* 228, p. 7368.

<sup>42</sup> *Lu Xuangong Hanyuanji* 10, pp. 66-7.

<sup>43</sup> This is according to *Lu Xuangong Hanyuanji* 10, pp. 64-5; pp. 66-7; *ZZTJ* 231, p. 7442; Sato 1959, pp. 641-2. Some sources say that Tang was to give up the land of four prefectures including Jingzhou and Lingzhou. See *JTS* 196B, p. 5252; *XTS* 216B, p. 6094; *CFYG* 981, p. 11531. Lü Simian (1959, p. 309) holds that Tang's supposed promise to give up Anxi and Beiting may have been a mistake in the sources, since Tibet would soon capture Anxi and Beiting by force, and would not have to ask Tang to hand those territories over. Lü also rejects the account of the concession of the four prefectures on the grounds that Jingzhou was so close to Chang'an that Tang could not have promised to give it up to Tibet.

<sup>44</sup> The Chinese sources are somewhat confused about the date of 781, according to a number of modern scholars, see Haneda 1957, pp. 212-3; Mackerras 1972, p. 163, note 199.

Zhang rGyal tshan insisted that, according to Tibetan custom, the mobilization of an army rested with the minister commanding the army. But the Tang edict did not have the signature of Li Huaiguang, the Military Commissioner of Shuofang and Hezhong. Li had been withdrawn from the campaign against the rebel Commissioners in the northeast to rescue the emperor and was then camped at Xianyang facing Zhu Ci. The Tibetans would not start to advance without his signature on the edict.

Unfortunately, Li was dissatisfied with the treatment he had received for relieving the emperor when besieged at Fengtian and was procrastinating over advancing on Chang'an with his own troops. He therefore refused to sign. He argued that if the Tibetans joined in the campaign, they would hang back and not commit their troops until they saw that the imperial troops were winning and would then join in to share in the credit, allow their troops to pillage the city, and demand the rewards that had been promised.<sup>45</sup> Soon after he himself withdrew east to Hezhong and rebelled against the court.

Dezong fled to Liangzhou, southwest of Chang'an. Finally the Tang envoy to Tibet, who was now with the Tibetan troops, had to forge a letter from the Chinese Vice Marshal on campaign, asking the Tibetans to act. After some hesitation, Zhang rGyal tshan despatched his troops to join the Tang force in recovering Wugong near Chang'an. He crushed a major force led by Zhu Ci in 784. This let the Tang troops march on to Chang'an.<sup>46</sup> The crisis ended in mid-784 when Zhu Ci was killed and the emperor returned to the capital.

It was during his exile that Dezong began to rely heavily on the Hanlin scholar, Lu Zhi, as personal adviser and secretary. Lu does not seem to have agreed with the plan to obtain Tibetan aid. Before the court recovered Chang'an from rebel occupation the Tibetans had withdrawn from China. They were suffering from plague and had also been bribed by Zhu Ci. When he heard of the retreat of the Tibetan troops, Dezong was worried, but Lu Zhi reassured him, saying that this was to be welcomed. He argued that the Tibetans were untrustworthy and that the Chinese generals had been worried that the Tibetans would attack from the rear or would not keep to the plan for joint action, and instead would try to reap all the merits of the campaign. The common people, who had been in fear

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<sup>45</sup> *JTS* 121, p. 3493; *XTS* 224A, p. 6377; *ZZTJ* 230, p. 7403.

<sup>46</sup> *JTS* 134, p. 3707; 196B, p. 5249; *XTS* 155, p. 4894; 216B, p. 6094; *ZZTJ* 230, p. 7416; p. 7422.



of Tibetan raids, would be relieved at their departure.<sup>47</sup>

### **The Breakdown of the Tibetan Alliance, 784-787**

Soon after Zhu Ci's rebellion was suppressed, the Tibetans asked Tang to fulfill its promise to cede territory to them. Dezong was going to recall the Military Commissioners of Beiting and Anxi, but Li Mi, who had been an important personal adviser to Suzong and Daizong, and was now the Left Policy Adviser, raised a strong objection on the ground that withdrawal of these troops would endanger the Guanzhong area, whereas their continued presence in the Western Regions would oblige the Tibetans to divide their forces. Dezong then sent an envoy to Tibet, bearing a letter written by Lu Zhi on his behalf, which promised only to provide a large amount of silk to Tibet, but implied that Tang would not make the land concession, because the Tibetan troops had not assisted Tang in recovering Chang'an as they had promised.<sup>48</sup>

The Tibetans decided to retaliate for the Tang refusal to cede territory. In 786, Zhang rGyal tshan raided the frontiers and approached Chang'an. The capital was on alert for a time. The Tibetans then captured the seats of Yanzhou, Xiazhou, Yinzhou (already an empty city), and Linzhou, all in the Ordos region. This posed a great threat, since Tibetan forces now formed a half circle to the west and north of the Tang capital.<sup>49</sup> Tang sent three letters to the Tibetan Chief Minister Zhang rGyal tshan, insisting that Tibet had violated the treaty of 783 by this invasion and had not fulfilled its earlier promise to assist Tang to recover Chang'an. The disputed land concession could, Tang insisted, be discussed without Tibet having to resort to violence.<sup>50</sup>

Zhang rGyal tshan now planned to get rid of three Chinese generals, Li Sheng, Ma Sui and Hun Jian, who held powerful positions as Military Commissioners of several provinces. Li Sheng and Hun Jian were appointed Chief Ministers in 784 and Ma Sui in 785. In 787 Zhang rGyal tshan asked for a peace settlement and, through heavy bribes, persuaded Ma Sui that the Tibetans would reaffirm the agreement of Qingshui and return the captured cities of Yanzhou and Xiazhou in return for peace. Ma

<sup>47</sup> ZZTJ 231, pp. 7429-30.

<sup>48</sup> *Lu Xuangong Hanyuanji* 10, pp. 66-7; XTS 139, pp. 4634-5; 216B, p. 6094; ZZTJ 231, p. 7442.

<sup>49</sup> Beckwith 1987, pp. 149-51.

<sup>50</sup> *Lu Xuangong Hanyuanji* 10, pp. 67-8.

Sui thereupon presented several memorials advocating peace with Tibet.<sup>51</sup>

The Tibetan occupation of Yanzhou and Xiazhou was a factor that made Tang consider a peace settlement.<sup>52</sup> It should be noted, however, that due to logistical problems, the Tibetans had left only a thousand or so troops in Yanzhou and Xiazhou, so that their occupation was not very secure.<sup>53</sup> Zhang rGyal tshan himself had only a modest military force of 30,000.<sup>54</sup>

In the court debate, Chief Minister Li Sheng proposed going to war. Han Yougui, Military Commissioner of Binning, held that the peace proposal must be a false one. Chief Minister Han Huang also supported Li. Dezong was persuaded. Ma Sui, however, urged a peace agreement. He brought Tibetan envoys to the court to support his request. Chief Minister Zhang Yanshang supported the peace policy. Both Ma Sui and Zhang Yanshang held a personal grudge against Li Sheng. This, together with Han Huang's death, helped get the peace policy approved by the emperor.

Dezong had his own motives for wanting peace: he was weary of constant wars, suspicious that the generals wanted to achieve merit through war, and inclined toward an alliance with Tibet rather than with the Uighurs. Zhang persuaded Dezong to relieve Li Sheng of his military power as Military Commissioner of Fengxiang on the grounds that Li Sheng had disagreed with the peace settlement and therefore should not hold this post on the Tibetan border.<sup>55</sup> This was just what the Tibetans had hoped to see happen.

Negotiations were held for the conclusion of the treaty. Zhang rGyal tshan stated that the demarcation stele had been destroyed, so Tibet wished for a new peace agreement. He promised to return the captured cities of Yanzhou and Xiazhou when the peace agreement had been concluded. Also, he argued that the Qingshui agreement could not be maintained because there had not been enough participants in the oath-taking ceremony. The Tibetans this time would have 21 ministers and generals present, and they named the Tang military commissioners of Lingzhou and Jingzhou as officials whom they particularly wanted to be present for the

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<sup>51</sup> *JTS* 134, p. 3700; 196B, p. 5250; *XTS* 155, pp. 4889-90; 216B, p. 6095; *ZZTJ* 232, pp. 7482-3.

<sup>52</sup> Beckwith 1987, p. 151.

<sup>53</sup> *ZZTJ* 232, p. 7482.

<sup>54</sup> *JTS* 12, p. 356; 196B, p. 5251.

<sup>55</sup> *JTS* 129, p. 3602; pp. 3608-9; 133, p. 3672; 134, p. 3700; 196B, p. 5250; *XTS* 127, pp. 4445-6; 154, pp. 4870-1; 155, pp. 4889-90; 216B, p. 6095; *ZZTJ* 232, pp. 7482-3.



oath taking ceremony.

The Tang court, for its part, proposed that the ceremony be held in Pingliangchuan (in Yuanzhou, in modern Gansu), rejecting the Tibetan choice of Tulishu because they deemed Tulishu (in Yuanzhou) to be in a dangerous geographical location which might be used by the Tibetans to lay an ambush. The court did not send the Military Commissioners Tibet wanted. It merely appointed Hun Jian as commissioner for the treaty.<sup>56</sup>

On the day the ceremony was to take place, while Ma Sui argued in the court at Chang'an that it would ensure lasting peace, Chief Minister Liu Hun expressed his dislike of the proceedings with the familiar argument that sworn covenants were made only when a dynasty was declining. When Li Sheng agreed with this, Dezong became enraged.<sup>57</sup>

But a report soon reached the court that the Tibetans had indeed laid an ambush. The Tibetan peace proposal turned out to be an intrigue purposely designed to weaken the Tang military forces and to capture Hun Jian, so that Tibet could launch a major attack on Chang'an. Sixty Chinese officials were kidnapped. Hun Jian managed to escape. Dezong was so frightened that he was preparing to flee from Chang'an, and was only barely dissuaded from doing so by his ministers.<sup>58</sup> Zhang rGyal tshan further stirred up Tang internal dissension by releasing the nephew of Ma Sui as a way to thank Ma Sui for his peace settlement. Hearing this, Dezong relieved Ma Sui of his military office, which was precisely what Zhang rGyal tshan wanted.<sup>59</sup>

Hostility became intense between the two states. Dezong sent an envoy bearing a letter to Zhang rGyal tshan, but the envoy was turned back at the Tibetan border. When the Tibetans returned a Tang official and asked for peace, the Chinese also turned back their envoys at the border.<sup>60</sup> Suffering from lack of supplies and from illness, the Tibetans withdrew from Yanzhou and Xiazhou, but in the eighth month of 787 they launched renewed attacks. Chang'an was once again seized with panic. From then on, the Tibetans often went back and forth across the border to plunder

<sup>56</sup> *JTS* 134, p. 3708; 196B, pp. 5250-1; *XTS* 155, p. 4894; 216B, pp. 6095-6; *ZZTJ* 232, pp. 7483-5.

<sup>57</sup> *JTS* 125, p. 3555; *XTS* 142, p. 4673; *ZZTJ* 232, p. 7487.

<sup>58</sup> *JTS* 196B, pp. 5251-3; *XTS* 216B, pp. 6095-6; *ZZTJ* 232, pp. 7486-7.

<sup>59</sup> *JTS* 134, pp. 3700-1; *XTS* 155, p. 4890; *ZZTJ* 232, p. 7488.

<sup>60</sup> *JTS* 196B, p. 5253; p. 5254; *XTS* 216B, p. 6096; p. 6097; *ZZTJ* 232, p. 7488; 233, p. 7496.

Chinese territory.<sup>61</sup>

### **Alliance with Nanzhao and the Uighurs against Tibet**

Since the policy of alliance with Tibet had proved to be a failure, new policies were proposed. Soon after the Pingliang disaster, Chief Minister Li Mi suggested changing to a policy of alliance with the Uighurs, Nanzhao, the Arabs and India. Dezong was eventually persuaded, and as we saw in the last chapter, a decision was reached to form a marriage alliance with the Uighurs.

There is no evidence that the Tang Chinese at this time formed an alliance with any part of India, though there had been diplomatic contacts between India and Tang throughout the 750's.<sup>62</sup> The Arabs had frequent contacts with Tang in Dezong's time, and sometime after 786, a long war between the Arabs and Tibetans began, which may suggest that the alliance advocated by Li Mi, whether formal or informal, did take shape.<sup>63</sup>

An alliance with Nanzhao was, in fact, achieved. After their joint invasion of Tang at the beginning of Dezong's reign in 779, Nanzhao's relations with Tibet had deteriorated. In 779, a new king of Nanzhao, Yimouxun (d. 808), came to the throne. As a prince, he had been under the strong influence of his Chinese tutor, and had acquired pro-Tang tendencies to complement his growing resentment of the excessive financial and military demands of the Tibetans.<sup>64</sup> It was under his rule that Nanzhao switched partners to form an alliance with China against Tibet. His primary aim was, of course, to maintain Nanzhao as an independent power by balancing out the two larger powers.

On the Chinese side, Wei Gao, who became the Military Commissioner of Xichuan in 785, worked hard to win over Nanzhao. In 787, before the Pingliang incident, Wei Gao proposed a policy for pacifying Nanzhao and the other non-Chinese on the southwestern frontier to keep them from joining Tibet.<sup>65</sup> Until his death in 805, Wei played an active role in winning over Nanzhao, and in manipulating the disputes between Nanzhao and Tibet in order to weaken Tibet and stabilize the situation on the southwestern border.

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<sup>61</sup> *JTS* 196B, pp. 5254-6; *XTS* 216B, pp. 6097-8; *ZZTJ* 233, p. 7501.

<sup>62</sup> Backus 1981, p. 89.

<sup>63</sup> Beckwith 1987, p. 152.

<sup>64</sup> Wang Jilin 1976, pp. 253-5; Backus 1981, pp. 84-7.

<sup>65</sup> *ZZTJ* 232, p. 7480; p. 7495; 233, pp. 7501-6. See also Backus 1981, pp. 87-90.



The alliance with Nanzhao was more effective in weakening Tibet than was the alliance with the Uighurs.<sup>66</sup> The major results of the alliance may be summarized as follows: Nanzhao refused to join forces with Tibet in attacking Sichuan in 788, and thus the Tibetan invading troops could be defeated by Wei Gao; within a few years thereafter Wei Gao was also able to recover Suizhou from Tibetan occupation; in 794 Tang and Nanzhao concluded a treaty, thereby marking Nanzhao's official break with Tibet.

In the early 790's, when Tibet had suffered heavy casualties in battles with the Uighurs in the Western Regions, the Tibetans demanded that Nanzhao send soldiers as reinforcements. Yimouxun despatched troops, but they made a surprise attack on the Tibetans on the Upper Yangtze.<sup>67</sup> Since Wei Gao's attacks drew off Tibetan forces to the south-west, the Chinese were able to build a walled town at Yanzhou in the northwest in 793, which proved to be effective in guarding against Tibetan incursions.<sup>68</sup>

The most significant battles took place in 801-802 when the joint forces of Tang, Nanzhao and other southwestern tribes attacked Tibet on China's southwestern borders and forced Tibet to withdraw its invading forces from China's northwest. From this time on Tibet was definitely on the road to decline as a great power.<sup>69</sup>

The Tang alliances with Nanzhao and the Uighurs were on the whole effective in weakening Tibet. Tibetan power was on the decline towards the end of the eighth century, with the death of the capable Zhang rGyal tshan in 796 and of the Tibetan *btsan-po* in the following year.<sup>70</sup> The new *btsan-po* sent an envoy to Tang, asking for a peace settlement, but Dezong refused, still deeply distrusting Tibet.<sup>71</sup> In 799 this *btsan-po* also died, and his successor, following a heavy defeat in Weizhou (in modern Sichuan), sent an envoy to Tang in 803. Dezong in turn dispatched an envoy to Tibet, thus ending the period of military conflict.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Wang Jilin 1976, p. 275.

<sup>67</sup> Sato 1959, pp. 675-86; Backus 1981, pp. 90-8. See also Wang Yongxing 1988.

<sup>68</sup> Sato 1959, pp. 665-6.

<sup>69</sup> Backus 1981, pp. 98-9.

<sup>70</sup> Sato 1959, pp. 667-8.

<sup>71</sup> *JTS* 196B, p. 5258; *XTS* 216B, p. 6099; *ZZTJ* 235, p. 7576.

<sup>72</sup> *JTS* 196B, pp. 5259-61; *XTS* 216B, pp. 6099-100; *ZZTJ* 236, pp. 7598-9; p. 7601.

### Making Peace with Tibet, 806-822

The Tibetans put forward two requests for renewing the sworn covenant in 806, the second time even offering border concessions, but Emperor Xianzong refused, following the advice of Li Jifu, then the Secretariat Drafter, who argued that, since Tang had a good relationship with Nanzhao, Tibet no longer dared to make border incursions, and that a Tang covenant with Tibet would only serve to alienate Nanzhao. As for the border land, he argued that it was difficult for Tang to keep and therefore it was useless to have it in name.<sup>73</sup> In 809, when Tibet again asked for a peace settlement, Lu Sui, whose father had been kidnapped at the time of the "False Treaty of Pingliang," presented five memorials, pleading with the emperor to agree to peace. Several other court ministers also tried to persuade Xianzong, who finally gave in and sent an envoy to Tibet.<sup>74</sup>

Negotiations followed. In 809 and 810, two letters written by Bai Juyi on behalf of the emperor were delivered to the Tibetan chief ministers. They set out the principles which should be followed in negotiating a peace settlement: invasions by either side should be forbidden and boundaries decided; Tibet should return the three Chinese prefectures of Qinzhou, Yuanzhou and Anlezhou; envoys should be exchanged to discuss important matters. The letter of 809 also asked for the return of Chinese officials who had been captured in the "False Treaty of Pingliang" incident.<sup>75</sup>

In reply, the Tibetans returned the coffins of two deceased officials, together with thirteen Chinese officials who were still alive. They also agreed to the return to Tang the three prefectures mentioned in Bai Juyi's letter.<sup>76</sup> Being in competition with the Uighurs and having broken with the Shatuo in 808, Tibet wished for peace with Tang. In 815 the Tibetans arrived at the border of Longzhou and asked for trade, to which the court agreed.<sup>77</sup> At the same time the Tibetans launched several raids on China's borders (in 812, 813, 818, 819, and 820) even as the two sides were exchanging envoys, probably in order to force China into accepting the peace treaty. The incursions in 819 started even before a mission that

<sup>73</sup> XTS 146, p. 4739.

<sup>74</sup> JTS 159, pp. 4190-1; ZZTJ 237, p. 7660.

<sup>75</sup> *Baishi Changqing Ji* 39, p. 203; p. 207. Between 808 and 810, Bai Juyi wrote at least four letters to the Tibetans on behalf of the Chinese central and local authorities. For a study of these documents, see Kolmas 1966, pp. 375-410.

<sup>76</sup> JTS 196B, p. 5261; XTS 216B, p. 6100; THY 97, p. 1737; CFYG 980, p. 11515.

<sup>77</sup> XTS 216B, p. 6100; ZZTJ 239, p. 7720.



had been sent to cultivate friendship could leave Tang.<sup>78</sup>

In the general amnesty after Muzong's accession to the throne in 820, the Tibetan captives were allowed to return.<sup>79</sup> The Military Commissioner of Jiannan and Dongchuan, under the pressure of the Tibetan incursions, suggested that the court use generous rewards to attract the Uighurs to ward off the Tibetans, to which Muzong did not agree.<sup>80</sup> After a long period of deliberation, the court instead decided to permit a marriage with the Uighurs in 821. Upon hearing the news the Tibetans attacked the Tang frontier.<sup>81</sup>

In 821, Muzong agreed to the request from Tibet to conclude a peace treaty. The treaty proved to be the last between Tang and Tibet.<sup>82</sup> There are several important features about this treaty to distinguish it from previous ones.<sup>83</sup> As in 783, the oath taking ceremony was performed in the territories of both states, once in 821 in the western suburb of Chang'an and once in 822 in Migu, the Tibetan summer capital, east of Lhasa. A stone stele was erected in Lhasa in 823. At the Chang'an ceremony both sides followed the Chinese ritual by smearing blood on the lips. In Tibet, in addition to the blood smearing ceremony, both sides performed the Buddhist rituals of Tibet.<sup>84</sup> Using both Chinese and Tibetan rituals at the ceremonies in 762, 783 and 821/822 implied reciprocity and equality.<sup>85</sup>

There are four important documents extant for the 821/822 treaty, more than for any previous treaty. These documents include: (a) a Chinese sworn treaty text preserved in Chinese written sources; (b) a Tibetan treaty text preserved on the east side of the Lhasa stele; (c) a joint text of both rulers with versions in both Chinese and Tibetan languages on the west side of the stele; (d) a bilingual version of the names of the Chinese and Tibetan officials who participated in the conclusion of the treaty with the Tibetan names on the northern side and the Chinese on the southern side

<sup>78</sup> *JTS* 196B, p. 5162; *XTS* 216B, p. 6101. For records of Tibetan incursions, see *ZZTJ* 239, 240, 241.

<sup>79</sup> *CFYG* 90, p. 1073.

<sup>80</sup> *JTS* 169, p. 4402; *XTS* 179, pp. 5317-8; *CFYG* 993, p. 11668.

<sup>81</sup> *JTS* 196B, p. 5263; *XTS* 216B, p. 6102; *ZZTJ* 241, pp. 7791-2.

<sup>82</sup> Concerning the 821/822 treaty, see *JTS* 196B, pp. 5264-5; *XTS* 216B, pp. 6102-3; *ZZTJ* 242, p. 7800; *CFYG* 981, pp. 11531-3; Richardson 1952; Li Fang-kuei 1955; 1980.

<sup>83</sup> Pan Yihong 1992a, pp. 144-7.

<sup>84</sup> *CFYG* 981, pp. 11531-3; Stein 1988, p. 129.

<sup>85</sup> Stein 1988, pp. 127-8.

of the stele.<sup>86</sup> An additional document has been found among the Tibetan texts from Dunhuang which records the building by the Tibetans of a Buddhist monastery to commemorate the peace treaty.<sup>87</sup>

The joint text added to the two individual texts certainly enhanced the solemnity of the treaty, and it was a significant innovation, since the earlier treaties did not have a joint text. Such a joint treaty text between contracting parties does not seem to have existed in the Song period either.<sup>88</sup> In the bilingual version of the joint text each recognizes the other as a legitimate ruler, with Tang in the east and Tibet in the west, and it is stipulated that the two sides shall not struggle like enemies, shall not lead armies into war, and shall not invade and seize each other's territory.<sup>89</sup>

It is important to note that the joint text has an item recognizing the legitimacy of retaliation, which did not exist in previous treaties. The treaty text does not contain any items regarding boundary demarcation. The boundary rules may have remained essentially the same as in the treaty of 783.<sup>90</sup> The Chinese participants in Chang'an all signed their names on the treaty, and through the Chinese envoy to Tibet for the Lhasa ceremony, the Tang Emperor Muzong requested that the Tibetans also sign their names.<sup>91</sup> As discussed earlier, during Xuanzong's time the Tibetans asked several times for the Chinese emperor's signature on a peace agreement but Xuanzong refused. The signatures on this treaty show a new Chinese willingness to compromise.

Following their sworn treaty with China in 821, the Tibetans also made peace agreements with the Uighurs and with the Nanzhao kingdom.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> For the translation of (a), see Pan Yihong 1992b, pp. 156-8. For (b), (c), and (d), see Richardson 1952; Li Fang-kuei 1955.

<sup>87</sup> Li Fang-kuei 1955. Thomas (II, 1951, p. 106) thinks that the monastery was built to commemorate the treaty signed during the early 730's. This is incorrect. He mistook the Tibetan king who ruled in 821 for the one who ruled in 730.

<sup>88</sup> Franke 1970, p. 57, note 2.

<sup>89</sup> Li Fang-kuei 1955, p. 56. See also Richardson 1952, p. 71.

<sup>90</sup> Li Fang-kuei 1955, pp. 6-8.

<sup>91</sup> *JTS* 196B, p. 5265; *XTS* 216B, p. 6102.

<sup>92</sup> Li Fang-kuei 1955, pp. 22-3; Richardson 1969, p. 35; Beckwith 1987, p. 167.



### The Weizhou Incident in 831

Even after the treaty was concluded, border conflicts still occurred in 821 and 822.<sup>93</sup> Peace, however, prevailed most of the time from 822 to 847, interrupted only by a Tibetan incursion in 830 and by the incident of Weizhou (in modern Sichuan) in 831.

In 831, Xidamou, the Tibetan Vice Commissioner of Weizhou, asked to submit to Tang. Weizhou had strategic importance to China. A route extended from there without much geographical hindrance all the way to the Tibetan capital. The Chinese recovery of the city would force Tibet to station a large force in that area, thus alleviating the pressure on other Chinese frontiers. Li Deyu, then Military Commissioner of Xichuan, despatched troops to occupy the town of Weizhou and requested permission from the court to send 3,000 Qiang troops to penetrate into Tibet.

At a court discussion, the majority of the officials agreed, but Chief Minister Niu Sengru raised an objection. Niu conceded that Tibet had a large territory and losing Weizhou would not be a serious matter. However, he warned that if China violated the peace agreement by taking Weizhou, the Tibetans could easily invade from the northwest, posing a threat to the Tang capital. Violating the treaty, he believed, would cause great harm without any benefit. Emperor Wenzong agreed with Niu Sengru and ordered the return of Weizhou. Xidamou and his followers were executed by the Tibetan court when they reached the border.<sup>94</sup> In 843 Li Deyu, reviewing the Weizhou incident, pointed out that in 830 the Tibetans had made incursions across China's border, thus breaking the peace agreement.<sup>95</sup> The attack of 830 had certainly provided the Chinese with an excuse to discard the treaty.

On the surface, this argument between Niu and Li reflects the conflict between Confucian moralistic ideology and pragmatic considerations in Chinese foreign relations. It also involves, however, a more complex question. Did Niu Sengru insist on keeping faithfully to the agreement because he believed in it or because he would have objected to any proposal by Li Deyu. Using Confucianism against Li's pragmatic strategy was controversial, since Niu and Li were engaged in factional strife, the notorious "Niu-Li factional quarrel." Wenzong, though persuaded by Niu

<sup>93</sup> *JTS* 196B, p. 5265; *ZZTJ* 242, p. 7802; p. 7818.

<sup>94</sup> *JTS* 172, p. 4471; 174, p. 4519; *XTS* 174, p. 5231; 180, pp. 5332-3; 216B, p. 6104; *ZZTJ* 244, p. 7878; 247, pp. 7976-8.

<sup>95</sup> *Li Wenrao Wenji* 12, pp. 64-5.

Sengru at the time, soon regretted his decision and dismissed Niu from his post of Chief Minister when some officials pointed out that the return of the submitted Tibetans would discourage future defections, and when the Li group insisted that Niu's objection was simply intended to harm Li Deyu.<sup>96</sup>

In 847, taking advantage of Tang's being in mourning at Wuzong's death, the Tibetans, in alliance with the Dangxiang and Uighurs, made an incursion.<sup>97</sup> However, by this time Tibet was itself in chaos. When Khri gtsug lde brtsan was in power, he devoted himself to promoting Buddhism. In 842, his successor, who opposed Buddhism and promoted the Bon religion, was assassinated by a Buddhist hermit. The central authority rapidly dissolved in the subsequent struggles over the succession. Tibet suffered the disaster of a civil war between two generals, Lun Kongre (Blon Gung bzher) and Shang Beibei, which lasted at least until 850.<sup>98</sup> Blon Gung bzher went to the Tang court to ask for aid and political investiture so that he could reestablish central control of Tibet. Upon Tang's refusal he too lost power.<sup>99</sup> He was captured by Tang in 866.<sup>100</sup>

From 849, the prefectures in modern Ningxia and Gansu which had been under Tibetan control since the An Lushan rebellion returned to Tang. In 851, Zhang Yichao of Shazhou led local people to drive the Tibetan generals away and submitted to Tang. From then on, Tibet ceased to be a power threatening China's frontiers.

### Peace and War with Nanzhao

With the collapse of the Tibetan state and the Uighur empire, Nanzhao became the next major foreign threat to Tang China.

Until the 820's, relations between Tang and Nanzhao were peaceful. In 820, when the Tibetans attacked China's southwestern borders before the Tang-Tibetan treaty came into effect, Nanzhao offered to send 20,000 troops to help the Chinese.<sup>101</sup> But between 829 and 830, Nanzhao plundered Sichuan and briefly occupied Chengdu. This invasion was mainly provoked by actions of the Chinese Military Commissioner of

<sup>96</sup> *JTS* 174, p. 4519; *XTS* 180, pp. 5332-3; *ZZTJ* 244, p. 7880.

<sup>97</sup> *ZZTJ* 248, p. 8030.

<sup>98</sup> For details concerning the Tibetan internal situation, see Wang Zhong 1958, pp. 145-58; Beckwith 1987, pp. 168-72.

<sup>99</sup> *ZZTJ* 249, p. 8047.

<sup>100</sup> *ZZTJ* 250, p. 8115.

<sup>101</sup> Backus 1981, pp. 103-4.



Jiannan, Du Yuanying, who mismanaged the relationship with Nanzhao, neglected frontier defense, and displayed his military incompetence. In addition, the Nanzhao rulership was motivated by its desire for the material riches of Sichuan. In 831, another border clash took place. During the tenure of Li Deyu as the Military Commissioner of Xichuan between 830 and late 832, Li diligently fulfilled his responsibilities and stabilized the frontier situation. Peace was maintained until the 850's.<sup>102</sup>

While Nanzhao maintained peace with Tang along the border with Sichuan, it continued the advance southward which it had started after 829, expanding its influence and territorial control to Guangxi and northern Vietnam, then under the loose control of Tang through the Protectorate of Annan (Vietnamese Annam) with its seat in present Hanoi. Some late sources say that Nanzhao launched its attack on Annan as early as 846, but this is uncertain.<sup>103</sup>

During his brief tenure as the Protector-General of Annan in 853-855, Li Zhuo mismanaged frontier defense and relations with the aboriginal peoples. He caused strong resentment among the Man people, who sought aid from Nanzhao, thus making possible Nanzhao's further advance into the area. In 858 a Nanzhao force invaded Annan, but soon retreated.

More serious conflicts followed. In 859, Du Cong, the Military Commissioner of Xichuan, proposed that Tang reduce the number of Nanzhao youths permitted to come to Chengdu as students as well as the number in each tribute-bearing delegation to the court on the grounds that both placed a heavy economic burden on the local government for their accommodation. The court agreed. This enraged the king of Nanzhao, who decided on retaliatory action. Although he died in the same year, the new king, Shilong, adopted a more aggressive attitude towards Tang.

Trouble arose because the first character in Shilong's name was part of Tang Taizong's personal name (Shimin) and the second had the same pronunciation as one of the characters in Xuanzong's personal name (Longji). The personal names of emperors were taboo. The Chinese sources all refer to Shilong as Qiulong. Because of this, the Tang court refused to invest him with the title of king. It may have also been because, on the one hand, the Chinese were aware of the growing power of Nanzhao and wished to restrain it by not recognizing the new king, and on

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<sup>102</sup> Backus 1981, pp. 101-30.

<sup>103</sup> Backus 1981, p. 130

the other hand, because the collapse of Tibet removed the need to have Nanzhao as an ally.

However, Nanzhao had developed into a strong regional power, and one capable of confronting Tang at the margins of Tang power. Shi-long soon went beyond nibbling at the margins of Tang power. He proclaimed himself emperor, renamed his state Dali (859-877, to be distinguished from the later Kingdom of Dali, 937-1253) and adopted his own reign name for the calendar rather than following the Chinese ones as his predecessors had done, all of which symbolized his independence.

He launched an attack on Bozhou in present Guizhou in 859, and in 860-861 the Nanzhao troops, responding to an appeal by a local rebel leader, attacked and briefly occupied Hanoi. A more serious invasion of Annan was mounted in the winter of 862-863, resulting in the capture of Hanoi after a siege. Annan was recovered and Hanoi eventually retaken in 866 by Gao Pian, a brilliant general, as well as a poet, from a family of Parhae extraction that had been serving in the Tang Palace Armies since early in the ninth century.<sup>104</sup>

Annan remained under Chinese control for the remainder of the Tang dynasty but dissatisfaction with Chinese rule and aspirations for independence that gave rise to the revolt in 860-861 foreshadowed the foundation of the independent Vietnamese state there in 939.

In 861, Du Cong, now Chief Minister, urged measures to bring Nanzhao back into good relations with Tang, but it was too late. Wars between Tang and Nanzhao lasted until 875, with the focal point first in Annan and then in Sichuan. During this period, Tang was on the defensive. Personal jealousy and spite among frontier officials and between the frontier officials and eunuch army supervisors, as well as the generally deteriorating situation inside China all contributed to the weakening of China's military power on the frontiers. Long years of fighting and being stationed in the south exhausted both Chinese troops and the treasury.

In 868, unbearable conditions led to the rebellion of Pang Xun, who led a mutiny by troops who had been sent from Xuzhou several years before to Guizhou (in present Guangxi) to defend against Nanzhao. Earlier, these soldiers had been told that their period of service would be three years, but after six years they were told they had to stay in service for another year. Resentment exploded into revolt.<sup>105</sup> Although the rebellion was

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<sup>104</sup> Wang Jilin 1976, pp. 335-9; Backus 1981, pp. 131-5; Hayashi 1992, p. 127-31.

<sup>105</sup> Somers 1979, pp. 695-700; Backus 1981, pp. 135-53.



suppressed the following year, waves of popular uprisings, the most significant being one led by Wang Xianzhi and Huang Chao (874-884), grievously weakened the Tang dynasty.

Song Qi in his historian's comment in the *Xin Tangshu* concludes: "Tang perished because of Huang Chao, but the root of the disaster was in Guilin (where Pang Xun rose in rebellion)."<sup>106</sup> Though this may seem exaggerated, Pang Xun's rebellion and its connection with Nanzhao was certainly one of the more important factors that contributed to the collapse of the Tang dynasty in 907.

After the loss of Annan, Nanzhao continued to attack China more directly in Sichuan, even threatening Chengdu. Once more the situation was saved by Gao Pian, who was made Military Commissioner of Xichuan in 875. After restoring the military situation and forcing the Nanzhao forces to withdraw, he initiated peace negotiations, sending a Buddhist priest as his envoy and promising (apparently without authorization by the Tang court) to send Shilong a Tang princess for marriage. Shilong welcomed the gesture, but insisted on an equal footing with China. However, he died in 877. This marked the beginning of the end of military hostilities between the two countries.

The many wars had exhausted both Tang and Nanzhao. The new king sent a diplomatic mission to the Tang court to negotiate a peace settlement the next year. At the Tang court, controversy arose as to whether Tang should accept the request of Nanzhao to be treated as younger brother rather than as a subject. On this demand for equality, the court could reach no decision. Finally, in 880, Tang gave in. It sent a Tang prince with rich gifts as an envoy to the king of Nanzhao. Tang accepted the proposal for marriage and acknowledged Nanzhao as an equal. That is, Nanzhao would no longer have to refer to itself as a subject. However, the promised marriage never took place. Nanzhao, for its part, did not commit any further aggression on the Tang borders even when Tang China dissolved into chaos.

The kingdom of Nanzhao thereafter devoted itself to religious and cultural development until the royal family was overthrown and replaced in 902. This ended the Nanzhao kingdom. In 937 the Dali kingdom was founded in Yunnan, and was to last for the next three centuries.<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> XTS 222B, p. 6295.

<sup>107</sup> Backus 1981, pp. 153-64.

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The An Lushan rebellion tipped the balance decisively against Tang in its military confrontation with Tibet, which by that time also had Nanzhao as its ally on China's southwestern flank. The Chinese had to adopt a very pragmatic attitude in order to maintain a balance of power among its strong neighbors. While Suzong and Daizong accepted assistance from the Uighurs and others for the suppression of internal disturbances, they resisted Tibetan help, since Tibet was obviously more interested in seizing Chinese territory than in helping the court. Sworn treaties made with Tibet in 762, 765, and 767 on Tibetan terms were of even less effect than those of 706 and 732, which had been followed by peace for about four and five years respectively.

Because of the personal humiliation he had suffered in the past, Dezong attempted to break with the Uighurs and make an alliance with Tibet instead. This resulted in the treaty of 783, which recognized the Tibetan occupation of Chinese land. It was followed by three years of peace, during which time the Tibetans refused to assist a Chinese rebel against the court and, on being promised concessions in land, sent military assistance to relieve the crisis of Zhu Ci's rebellion in 783-784. When Tang refused to fulfill the land concession promise on the grounds that Tibet had not fully carried out its part of the bargain, Tibet retaliated and the pro-Tibetan policy ended with the disaster of the "False Treaty of Pingliang" in 787.

Thereafter, the court had to return to the Uighur alliance and also to make an alliance with Nanzhao against Tibet. China shared more common interests with these states than with Tibet. From early in the ninth century, Tibetan power was on the decline. It tried to make peace with Tang, and the treaty of 821/822 was indeed followed by peace, with only brief interruptions, for over twenty years. To a large extent, however, the absence of hostilities was a result of the pacific attitude of the Tibetan ruler then and the weakened position of his country.

The ineffectiveness of the Tang-Tibetan treaties was due to the lack of common interests between the two parties and the limited rewards that conclusion of treaties seemed to offer to both sides. Nevertheless, the act of treaty-making was itself a remarkable innovation. In concluding their treaties with Tibet in the post-An Lushan period, the Chinese had to abandon their claims of superiority. In revising the wording in the official letter from Tang to Tibet in 781 and in the sworn treaty of 783, China re-



cognized Tibet as an equal power. The 821/822 covenant made this concession even more apparent. The inclusion of both Chinese and Tibetan rituals in the ceremonies in 762, 783 and 821/822 implied reciprocity and equality. Some of the articles in the treaties of 783 and 821/822 resemble the characteristics of a modern treaty concluded between sovereign equals.

Just as peace seemed ensured with the Uighurs and Tibet, the Nanzhao kingdom in the south from the 820's raised a new challenge. Like the Tibetan state, Nanzhao became interested in territory and in raiding Chinese frontiers. It plundered Sichuan in 829-830, and expanded eastward, coming close to the Chinese Annan Protectorate. Moreover, it competed with Tang for control over the local aboriginal peoples. Relations with Nanzhao were to a large extent handled by local Chinese officials. The effectiveness of their management often determined the degree of danger in the local situation.

When both the Uighur empire and Tibet disintegrated as states in the 840's, Tang, taking advantage of the situation, resorted to force to speed up the process, but in the south, Tang did not have much leverage. From 858 until 877, confrontations with Nanzhao persisted, and Annan was occupied for a time. China was on the defensive. In 868, the Chinese troops sent to the far south rebelled under the leadership of Pang Xun. This touched off a series of rebellions which proved to be fatal for the Tang court. Eventually, in 880, as it entered the last stages of its disintegration, the Tang court formally recognized Nanzhao as an equal.