

Chapter 2

How Foreign Affairs were Handled During Sui and Tang

The basic structure of the bureaucracy by which China was governed in imperial times took shape during Qin and Han. Its institutions and their functioning during that period have been well described by Wang Yü-ch'üan and Hans Bielenstein.¹ Between Han and Tang these institutions had undergone much evolution and elaboration. The more ample data from the Tang period have also been thoroughly analyzed and discussed by such scholars as Des Rotours, Sun Guodong, and Xie Yuanlu.²

After a brief discussion of the general decision-making process of the Tang government and the checks and balances built into the process for ensuring accuracy and effectiveness, this chapter focuses on the way in which Tang dealt with official business involving relations with foreign countries. Who were the individuals and groups principally involved in making policy on such matters? What bureaucratic apparatus on the central level was responsible for handling foreign affairs? How was information on foreign countries collected and utilized in coming to decisions? How did this information provide basic materials for the compilation of accounts of foreign countries in the national history? Answers to these questions show that China had developed a sophisticated set of principles and institutions for dealing with foreign countries, assuring frontier security and securing the rule of the Son of Heaven.

The Decision-Making Process

There was no special office in traditional China for foreign policy decision-making. Foreign affairs were largely concerned with frontier security, and frontier policies were part of the general decision-making process. The procedure for decision-making in foreign affairs started with the gathering of information from various sources. Based on their assessment of that information, officials would put forward proposals in the form of memorials. On the central level, the memorials would be studied by Chief

¹ Wang Yü-ch'üan 1949; Bielenstein 1980; 1986.

² Des Rotours 1932; 1947-48; Sun Guodong 1957; Xie Yuanlu 1992.

Ministers, and a decision would finally be arrived at through a sequence of deliberation, drafting, sanction by the emperor, and final scrutiny until the decision was proclaimed in an imperial edict or an instruction from some lesser authority and implemented.³

The above decision-making process took definitive shape at the central level during Tang under Taizong but all its main characteristics were inherited from Sui. Three kinds of conferences were held to discuss the feasibility of proposals on such important matters as succession to the throne, appointments, financial policies, military affairs, frontier policies etc.

The first was the regular audience at which the emperor met his high officials. At the beginning of the dynasty, the most important of these was the Consultant Assembly (*changcan*), held every day or every other day and participated in by officers of the fifth rank and above. After the time of Gaozong, the importance of this large assembly decreased and a smaller meeting between the emperor and his Chief Ministers and other select officials after the court assembly was finished became more important. These smaller meetings were sometimes already being held in Taizong's time. From Suzong's time onward it became the regular practice to hold these meetings in the Yanying Hall (*Yanying dian*), a venue that had already sometimes been used in Xuanzong's time. Often other officials in addition to the Chief Ministers would participate in such meetings. After mid-Tang the emperor also held irregular meetings with the Hanlin academicians.⁴

The second kind of deliberative conference was a formal meeting of Chief Ministers among themselves. These were first held in the Administration Chamber (*zhengshi tang*) and called the Zhengshi Tang meeting, and then moved to the Office of the Secretariat (*zhongshu sheng*) in Empress Wu's time. From Xuanzong's time the Zhengshi Tang became an office for the Chief Ministers, and was renamed the Secretariat-Chancellery (*zhongshu menxia*); therefore the meeting was also renamed. An important change was the participation of the eunuchs during the post-An Lushan period, when the eunuchs' power increased in the court.⁵

³ Xie Yuanlu 1992, pp. 3-6. For the procedure in Taizong's time, see Wechsler 1974, pp. 95-8. The procedure during the Ming period was similar, see Lo Jung-pang 1969, pp. 70-2.

⁴ Xie Yuanlu 1992, pp. 53-76; Twitchett 1992, pp. 35-8.

⁵ Sun Guodong 1957, pp. 58-9; pp. 81-3; Xie Yuanlu 1992, pp. 77-88.

The third, less frequent, type of deliberative meeting was the Court Conference (*tingyi*) participated in by civil and military officials of the ninth rank and above.⁶

To ensure an effective government the court implemented an elaborate, multi-channel system for communication between the central and local governments. The system enabled local officials to send their memorials, reports and other documents through Territorial Representatives (*chaoji shi*)⁷ or via the postal service to the central government.

After the An Lushan rebellion, the Capital Liaison Office of Various Regions (*zhudao jinzouyuan*) was set up in order to make the transmission of reports and information more efficient. An agency known as Touring Brokerage (*xunyuan*) was established after 758. It was not only charged with administering the salt monopoly but also functioned as a channel to inform the central government of local political, administrative and social conditions.⁸ In addition, a system for soliciting opinions (*qiuyan*) and for presentation of unsolicited memorials allowed officials at all levels and common people to present their opinions to the court.⁹ A parallel mechanism for communication between the central and local governments was provided by the system of censors or special commissioners dispatched by the court down to the local areas, whose tasks were to investigate local conditions, to supervise local official administration, and to verify and confirm the information presented through other channels.¹⁰

Decision-Makers

As in all other periods, the decision-making group within the central government of the Tang dynasty was composed of four levels.

1. The emperor. He was the final authority and source of all laws, the head of state; his legitimacy was based on the belief that he was the Son of Heaven, given the Mandate to rule by Heaven. More practically, his power was based on his possession of military force and his command of economic resources. In reality, however, his power was limited by his personal capability and by the technical impossibility for one man to handle the affairs of a government of large scope, by public opinion, and by

⁶ Xie Yuanlu 1992, pp. 99-103.

⁷ A delegate from each prefecture was sent to the capital annually to participate in the New Year's audience and report on local conditions. See Hucker 1985, p. 118.

⁸ Xie Yuanlu 1992, pp. 128-42.

⁹ Xie Yuanlu 1992, pp. 161-71.

¹⁰ Xie Yuanlu 1992, pp. 146-58.

the concept of propriety, all these obligations serving as a kind of unwritten constitution. Even the most independent-minded or willful emperor was constantly receiving advice from his ministers, as well as from his inner circle of relatives and attendants, and he was morally obliged to at least listen to such people.¹¹

In their decisions involving foreign policies, the emperors were influenced by a variety of motives. Their primary responsibility was to maintain internal and external order so as to ensure the stability and security of the whole nation. A second major objective was preservation of the state's political prestige. Prestige yielded a power that could not only awe neighboring peoples into submission but also command the respect and obedience of the emperors' own Chinese subjects. Their claim to sovereignty required that neighboring countries should recognize their possession of the Mandate of Heaven and their right to rule All-under-Heaven. A third motivation was economic. The trade that accompanied tribute-bearing missions brought into China nomadic specialties such as horses which were needed not only to satisfy the personal appetites of the ruler but also for national defense. On the other hand, tribute from foreign countries, consisting typically of exotic luxury goods, mostly went into the personal treasuries of the emperors, who would distribute it to favored individuals. Tribute did not benefit the state finances. Indeed, emperors were often chided for being excessively attracted by exotic products.

2. The Chief Ministers (*zaixiang*). Together with the emperor, they formed the core group in decision-making and administering all aspects of state affairs. In place of the Chancellor of early Han times, standing over against the emperor as the head of the bureaucracy, the Sui-Tang had a committee of Chief Ministers. At the beginning of the Tang dynasty, the heads of the three Departments, Director of the Department of State Affairs (*shangshu ling*), Secretariat Director (*zhongshu ling*) and Director of the Chancellery (*shizhong*), were ex officio Chief Ministers. The Three Departments had originated in Han as agencies within the emperor's inner court that had taken over functions of the regular outer bureaucracy and eventually moved out and become recognized as the most important formal parts of the bureaucracy. Instead of dealing with one chancellor the Tang emperors now dealt with a group of Chief Ministers, which provided more flexibility in adjusting the balance between different interests and points of view and in making decisions. The actual power to make particu-

¹¹ Wang Yü-ch'üan 1949, pp. 138-41; pp. 161-2; Lo Jung-pang 1969, p. 44.

lar decisions varied and alternated under different circumstances between the throne and the bureaucracy.

After the emperor Taizong, as Crown Prince, held the title of *shangshu ling*, this position fell into abeyance and was not filled. Until 705, the deputy heads of the Department of State Affairs (*puye*) took this official position's place as ex officio Chief Ministers, after which they too ceased to function and the title of *puye* was attached to a sinecure for persons of high rank. It was also customary throughout the dynasty to appoint one or more other high officials, including, most commonly, the head of one of the six Ministries (*bu*) of the Department of State Affairs, to serve as ad hoc Chief Ministers.¹²

3. Remonstrance officials, whose responsibilities included scrutinizing and commenting on decisions (*shenyi fengbo*). They held such offices as Supervising Secretary (*jishi zhong*) under the Department of State Affairs, Policy Adviser (*sanqi changshi*), Grand Master of Remonstrance (*jianyi dafu*), Rectifier of Omissions (*buque*) and Reminder (*shiyi*). The last four were divided between the Chancellery and the Secretariat. They were also admitted to the conferences held between the emperor and his Chief Ministers. Compared with Han, the Tang remonstrance system was more formalized; the number of officials increased, and they enjoyed relatively more independence. However, on occasions when they, as comparatively low-ranking officials, attempted to confront those in power, including the emperor himself, their position could become quite precarious.¹³

4. Assistants, who did not participate in the deliberations of policies but played important roles in recording the activities of the emperor, transmitting (*chuanda*) and promulgating (*banbu*) orders. These assistants held such positions as Imperial Diarist (*qiju lang* and *qiju sheren*) and Secretarial Receptionist (*tongshi sheren*).¹⁴

The official histories contain materials on policies and decisions, major participants in the deliberations, and major conflicting opinions. We also on occasion have contemporary correspondence or documents sent from the Tang court to frontier officials and to foreign rulers, as for example, in the collected works of Zhang Jiuling, Bai Juyi and Li Deyu, that

¹² Des Rotours 1932, pp. 5-6; p. 10; Wang Yü-ch'üan 1949, pp. 43-6; Sun Guodong 1957, pp. 19-24; pp. 60-5; Xie Yuanlu 1992, pp. 6-10.

¹³ Xie Yuanlu 1992, pp. 35-52.

¹⁴ Sun Guodong 1957, pp. 25-9.

provide us with more detailed information. Li Deyu's works, in particular, provide us with a detailed, step by step, day-to-day account of how the court dealt with the Uighurs between 841 and 845 and how the key decisions were made.¹⁵

In addition to the above groups, officials throughout the empire could present memorials and reports to the central government with proposals for action. These would be examined and deliberated upon and decisions reached. In the formulation of foreign policy, although frontier officials were not formally included in the decision-making bodies, they often played an important, sometimes decisive, role. They were familiar with frontier affairs and handled much of the actual contact with the non-Chinese. It was often they who made proposals, whereupon they might be invited to participate in the deliberations at court and have their proposals approved at the central level. The emperors often consulted the frontier officials for detailed information and advice on strategy. Many of them were promoted to the central level, taking up various positions such as Minister of War, and often becoming Chief Ministers. Examples of the important roles played by frontier officials will be seen in the following chapters.

Tension between the emperor and his bureaucracy was the normal state of affairs. Although emperors had to rely on their bureaucrats for administration and needed the information and advice that they provided in making decisions, no emperor was content to be reduced to merely a figurehead. The bureaucracy, on the other hand, attempted to restrict the power of the throne the better to exert its own influence. In policy matters it was often influenced by ideals and interests that were different from those of the emperors. From the Han period onward, the Confucian principle that a wise ruler should not be an active administrator but rather should content himself with being a perfect moral leader who would select wise and virtuous men and listen to their advice in state affairs prevailed within the Chinese bureaucracy.¹⁶ Through the civil service examination system which began in the Sui dynasty and was further developed throughout the Tang period, Confucianism sent down deeper roots. Members of the bureaucracy also had their own family connections and economic interests, often as local landlords, which influenced their attitudes toward government policies. Moreover, as everywhere, bureaucratic rou-

¹⁵ Drompp 1986.

¹⁶ Wang Yü-ch'üan 1949, pp. 162-4.

tines could create intolerable delays in the handling of the day-by-day business of government, and activist emperors tried to circumvent them.

The bureaucracy always tended to act as a check on the power of the emperor and this was a continuing source of conflict between the throne and the bureaucrats. Such tension could be constructive, conducive to well-thought-out plans and effective government; but it could also lead to destructive power struggles.

Having the heads of the Three Departments as Chief Ministers participating in decision-making lessened the tensions between the emperor and bureaucracy. This prevented any monopoly of power on one side. Instead of dealing with one chancellor the Tang emperors now dealt with a group of Chief Ministers, who provided more alternatives and flexibility in making decisions. The actual decision-making power oscillated irregularly under different circumstances between the throne and the bureaucracy.¹⁷ An emperor with a strong personality, such as the Sui Emperor Yang and Tang Taizong, was usually prepared to enforce his will. The personal character, abilities and experience of each emperor very much influenced which chief ministers he selected and his subsequent relations with them. A weak emperor could let the power slip into the hands of his ministers. When Xuanzong lost interest in government, first Li Linfu and then Yang Guozhong were able to exercise dictatorial power.

To strengthen their own power, emperors tended to develop an "inner court" (*neiting*), relying on imperial relatives, personal secretaries or eunuchs, as opposed to the "outer court" (*waiting*) of bureaucrats. This distinction has been well described by Wang Yü-ch'üan for the Han period.¹⁸ Former Han empresses and empress dowagers, along with their male relatives (*waiqi*), often formed a powerful group behind and around the throne. This was also true during Sui and Tang.

Sui Wendi's Empress Dugu was a powerful influence behind her husband and Tang Taizong's brother-in-law, Zhangsun Wuji, was a prominent figure who became deeply involved in the question of succession to the throne, only to be defeated by Gaozong's Empress, Wu Zetian. She in turn, first dominated her husband and then supplanted her sons and made herself the first and only female emperor in Chinese history. Paradoxically (from the point of view of traditional Chinese patterns of behavior) she despised her own male relatives as much as she did the members

¹⁷ This was a general feature of China's political history. See Lo Jung-pang 1969, p. 45.

¹⁸ Wang Yü-ch'üan 1949, pp. 166-73.

of the Tang royal family, which no doubt was a factor in frustrating her attempt to replace Tang by her own Zhou dynasty.

Female influence on the throne continued when Empress Wu's elder son, Zhongzong, replaced her in 705, only to be dominated by his own Empress Wei, and when Wu Zetian's daughter, Princess Taiping, was deeply involved in the coup that placed Wu Zetian's second son, Ruizong, on the throne in 710. Ruizong's son, Xuanzong, succeeded in eliminating Princess Taiping. But during the latter part of his reign Xuanzong came under the influence of his favourite concubine, Yang Yuhuan, whose cousin, Yang Guozhong, became Chief Minister with nearly dictatorial powers. Yang Guozhong's rivalry with An Lushan contributed greatly to the disaster that ended Xuanzong's reign. Female influence in government continued under Suzong but became less important as the later Tang emperors fell under the domination of eunuchs.

Former Han emperors' frustration with the bureaucracy and need for more informal advice and assistance led them to rely on private secretaries within the palace. In the course of time these secretaries in turn moved outside the palace and created the most important functioning offices of the regular bureaucracy, replacing the previous "outer" bureaucratic offices, which often survived in name but with reduced or purely honorific functions.

The same tendency to rely on private secretaries repeated itself during Tang. Empress Wu used the Scholars of the Northern Gate (*Beimen xueshi*) to help her reach decisions, and also had a female private secretary, Shangguan Wan'er, granddaughter of a disgraced and executed Chief Minister, who rose from being a palace slave and not only composed government documents for the empress but gained a name for herself as a poet. She later became deeply involved in court politics under Zhongzong.¹⁹

The founding of the Hanlin Academy was a more substantial and long-lasting innovation of this kind during Tang. It began under Xuanzong as a miscellaneous assembly of persons with special skills whom the emperor wished to have constantly by him within the palace for his personal edification and entertainment, including not only literary stylists who could compose official documents, but also poets, calligraphers, experts in religion, and even chess players.²⁰ After the An Lushan rebellion it devel-

¹⁹ *JTS* 51, p. 2175; Guisso 1979, p. 322.

²⁰ Twitchett 1979, p. 450.

oped into an important consultative body. See especially Chapters 4 and 10 for the role of Lu Zhi as a Hanlin Scholar advising Emperor Dezong.

As during the Later Han period, however, it was the eunuchs who emerged as the most serious challenge to the role of the regular bureaucrats as partners of the emperor in governing the country. Formally excluded from participation in governmental matters under Taizong, their influence grew in an informal way under Xuanzong. During the An Lushan rebellion soon after Suzong assumed the throne at Lingwu, his eunuch adviser, Li Fuguo, dominated the court in exile and continued to do so after the return to Chang'an. Under Suzong's son, Daizong, a eunuch was put in charge of the palace armies and, though the eunuchs lost this authority briefly at the end of his reign, it was restored to them under Dezong and remained with them until the end of the dynasty.

Another eunuch institution that seems to have begun under Daizong was the office of Commissioner of Palace Secretary (*shumi shi*), originally set up as a messenger service for transmitting documents between the palace and the outer court. In the ninth century it grew into a full-blown Palace Secretariat (*shumi yuan*) which became a deliberative body on a par with the Chief Ministers.²¹ After the slaughter of eunuchs at the end of the dynasty it was transformed into a supreme council for military affairs and, as such, became part of the regular bureaucracy from the Five Dynasties through Song and Yuan.

Within the bureaucracy, officials' family backgrounds, education, experiences in government, official status, and factional relationships all influenced their assessments of particular kinds of situations. In his historian's comment at the end of the Monograph on the Xiongnu in the *Hanshu*, Ban Gu remarks that while Confucian officials stick to the policy of marriage alliances, military officers advocate punitive expeditions. They both see one-side and its temporary advantages but do not thoroughly understand the Xiongnu.²² The historian's comment in the *Jiu Tangshu* also holds that Confucian officials talk mostly about marriage alliances and generals only want to conquer by force.²³ This is oversimplified since neither Sui nor Tang, set a distinct line between civil and military officials. The same persons often acted in both capacities at different stages of their

²¹ Wang Gungwu 1963, p. 89 n. 9; Twitchett 1979, p. 20; Dalby 1979, pp. 633-4; Xie Yuanlu 1992, pp. 22-3.

²² HS 94B, p. 3830.

²³ JTS 196B, pp. 5266-7.

careers. Chief Ministers in particular were often pragmatic men, some with practical experience in both military and civilian administration.

Although, in Confucian theory, officials supposedly gave disinterested advice to the emperor as individuals, we may be sure that during Sui and Tang, as in all periods of Chinese history, connections based on kinship, marriage, local origins, and patronage, as well as class interests, also affected the advice given. These factors are usually difficult for the historian to sort out. For some brief remarks on the notorious Niu-Li factional struggles in the ninth century, which had an influence on foreign policy, see Chapters 9 and 10.

Central Government Offices for Dealing with Foreigners

Specialized central government offices handled the formal side of intercourse with foreigners and their states. These offices mobilized the large bureaucratic machine to tightly control the activities of foreign official visitors to China. The most important of these specialized bureaus was the Court of State Ceremonials (*honglu si*),²⁴ a section of the Ministry of Rites (*libu*) in the Department of State Affairs (*shangshu sheng*) in Tang. It was in charge of foreign guests to China and functioned roughly as what would in modern times be termed a department of protocol.

This office had its origin in the Zhou Senior Messenger (*da xingren*), assisted by the Junior Messenger (*xiao xingren*). The Messengers were to make arrangements for the visits and receptions of feudal lords at the royal court.²⁵ The name *honglu* was first used in 104 B.C.E. under the Han Emperor Wu to designate the office responsible for diplomatic relations as well as for reception of Chinese princes and lords and for their investiture.²⁶ The office remained in existence until the Qing period.²⁷

Specifically, the Court of State Ceremonials during the Sui dynasty was "responsible for managing the reception at the court of tributary envoys."²⁸ It was incorporated into the Court of Imperial Sacrifices

²⁴ Hucker 1985 translates *honglu si* as Court of Dependencies for the Sui period and as Court of State Ceremonials for the Tang. This seems confusing and unnecessary.

²⁵ *Zhouli zhushu* 37, pp. 1328-9; pp. 1344-5; Hucker 1985, p. 466.

²⁶ *HS* 19A, p. 730; *HHS zhi* 25, pp. 3583-4; *TD* 26, p. 153; Hucker 1985, p. 264.

²⁷ Hucker 1985, p. 264.

²⁸ Hucker 1985, p. 264.

(*taichang si*) in 582 and was restored in 592.²⁹ There were three branch offices under it:³⁰

1. Office of Receptions (*dianke shu*; *dianfan shu* under Emperor Yang), responsible for attending to the needs of important foreign visitors;³¹

2. Ceremonial Office (*siyi shu*), responsible for the funerals of officials;³²

3. Office of Daoist Worship (*chongxuan shu*), responsible for registering and monitoring the activities of all Daoist monks and nuns in the capital area.³³

During Emperor Yang's reign (605-616) the Hostel for Tributary Envoys (*sifang guan*) attached to the Court of State Ceremonials was activated from time to time as required by the situation. It was the agency responsible for the greeting of foreign rulers and envoys, their preparation for presentation at court audience and the handling of their tributary gifts.³⁴

We have more specific information on the responsibilities of the Court of State Ceremonials during Tang.³⁵ The Chamberlain (*qing*) of the Court of State Ceremonials and his assistants took charge of receiving guests and arranging funeral rites of Chinese officials and foreign rulers who had received Chinese official titles. The Tang Court of State Ceremonials differed from the Sui institution in that it had only two branch offices: the Office of Receptions (*dianke shu*) and the Ceremonial Office (*siyi shu*). Their tasks included the following:

1) to assign to each of the Chinese princes and non-Chinese chiefs a proper rank for court audience, and to distinguish between the eldest son and the other sons when the heirs of the previous two dynasties and the princes and chiefs of non-Chinese states received their appointments and their titles of nobility, and to confer official titles on the foreign rulers;

2) to arrange transportation for foreign envoys to come to the capital, to register tributary goods and Chinese imperial presents, and to

²⁹ *SUIS* 28, p. 792; *TD* 26, p. 153.

³⁰ *SUIS* 28, p. 777.

³¹ *SUIS* 28, p. 798; Hucker 1985, p. 504.

³² Hucker 1985, p. 449.

³³ Hucker 1985, p. 196.

³⁴ *SUIS* 28, p. 798; Hucker 1985, p. 446.

³⁵ For more details see Iwami Kiyohiro 1990.

draw up reports on behalf of foreign envoys if the envoys had some matters to be presented to the emperor.³⁶

The Office of Receptions was responsible for keeping records of feudal princes and of non-Chinese who had submitted, to be used for organizing their reception, banquets in their honor, their preparation for court audience and for providing accommodation and looking after foreign rulers when they fell ill or died while in China.³⁷ The Ceremonial Office was responsible for funerals of Chinese officials as well as foreign rulers who had received Chinese official titles.³⁸ In 754, the Foreign Relations Office (*libin yuan*) was brought under the supervision of the Court of State Ceremonials; it is not clear under which office this unit had previously been placed or when it had been set up. It was to give banquets and arrange accommodations for foreign envoys.³⁹

The Court of State Ceremonials normally employed twenty interpreters or translators.⁴⁰ One important duty of the office was to collect information on foreign states. It made inquiries from foreign envoys concerning the geographical conditions of their countries, their customs, local products, distance from China, and the names of their rulers, after which it made maps and pictures of foreign peoples and sent reports to the Bureau of Historiography.⁴¹

The Court of State Ceremonials was headed by a Chamberlain, *honglu qing*, rank 3b in the Tang period. A major part of his duties was to visit foreign lands to cultivate good relations and for such ceremonial purposes as to confer official titles, express condolences at the death of foreign rulers, escort Chinese imperial princesses to establish or maintain marriage alliances, and to handle frontier affairs in general. For example, in 841 the court sent the Chamberlain of the Court of State Ceremonials, Zhang Jia, as Frontier Patrolling Inspector (*xunbian shi*) to investigate the situation of the Uighurs.⁴²

The Chamberlain of the Court of State Ceremonials sometimes even participated in frontier warfare, perhaps because the holders of this position often dealt with non-Chinese and had expertise in foreign affairs.

³⁶ TLD 18, p. 13; TD 26, p. 153; JTS 44, pp. 1885-6; XTS 48, pp. 1257-8.

³⁷ TLD 18, pp. 16-7; JTS 44, p. 1885; XTS 48, p. 1258.

³⁸ JTS 44, p. 1885; XTS 48, pp. 1258-9.

³⁹ THY 66, p. 1151; p. 1152; Xie Haiping 1978, pp. 310-1.

⁴⁰ TLD 2, p. 28.

⁴¹ TLD 51, pp. 29-30; JTS 43, p. 1836; XTS 46, p. 1198; THY 63, p. 1089.

⁴² ZZTJ 246, p. 7953.

One example is found in the career of Xiao Siye. Xiao was a descendent of the royal Xiao family of the Latter Liang dynasty (555-597). At an early age he went into exile among the Turks to accompany his great-aunt, Empress Yang of the Sui dynasty. He returned to China in 635 and was put in charge of Turkish affairs. He was appointed Chamberlain of the Court of State Ceremonials with a concurrent position as the Aide (*zhangshi*) of the Protectorate of Chanyu. In 661 he led the Uighurs who had previously submitted to China to participation in the war with Koguryō. In 679, when the Turks who had earlier submitted to Tang rebelled, Xiao Siye led troops to suppress them. He failed and was exiled to the deep south.⁴³

The position of Chamberlain of the Court of State Ceremonials was often filled by officials like Xiao Siye who had gained expertise through either diplomatic or military contact with the non-Chinese. Around 619, Zheng Yuanshu, who had a military background, was assigned a mission to the Turks to persuade them to break with the anti-Tang forces. He was detained by them for some time, the Turks suspecting him of being involved in an attempt to poison the qaghan. Upon his return to China he was appointed Chamberlain of the Court of State Ceremonials, sent on several difficult peace-preservation missions to the Turks, and nearly died on several occasions. He played an important role in carrying out the Tang appeasement policy towards the Turks.⁴⁴

In 714, Wang Jun, who was Vice Minister of the Court of State Ceremonials and Vice Commander-in-chief of the Shuofang Army, was made concurrently Protector-general of Anbei in command of several frontier armies.⁴⁵ Guo Zhiyun, a capable frontier military official, was rewarded with the position of concurrent Chamberlain of the Court of State Ceremonials in 718 after his battles with the Tibetans.⁴⁶ Wang Zhongsi, whose father was a capable military official, rose to prominence due to his successes in frontier administration and in battles with the Tibetans and the Turks. In 746 he held unprecedented military power as the Military Commissioner of Hexi-Longyou and Shuofang-Hedong, and was appointed Chamberlain of the Court of State Ceremonials. He soon resigned

⁴³ *JTS* 63, pp. 2405-6; *XTS* 101, p. 3952; *ZZTJ* 200, p. 6323.

⁴⁴ *JTS* 62, pp. 2379-80; *XTS* 100, p. 3938.

⁴⁵ *JTS* 93, p. 2986; *XTS* 111, p. 4154; *ZZTJ* 211, p. 6696.

⁴⁶ *JTS* 103, p. 3190.

from the post of Commissioner of Shuofang-Hedong, and remained on the frontier defending against the Tibetans.⁴⁷

The title of Chamberlain of the Court of State Ceremonials was sometimes given to non-Chinese who had submitted to China. These non-Chinese would be expected to contribute their special knowledge and experience to the conduct of China's foreign relations. A Turkish chief, Ashina Sheer, submitted to Tang in 635, and then joined several Tang military campaigns. In 645, following his participation in the war with Koguryō, he was given concurrent title as Chamberlain of the Court of State Ceremonials, while his major responsibility still remained military as commander of expeditions against non-Chinese.⁴⁸ After the same war with Koguryō a Korean general who had submitted was also given the title of Chamberlain of the Court of State Ceremonials.⁴⁹ In 732, the nephew of the King of Silla was given the title of Supernumerary Vice Minister of the Court of State Ceremonials but remained a member of the imperial guard at the Tang court.⁵⁰ Geshe Han, of non-Chinese origin, was made Chamberlain of the Court of State Ceremonials in 747, due to his military experience in frontier affairs, especially in dealing with the Tibetans.⁵¹

In addition to the Court of State Ceremonials other offices did work pertaining to foreign affairs.⁵²

A. There were four such bureaus under the Department of State Affairs.

1. The Treasury Bureau (*jinbu*) under the Ministry of Revenue (*hubu*) was in charge, among other responsibilities, of tribute trade (*hushi*) and of rewards to foreign guests.⁵³

2. The Ministry of Receptions (*zhuke bu*) in Sui, called the Bureau of Receptions (*zhuke si*) during Tang, was under the Ministry of Rites. Its job was to take care of the reception of foreign dignitaries at court.⁵⁴ The bureau was a supervisory office ranked above the Court of State Ceremo-

⁴⁷ *JTS* 103, p. 3199.

⁴⁸ *JTS* 109, pp. 3289-90; *XTS* 110, pp. 4114-5.

⁴⁹ *JTS* 199A, p. 5323.

⁵⁰ *THY* 95, p. 1712. From the context it seems that the year should be 734.

⁵¹ *JTS* 104, p. 3212; *XTS* 135, p. 4570.

⁵² See also Xie Haiping 1978, pp. 314-5.

⁵³ *TLD* 3, pp. 48-9; *JTS* 43, p. 1828; *XTS* 46, p. 1193.

⁵⁴ *SUIS* 27, p. 753; *TLD* 4, p. 55; p. 57; *JTS* 43, p. 1832; *XTS* 46, pp. 1195-6; Hucker 1985, p. 181.

nials.⁵⁵ The office remained as an agency for reception of foreign delegations during the Ming-Qing period under the name of *zhuke qingli si*.⁵⁶

3. The Bureau of Operations (*zhifang si*) was under the Ministry of War (*bingbu*) during both Sui and Tang. It was in charge of frontier defense matters, preservation of maps of foreign states and drawings of foreign peoples. These maps and drawings were made by the Court of State Ceremonials and by this office itself. The Ministry of War, like the Ministry of Rites, was under the Department of the State Affairs.⁵⁷

4. The Transit Authorization Bureau (*simen*) was under the Ministry of Justice (*xingbu*) and responsible for inspecting the luggage of foreign guests.⁵⁸

B. The Department of Chancellery (*menxia sheng*) during Tang conveyed greetings to foreign tributaries in accord with imperial orders.⁵⁹

C. The Vice Directors (*zhongshu shilang*) of the Department of the Secretariat were to receive correspondence and memorials from foreign states and to report them to the throne. They also received gifts and passed them on to the appropriate agencies.⁶⁰ Copies of the correspondence and memorials were to be sent to the Bureau of Historiography.⁶¹ The Secretarial Receptionists (*tongshi sheren*) were to introduce personages during court audiences, and to receive tribute and presents to the throne.⁶² The Secretariat had a unit known as the Hostel for Tributary Envoys which had belonged to the Court of State Ceremonials in the Sui period. The Hostel was responsible for the greeting of foreign rulers and envoys and was staffed with Secretarial Receptionists.⁶³

D. Under the Palace Domestic Service (*neishi sheng*), the Palace Treasury (*neifu ju*) was in charge of the emperor's personal money and

⁵⁵ This is according to Yan Gengwang 1969. The traditional view is that the Ministry of Rites, under the Department of State Affairs, and the Court of State Ceremonials ranked parallel to each other and that their duties overlapped. Yan disagrees with this, and argues that the Ministry of Rites' duties were supervisory, and that the Court of State Ceremonials was assigned specific tasks. He demonstrates that after the An Lushan rebellion the responsibilities of various government offices began to blur together.

⁵⁶ Rossabi 1975, p. 63; Hucker 1985, p. 181.

⁵⁷ *TLD* 51, pp. 29-30; *JTS* 43, p. 1836; *XTS* 46, p. 1198.

⁵⁸ *JTS* 43, p. 1839; *XTS* 46, p. 1201.

⁵⁹ *TLD* 8, p. 10; *JTS* 43, p. 1843; *XTS* 47, p. 1205.

⁶⁰ *TLD* 9, p. 13; *JTS* 43, pp. 1849-50; *XTS* 47, p. 1211.

⁶¹ *THY* 63, p. 1089.

⁶² *TLD* 9, pp. 20-1; *JTS* 43, p. 1850; *XTS* 47, p. 1212.

⁶³ Hucker 1985, p. 446.

goods and was to give imperial gifts to foreign chieftains upon their departure.⁶⁴

E. Placed under the Directorate for Imperial Manufactories (*shaofu jian*) during Tang, the Directorate of Tributary Trade (*hushi jian*) supervised trade carried on by tributary delegations. It was under the Hostel for Tributary Envoys during Sui.⁶⁵ From Han times on, border markets had carried on trade with non-Chinese, but under the supervision of local governments rather than the central government. The Sui founded this office and Tang continued it, primarily out of strategic and military rather than economic considerations. Its task was to supervise the cross-border trade in horses and other animals, including examining the animals, making records and transferring them to the capital and other places.⁶⁶

Seaborne trade had also been under the supervision of local governments from Han times onward. As long as the imperial court could obtain exotic goods from overseas through tribute offerings and official purchases, that is, through purchase of goods from foreign maritime merchants by local officials on behalf of the imperial court, it did not seem necessary for the central government to exercise any direct control over maritime trading activities. From 714, the central government appointed a Maritime Trade Commissioner (*shibo shi*), who was a court envoy, to south China to purchase goods for the court. Overseas trade was, however, still under the supervision of the local government. Normally, the post of commissioner was concurrently held by the prefect of Guangzhou, a major port city.⁶⁷ During the Song dynasty, when overseas trade proved to be so highly profitable to the court that it rivalled other sources of tax revenue, the government set up its own offices in the major sea ports, directly controlling the trade.⁶⁸

Sources of Information on Foreign Countries

From the Han dynasty onwards the Chinese showed great interest in collecting information on foreign countries. The information was collected from various sources. It formed the basis for the making of foreign policy and it also provided rich basic materials for the compilation of ac-

⁶⁴ TLD 12, pp. 42-3; JTS 44, p. 1872; XTS 47, p. 1224.

⁶⁵ JTS 44, p. 1895; XTS 48, p. 1272; Hucker 1985, p. 259.

⁶⁶ TLD 22, pp. 29-30.

⁶⁷ Wang Zhenping 1991, pp. 11-38.

⁶⁸ Shiba 1983.

counts of foreign peoples in the Standard Histories from the *Shiji* onwards. The sources of information from the period between Han and Tang include the following: .

1. Chinese envoys to foreign places.

Reports from these envoys were the basis for decision-making. In the Former Han period, it was the report from Zhang Qian, the famous Han envoy to the Western Regions, that made Emperor Wu's several great expeditions to Central Asia possible, and aroused the Emperor's interest in opening up a route from Southwest China to India.⁶⁹ His report is incorporated in the chapter on Dayuan (Ferghana?)⁷⁰ in the *Shiji* and in the chapter on the Western Regions in the *Hanshu*.⁷¹ In 97, Gan Ying, a Han envoy to Parthia, went as far as the Persian Gulf and brought back information that was later included in the chapter on the Western Regions in the *Hou Hanshu*.⁷²

During the period of the Three Kingdoms, the Sun-Wu regime, with its capital at present Nanjing, took an active interest in the sea routes to the south. Around 227, Zhu Ying and Kang Tai were sent on a diplomatic mission to southeast Asian countries. Kang Tai wrote two traveler's accounts, *Wushi Waiguo Zhuan* (*Account of Foreign Countries of the Wu Period*) and *Funan Ji* (*Record of Funan*; Funan refers to Cambodia). Zhu Ying wrote *Funan Yiwu Zhi* (*Accounts of Exotic Things of Funan*). All three books are lost, but they provided the basic materials for the account of Southeast Asian countries in the *Liangshu*.⁷³ During the Northern Wei, under Emperor Taiwu (r. 424-452), Li Ao was sent as an envoy to Koguryō. While in P'yōngyang, he inquired after the local situation.⁷⁴

Early Sui's strategy to defeat the Turks was designed primarily by Zhangsun Sheng, who went on a mission to escort Princess Qianjin to the

⁶⁹ *SJ* 116, pp. 2995-6.

⁷⁰ This is the rather late, traditional, identification of Dayuan based on the *Beishi*. Pulleyblank 1966, p. 22-6, has proposed to interpret Dayuan as a transcription of *Taxwar, that is, the underlying form of the name of the Tochari, who are referred to in Greek sources as invaders of Bactria and from whom the later name, Tocharistan, for that region was derived. If this is correct, the Dayuan visited by Zhang Qian was not a place but a nomadic people, like the Yuezhi. At the time of Emperor Wu's expeditions against Dayuan in 104 and 102 B.C.E., they seem to have been located in present-day Uzbekistan. This footnote was kindly provided for me by Professor Pulleyblank.

⁷¹ Hulsewé 1979, p. 8.

⁷² *HHS* 88, p. 2910.

⁷³ Xiang Da 1957, pp. 566-8.

⁷⁴ *WS* 100, p. 2215.

Turks at the end of Northern Zhou and stayed with the Turks for more than a year, during which time he obtained invaluable first-hand information about the Turks' internal situation.⁷⁵ After his diplomatic mission to Chitu (in modern Malaya) in 608, Chang Jun and others compiled a book *Chituguo Ji* (*Record of Chitu*).⁷⁶ Early in Taizong's reign Tang Jian went to the Eastern Turks and upon his return Taizong discussed the situation there with him.⁷⁷ In 641, Chen Dade, Director of the Bureau of Operations, returned from Koguryō. His mission had been to collect information on that country. Through distribution of gifts, Chen was able to find guides to show him around and he acquired information about mountains and rivers there.⁷⁸

Also during Taizong's time, a military officer, Wei Hongji, the great grandfather of the famous historian Wei Shu, went on an embassy to the Western Turks, but was trapped there for three years. Ever loyal to the court, he wrote a book, *Xizheng Ji* (*Record of the Western Expedition*), on his own clothes which he tore into pieces to make individual pages. The book was about the various products and customs of the states on the route from Tang to the west. When asked about foreign countries by Taizong on his return, Wei presented the book. Taizong was pleased and rewarded him with a promotion.⁷⁹

The military official Wang Xuance went on three diplomatic missions to India between 643 and 657 and compiled *Zhong Tianzhuguo Xingji* (*Record of Travelling in Middle India*).⁸⁰

After the Western Regions were brought under Tang control in the time of Gaozong, the court sent special missions to the Western Regions to collect information on local customs and products and, as a result, the Bureau of Historiography produced the *Xiyu Guozhi* (*Accounts of the States of the Western Regions*) with maps and perhaps other illustrations.⁸¹

Gu Yin, who went as an assistant to a diplomatic mission to Silla around the middle of the Dali reign (766-778), wrote a book entitled *Xin-*

⁷⁵ *SUIS* 51, pp. 1329-31; *ZZTJ* 175, pp. 5450-1.

⁷⁶ *JTS* 46, p. 2016; *XTS* 58, p. 1505.

⁷⁷ *JTS* 58, p. 2307.

⁷⁸ *XTS* 220, p. 6187; *ZZTJ* 196, pp. 6169-70.

⁷⁹ *JTS* 185A, p. 4795; *XTS* 100, p. 3944.

⁸⁰ Cen Zhongmian 1966, pp. 300-3.

⁸¹ *XTS* 58, p. 1506.

luo Guoji (Record of Silla). This book was referred to by the twelfth century Korean historian Kim Pu-sik when he compiled his Korean history.⁸²

Unfortunately, all these books have been lost in the course of time. Nevertheless they must have provided much information that was useful to contemporary Chinese governments in both their diplomatic and military dealings with foreigners and for the compiling of official histories. In 787 when the emperor Dezong asked officials to present opinions on a policy toward Tibet, Cui Huan, who had been to Tibet earlier, reported information on the number of Tibetan troops and horses, which he had obtained while in Tibet by bribing the local servants.⁸³ The collection of information continued to be a major mission for Chinese envoys to foreign countries in later times.⁸⁴

2. Chinese frontier officials.

Frontier officials made regular reports and suggestions to the central government or provided their own surveys of foreign countries. Often it was their proposals that eventually became the policy of the court. An example during the Han dynasty is found in Han management of the Western Regions by General Ban Chao, who was in the Western Regions first as Han commissioner then as the Protector-general during 73-102, and by his son Ban Yong, who was there as the Aide of the Western Regions (*Xiyu zhangshi*) in 123-127. The two played an important role in maintaining Han administration in the area, and their reports were incorporated in the *Hou Hanshu*. The Protector-general of the Western Regions (*Xiyu duhu*) must also have been responsible for collecting the information contained in the chapter on the Western Regions in the *Hanshu* on distance from China, local population and numbers of troops of different peoples.⁸⁵ It was from Ban Yong's report that the chapter on the Western Regions in the *Hou Hanshu* drew a large proportion of its data.⁸⁶ One can assume that the information was collected not just for the compilation of a history book. It was essential for the central authority to have a clear understanding of the Western Regions in order to design its policy there.

The Sui Emperor Yang sent Wei Jie and Du Xingman to the Western Regions. They went as far as Persia. In his *Tongdian* Du Yu cites a

⁸² *XTS* 58, p. 1508; 220, p. 6205; Gardiner 1970, p. 15.

⁸³ *JTS* 12, p. 356; 196B, p. 5251.

⁸⁴ For the examples of Song, see Franke 1983, pp. 137-9; for the examples of Ming, see Rossabi 1975, pp. 15-6.

⁸⁵ Biographies of Ban Chao and Yong, *HHS* 47; Hulsewé 1979, p. 9-11.

⁸⁶ *HHS* 88, p. 2913.

passage from the book of Wei Jie called *Xifan Ji* (*Record of Western Barbarians*).⁸⁷ When Pei Ju served as a Sui official in Zhangye, an important trading center in modern Gansu, he collected information from foreign merchants and compiled a book entitled *Xiyu Tuji* (*Illustrated Record of the Western Regions*). It was this book and the suggestions Pei made to the court that helped encourage Emperor Yang's ambition and adventures in the Western Regions. He also wrote another book, *Gaoli Fengsu* (*Customs of Koguryō*).⁸⁸

During the Tang period, soon after a coup d'état took place in Koguryō in 642, Zhang Jian, the Commander-in-chief of Yingzhou, located close to Koguryō, reported the event to the Tang court.⁸⁹ After the Tang conquest of the Western Turks, Wang Mingyuan was sent to set up prefectures in Tuhuoluo (Tokharestan, now northern Afghanistan). In 661 he presented to the throne the *Xiyu Tuji* (*Illustrated Account of the Western Regions*) and made a proposal for the establishment of area commands, prefectures, districts and garrisons in the area, which the court accepted. His book is not extant.⁹⁰

In Xuanzong's time Gai Jiayun, the Protector-general of Anxi, wrote a book entitled *Xiyu Ji* or *Xiyu Zhi* (*Record of the Western Regions*). Gai was of military background, with a career in the northwestern regions. A passage about the Kirghiz in his lost book is quoted in the *Tang Huiyao*.⁹¹ In the famous battle at the Talas River between Tang and the Arabs in 751 Du Huan, a nephew of Du You, was taken captive and did not return to Tang until ten years later. He wrote a book under the title *Jingxing Ji* (*Record of Places Passed Through*) about his experience. The book was later lost but some passages were quoted by Du You in his *Tongdian*.⁹²

Jia Dan held various positions such as Chamberlain of the Court of State Ceremonials, Military Commissioner, and Chief Minister in 793-805 under Dezong. He remained interested in geography throughout his career and wrote several geographical works. When foreign envoys arrived or Chinese envoys returned, he would ask them about the topography of the place with which they were associated. One of his books contained a de-

⁸⁷ *SUIS* 83, p. 1841; p. 1849; p. 1857; *TD* 193, p. 1039.

⁸⁸ *SUIS* 67, pp. 1578-81; *JTS* 46, p. 2016; *XTS* 58, p. 1506.

⁸⁹ *ZZTJ* 196, p. 6181.

⁹⁰ *TD* 193, p. 1044.

⁹¹ *THY* 100, p. 1785. Ise 1968, pp. 300-7.

⁹² *TD* 191, p. 1029; 192, p. 1034.

tailed study of the routes between Tang and foreign countries.⁹³ Another had the title *Tufan Huanghe Lu* (*Record of Tibet and the Yellow River*).⁹⁴ In 843, when the envoys of Kirghiz arrived at the Tang court, the Chinese were not clear who they were since communication with China had been interrupted for sometime and the pronunciation of their name as transcribed in Chinese had changed. It was Jia Dan's work, *Siyi Shu* (*Discussion of the Four Barbarians*), that provided the court with clarification.⁹⁵

At least six works on the Nanzhao kingdom were written by local officials and by Chinese envoys to Nanzhao. One of them, *Manshu*, is still extant. The military commissioner, Wei Gao, wrote a work on the southwestern frontier defense concerning Nanzhao.⁹⁶ When Li Deyu was made Military Commissioner of Xichuan in 830, he made special efforts through personal interviews and investigations to collect knowledge on the frontier, and compiled a book called *Xinan Beibian Lu* (*Notes on Southwestern Border Defense*).⁹⁷ These works became the major sources for the compilation of the "Account of Nanzhao" in the *Jiu Tangshu* and *Xin Tangshu* and for *Zizhi Tongjian*. Some of these lost works are quoted in Sima Guang's *kaoyi*.

3. Chinese Princesses in the Marriage Alliance System.

From the limited sources we have concerning the roles of these Chinese princesses, we see that they provided useful information to the Chinese court in addition to the other important functions they performed in the marriage alliance system.

During the Former Han dyansty, for example, the Han Princess Jieyou who had married Wusun royalty in the Western Regions, and her maid Feng Liao, both played an active role in strengthening Han relations with the Wusun. Through their reports or letters they often kept the court informed of the local situation.⁹⁸ In 615, when the Sui Emperor Yang was on his northern tour, the Turkish Shibi Qaghan planned a sudden attack. The Sui Princess Yicheng, who had married the qaghan, sent a report to

⁹³ *JTS* 138, pp. 3782-7; *XTS* 43B, pp. 1146-55; 58, p. 1506; 166, pp. 5083-5.

⁹⁴ *XTS* 58, p. 1506.

⁹⁵ *THY* 100, p. 1785; Pulleyblank 1990b, p. 103.

⁹⁶ For a study of these works, see Xiang Da 1957, pp. 136-54. For an English translation of the *Manshu*, see Luce 1961.

⁹⁷ Backus 1981, pp. 123-4.

⁹⁸ *HS*96B; Li Hu 1979.

Sui, although it arrived too late.⁹⁹ In 677 the Tibetan *btsan-po* died but it seems that the Tang court was not informed of this until two years later in 679 when Princess Wencheng, who had married into the Tibetan royal family in 641, reported the matter through her envoys.¹⁰⁰ In 717 Princess Jincheng, who had married the Tibetan king in 707, sent a memorial to the Tang emperor Xuanzong explaining the situation in Tibet and the necessity for the two sides to conclude a peace treaty.¹⁰¹

4. Foreign merchants and envoys.

As mentioned above, when Pei Ju was in Zhangye, he collected information from foreign merchants about their homelands' customs and geography. This information and his policy suggestions encouraged Emperor Yang's ambitions in the Western Regions.¹⁰²

Information from foreign envoys may not have been directly useful for decision-making, but it was certainly given great importance by the Chinese court. Japanese envoys arrived at the Sui court in 600. Emperor Wen asked the official in charge to inquire after the customs of Japan, and the envoy's detailed answer was incorporated into the *Suishu*.¹⁰³ Curiosity was surely one motive but acquisition of reliable knowledge of foreign lands for making foreign policy would have been the primary motive.

During the Tang period, continuing a tradition that must have gone back to much earlier times, the various government agencies that dealt with envoys from foreign countries were required to make regular reports to the Bureau of Historiography, as follows:

Appearance at court of tribute-bearing missions from foreign countries: Whenever such a foreign mission arrives, the Court of State Ceremonials should examine them on the natural conditions and customs of their country, on their dress, and the products brought as tribute, and on the distance and route by which they have come. These facts are to be reported together with the names of their leaders.

⁹⁹ *SUIS* 4, p. 89; *ZZTJ* 182, p. 5697.

¹⁰⁰ The Chinese sources record the death of the *btsan-po* as occurring in 679, see *JTS* 196A, p. 5224; *ZZTJ* 202, p. 6393; *CFYG* 979, p. 11498. The Tibetan source records the year as 677, see Beckwith 1987, p. 43. The discrepancy might be due to the fact that Princess Wencheng's envoy reached the Chinese court in 679, and the Chinese historians then recorded that as the year when the death of *btsan-po* occurred.

¹⁰¹ *XTS* 216A, p. 6082.

¹⁰² *SUIS* 67, pp. 1578-81; *JTS* 46, p. 2016; *XTS* 58, p. 1506.

¹⁰³ *SUIS* 81, p. 1826.

The invasions and submissions of barbarians: The Department of the Secretariat should record and send their memorials and reports [to the Bureau]; the Ministry of War should record and send military reports [to the Bureau]; on the day when armies return, generals should fully record and report [to the Bureau] the cities and fords that have been captured, officials and commoners who have been wounded and killed, and animals and goods that have been plundered.¹⁰⁴

The Court of State Ceremonials also regularly questioned foreign envoys about their countries and at court audiences the emperor himself would put questions to them.¹⁰⁵ Although it is not clear how strictly the rules for reporting information were enforced and although after the An Lushan rebellion the collection of material of all kinds by the Bureau of Historiography apparently ceased to function well,¹⁰⁶ the accounts of foreign countries in the Standard Histories, presumably based partly on such materials, show that the historiographers did receive such reports. Also, we read that in 843, when Kirghiz envoys arrived at the Tang court, the Court of State Ceremonials interviewed them about the geography and customs of their nation. As a result, a painting of these envoys and an account of the Kirghiz nation were produced.¹⁰⁷

5. Buddhist travelers.

Buddhist travelers' accounts are a rich source of information on foreign countries. The early Tang famous monk Xuanzang left for India around 629 via the Silk Road. Upon his return to the Tang capital over ten years later he was interviewed by Taizong. Greatly impressed, the emperor commissioned him to write an account of his experiences and what he had seen and heard. It can be assumed that the information from Xuanzang helped Taizong in his expansion into the Western Regions, which began in earnest during the 640's. The book entitled *Da Tang Xiyu Ji* (*Record of the Western Regions in the Tang Dynasty*) was dictated by Xuanzang to Bianji. The book was completed in 646 and contains invaluable information about Central Asia and India, providing basic materials for the account of the Western Regions in the *Xin Tangshu*.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁴ THY 63, p. 1089. Translation of the first paragraph is based on Twitchett 1992, p. 27. He omits the second paragraph in his translation.

¹⁰⁵ For example, see ZTJ 202, p. 6368.

¹⁰⁶ Twitchett 1992, p. 29.

¹⁰⁷ Drompp 1986, p. 286.

¹⁰⁸ Sato 1958, p. 128; Ch'en, K. 1964, pp. 235-8.

Many Buddhist travelers wrote accounts on foreign countries before Tang. Although they may not have provided direct assistance in the decision-making process on the central level, they contributed to the enrichment of Chinese knowledge of the outside world, and to the compilation of the accounts on foreign countries in the official histories. Faxian and his book on his travels to India are mentioned in Chapter 1. There were other books by Buddhist monks who traveled abroad in the Period of Disunion, such as

1) *Shishi Xiyu Ji* (*Records of the Western Countries by a Buddhist Monk*), which probably contained a brief account of the Indus valley, a fuller description of Buddhist holy places in the Ganges valley, and an account of Central Asia, by an unknown monk, probably before Faxian;

2) *Waiguo Shi* (*Matters Concerning the Foreign Kingdoms*), a description of kingdoms in North India by Zhi Sengzai, a monk probably from the Yuezhi in the Jin period (265-420);

3) *Foguo Ji* (*Record of the Buddhistic Kingdoms*) by Zhu Fawei, who may have lived in the Jin period;

4) *Youxing Waiguo Zhuan* (*An Account of Travels in Foreign Countries*) by Shi Zhimeng, who left Chang'an in 404 via the Western Regions to India and arrived back in China in 424;

5) *Waiguo Zhuan* (*Account of Foreign Countries*) by Shi Tanjing or Tanwujie, who left China around 420, traveled for about twenty years from the Western Regions to India and returned to China by sea;

6) *Liguo Zhuan* (*The Account of Countries Passed*) by Shi Fasheng, probably from Gaochang in the Song period (420-479).

These books are no longer extant but some were still available in the Tang period and there are quotations from some of them in existing works.¹⁰⁹

Under the Northern Wei regime, the court sent an envoy, Song Yun, and others, including a monk, Huisheng, to Central Asia to obtain Buddhist sutras. They left China around 518 and returned in 522. Both Song Yun and Huisheng wrote works on their travels. Although they are now lost, there are extensive quotations in the still extant *Luoyang Qielan Ji* (*An Account of Buddhist Monasteries of Luoyang*) written in 547. Huisheng's report was used in the compilation of the chapter on the Western Regions in the *Weishu* and *Beishi*.¹¹⁰ There were other early Buddhist

¹⁰⁹ Petech 1950, pp. 5-6; Xiang Da 1957, pp. 570-7.

¹¹⁰ WS 102, p. 2279; Chavannes 1903; *Luoyang Qielan Ji Jiaozhu*, pp. 251-66.

travelers, of whom Chavannes gives a list in an appendix to his translation of the account of Song Yun's journey.¹¹¹

In addition to Xuanzang, another famous Tang Buddhist traveler was Yijing. He left Canton for India in 671 on board a Persian ship, returned to Canton in 689, and wrote two important historical works in addition to his translations of Buddhist sutras, *Nanhai Jigui Neifa Zhuan* (*A Record of the Buddhist Kingdoms in the Southern Archipelago*), and *Da Tang Xiyu Qiyu Gaoseng Zhuan* (*Biographies of Eminent Monks of the Tang Who Sought the Dharma in the Western Regions*).¹¹² Other surviving accounts of Buddhist pilgrims include a work in Chinese by Huichao, a Korean monk who went to India via sea and returned to China by land in 729, and a work by Wukong who left Chang'an in 751 and returned to China in 790 by land.¹¹³

6. Miscellaneous works.

Works in this category, like the Buddhist travelers' accounts, may not have direct bearing on the making of foreign policy, but they were important sources for the compilation of official histories. During the Period of Disunion the Chinese interest in geography and in foreign lands produced a large number of books on the subject, as shown in the Monograph on Bibliography in the *Suishu*. Most of them are not extant but materials from some are scattered in other books, from which one can get a hint of the wide scope of their authors' interests.

The eighteenth century scholar Wang Mo printed a collection of surviving fragments of geographical works of the period from Han to Tang under the title *Han-Tang Dili Shuchao* (*Excerpts of Han-Tang Books on Geography*). In his original table of contents he included about 40 titles by envoys or generals on campaign and quoted in accounts of foreign countries, and works on the four "barbarians". Unfortunately none of these works was included in the work as finally printed.¹¹⁴

There seems to have been an explosion in books on geography during the Period of Disunion, dealing with both China itself and also with foreign countries. Lu Cheng in the Southern Qi period (479-502) compiled the *Dili Shu* (*The Book of Geography*) in 149 chapters based on 160 other works. Ren Fang in the Liang period (502-557) wrote *Di Ji* (*Record of*

¹¹¹ Chavannes 1903, pp. 430-41.

¹¹² Ch'en, K. 1964, pp. 238-9.

¹¹³ Chavannes 1969, pp. 141-2.

¹¹⁴ *Han-Tang Dili Shuchao*, pp. 19-20.

Land) in 252 chapters, adding more works to Lu Cheng's. Only a fifth of these two works were extant by early Tang.¹¹⁵

Interest in exotic things also stimulated the production of books. For example, the monograph on bibliography of the *Suishu* lists over ten works on exotic things, such as *Jiaozhou Yiwu Zhi* (*Exotic Things of Jiaozhou*) by Yang Fu of the Han dynasty, and *Nanzhou Yiwu Zhi* (*Exotic Things of Nanzhou*) by Wan Zhen, a local official of the early part of the third century under the Sun-Wu regime.¹¹⁶ Prior to Tang several works were written about the southwest, including Yunnan.¹¹⁷

In the monographs on bibliography in Sui and Tang official histories, one finds many interesting titles of works concerning non-Chinese. One book entitled *Beihuang Junzhang Lu* (*Record of Chieftains of the Northern Wilderness*) was by Li Fan (d. 826), the son of Chief Minister Li Mi under Dezong.¹¹⁸ The works recorded in these bibliographies also include the titles mentioned above by Zhu Ying and Kang Tai, and the Buddhist travelers Pei Ju, Jia Dan etc.

In addition to the above-mentioned literary sources, historians used documents of the following kinds in compiling accounts of foreign countries in the Standard Histories.

1. Edicts and orders issued by the Chinese court and letters sent by China to foreign rulers.

2. Biographies of officials involved in foreign affairs and expeditions to foreign countries, and documents contained in their collected works.

3. Correspondence from foreign countries. It is not clear who composed letters sent by foreign rulers to the Chinese court and whether they were originally written in Chinese or were translated into Chinese either at their point of origin or after arrival at the Chinese court. One speculation is that the foreign rulers had them written by Chinese who were living at their courts or by their own people who had learned Chinese. For example, in Taizong's reign, following the marriage of Princess Wencheng to the Tibetan king, Tibet sent young people to Tang to study, and invited Chinese scholars to Tibet to compile official reports to send to the Tang em-

¹¹⁵ Xiang Da 1957, p. 565.

¹¹⁶ Xiang Da 1957, pp. 568-70.

¹¹⁷ Xiang Da 1957, pp. 138-9.

¹¹⁸ *JTS* 130, p. 3623; *XTS* 58, p. 1508.

peror on behalf of Tibet.¹¹⁹ In 647, when the Uighurs were brought under the Chinese administrative system, they asked for scholars to compose official letters for them.¹²⁰ Korea and Japan adopted not only the Chinese bureaucratic system but also the Chinese script.

On the other hand, in the Chinese court there were Official Interpreters (*yiguan*). It is possible that, at least on some occasions, they translated foreign correspondence into proper Chinese both in language and in rhetoric. An example is the letter sent by the Turkish qaghan Qimin to the Sui Emperor Yang in 607. The letter may have been translated from Turkish into Chinese since some sentences bear similarities to the phrases in the Turkish inscriptions.¹²¹

The question of the proper modes of address for a foreign ruler to use in addressing the Chinese emperor was a vital consideration from the Chinese point of view.¹²² Some letters of foreign rulers demonstrate a strong tendency to insist on equality with China, the most famous example being the letter by the Japanese ruler to Emperor Yang of the Sui period, which began: "The Son of Heaven in the land of the rising sun sends this letter to the Son of Heaven of the land where the sun sets."¹²³ Upon reading it, Emperor Yang was displeased and instructed the Chamberlain of the State Ceremonials: "From now on, do not present letters from the Man and Yi (barbarians) which do not have proper etiquette."¹²⁴ Letters from Tibet quoted in the Tang histories also contain examples of language that Chinese rulers found unacceptable. Other letters from foreign rulers, however, were written in accordance with Chinese rhetorical forms, the most obvious cases being when the foreign rulers refer to themselves as vassals.

Within the Bureau of Historiography, the works based on the materials collected went through a series of stages of composition. During the Tang dynasty these were the Court Diary (*qiju zhu*), Administrative Record (*shizheng ji*), Daily Calendar (*rili*), Veritable Records (*shilu*) and National History (*guoshi*), each being a digest of the material produced at the previous stage.¹²⁵ Although these works are largely no longer extant, the last two categories were the principal direct sources for the existing Stan-

¹¹⁹ JTS 196A, pp. 5221-2; XTS 216A, p. 6074.

¹²⁰ ZZTJ 198, p. 6245.

¹²¹ Mori Masao 1967, pp. 441-76.

¹²² Kaneko Shūichi 1974; 1988; Wang Zhenping 1994.

¹²³ Wright 1979, p. 139.

¹²⁴ SUI 81, p. 1827.

¹²⁵ Twitchett 1992, p. 33.

dard Histories of Tang, the *Jiu Tangshu* and the *Xin Tangshu*, as well as of the Tang section of *Zizhi Tongjian*.

The Sui-Tang period is noted for its innovations and improvements in the structure of government. Foreign policy was not made in isolation by a separate corps of diplomats lacking meaningful contact with those engaged in domestic policy-making. Indeed, no real distinction was made between domestic and foreign affairs. A larger group of officials than in Han times participated in decision-making for both domestic and foreign policy. Conferences were held regularly between the emperor and his officials and among the Chief Ministers. Responsible officials deliberated on all important decisions and checks and balances were put in place to ensure accuracy and avoid errors. An elaborate communication system linked the center to the most remote offshoots of the empire. Although not part of the central decision-making body, frontier officials often played a very important, sometimes decisive, role in making proposals and contributing their local knowledge and experience to decision-making.

During the Tang period, as in other times, tensions often existed between the emperor and his ministers as a result of their conflicting interests and different points of view. As in other times, the Tang emperors often relied on their inner court of imperial relatives, personal secretaries and eunuchs, to strengthen their power and bypass the bureaucracy. Moreover the composition of the inner court changed over the course of the dynasty, most notably with the growth in the power of the eunuchs after the An Lushan rebellion.

Traditional historians often commented that under the imperial system Confucian officials tended to promote a peaceful policy whereas military men often advocated aggression, but this simple conclusion does not seem to apply to the Sui and Tang period, during which there was much fluidity of movement between civil and military posts and the same persons often acted in both capacities at different stages of their careers.

There was no specific office in the central government for foreign affairs. This did not mean that foreign affairs were not important, but rather that as a would-be universal state the government of China had to integrate foreign with domestic affairs. The need to foster such integration was not peculiar to imperial China. When the issues are crucial enough, even modern states must judge their foreign affairs in term of domestic

needs and make their domestic policies adjust to the requirements of their foreign involvements. Few governments are fortunate enough to be able to make their foreign policies adjust to their domestic needs.

The government distributed relevant work to various offices that took charge of foreign diplomatic delegations from their arrival at the border to their audience with the emperor and their safe departure from China. The most important office was the *honglu si*, with its chief officers selected for their background or expertise in dealing with non-Chinese. Border markets for trade with non-Chinese were all under the supervision of local governments rather than the central government. All these offices were supposed to ensure the smooth working of the tribute system, and to exercise a tight control over official contact with foreign countries.

It has often been claimed that the ethnocentric Chinese were not interested in foreign countries but there is abundant evidence, and not just during Sui-Tang times, for the opposite conclusion. In dealing with frontier issues the Chinese simply could not afford to be ill-informed about foreign countries, and from the Han dynasty onwards Chinese governments attached great importance to the collection of information on their neighbors. Large amounts of data were regularly collected from Chinese envoys sent abroad, frontier officials, Chinese princesses in marriage alliances and from foreign envoys to China. During Tang this information was gathered in the Bureau of Historiography. Buddhist travelers and scholars and officials interested in foreign lands also produced a variety of works that enriched Chinese knowledge of the world and broadened the minds of China's ruling elite.

These materials were organized by the bureaucracy into forms easily available to the decision-makers, and they were in fact used in decision-making. Happily for the modern historian, these materials were also the primary sources for the compilation of the accounts of foreign countries in the dynastic histories and encyclopaedias which have come down to us. While persistently maintaining the official rhetoric of sinocentrism and Chinese cultural superiority, the Chinese realistically understood the importance of knowledge of their neighboring peoples and made efforts to increase such knowledge.