

Chapter 3

The Sui Dynasty: A United Empire Restored and Lost

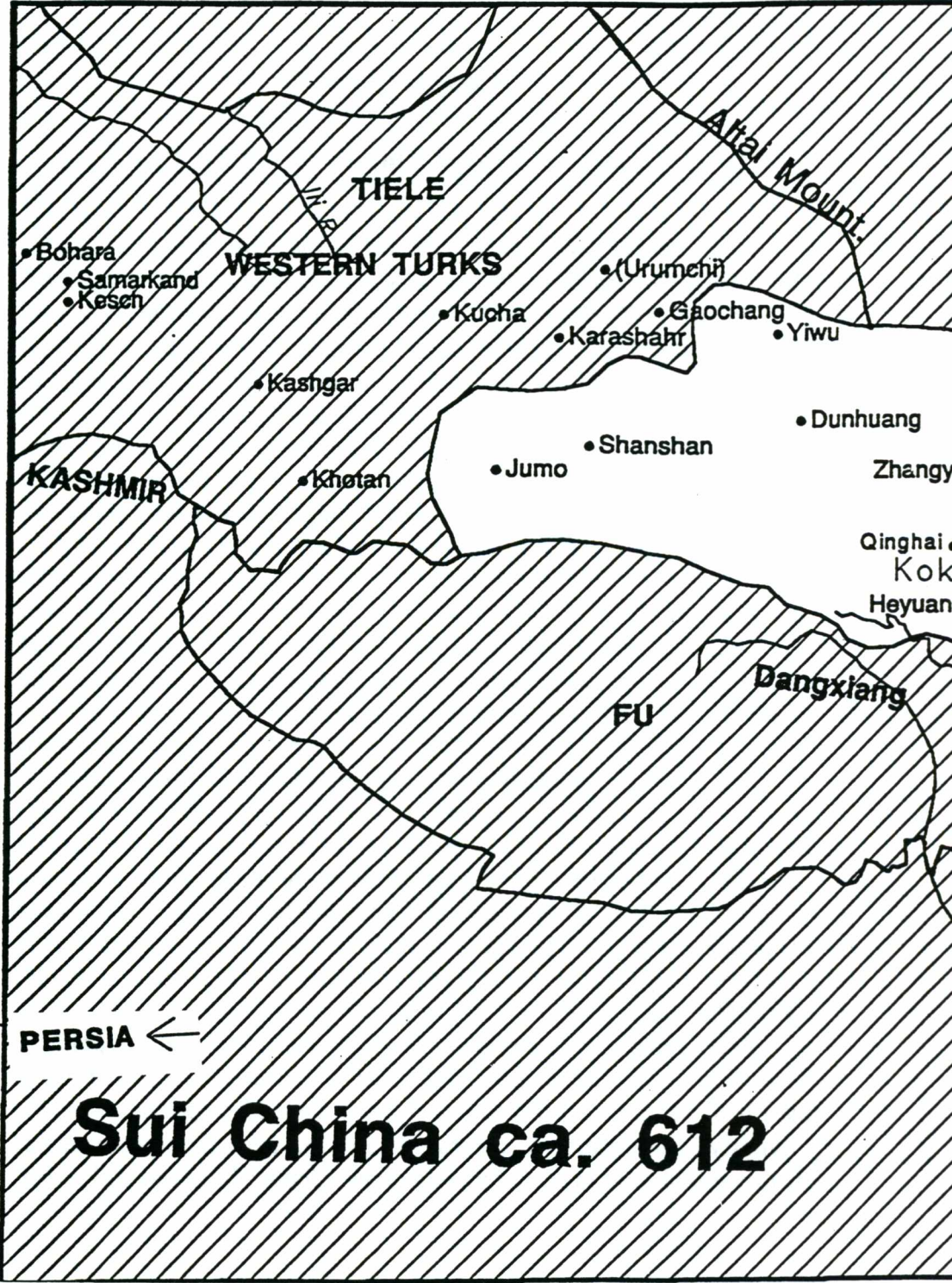
In 581 the Regent, Yang Jian, forced the child Emperor Jing of Northern Zhou to abdicate his throne and inaugurated the Sui dynasty, with its capital in Daxingcheng, near Chang'an. Though it began auspiciously by conquering Chen, the last of the Southern Dynasties, in 589 and reuniting the whole of China for the first time since the fall of Western Jin, the Sui dynasty lasted for only two generations. In this chapter we first discuss the generally successful, pragmatic foreign policy of the founding ruler, Emperor Wen, who aimed at consolidating his frontiers, and then the transition under the second ruler, Emperor Yang to an overambitious, aggressive policy aimed at foreign conquest, which led to disaster.

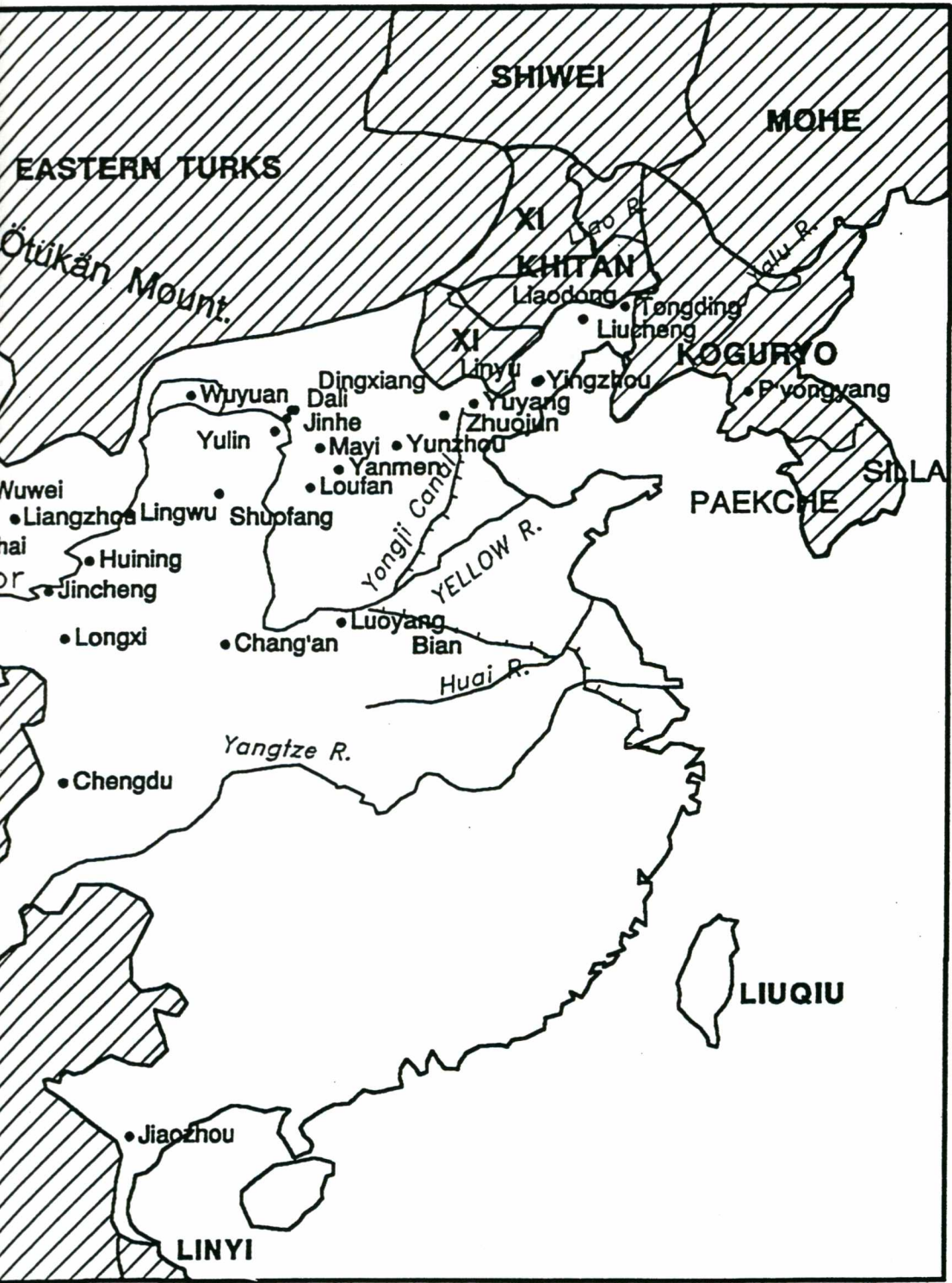
Emperor Wen

Yang Jian was a native Chinese whose forefathers had served non-Chinese regimes for six generations during the Period of Disunion. His wife was from a Xianbei aristocratic family, and his daughter was the empress of the Emperor Xuan of the Northern Zhou. The new Sui Emperor Wen, Yang Jian's posthumous title, soon engaged himself in a whole set of complex tasks to consolidate the dynastic power. The situation was not unfavorable: Northern Zhou had conquered its rival, Northern Qi, just four years earlier, and had thereby unified the whole of north China. Although a usurper of Northern Zhou's throne, Yang Jian had already defeated his major opponents before 581 and had under his control the powerful military machine and the loyal and effective bureaucracy of that semi-nomadic and semi-Chinese regime.

Yet the tasks of consolidation were formidable: from the point of view of geopolitics, three regions of China — Northwest China, the North China Plain, and the Lower Yangtze — were the most important areas for any dynasty of unification to control.¹ In 581 Sui dynastic power was not yet firmly established in any of these regions: South China was still under

¹ Somers 1986, pp. 976-8.





the last of the Southern Dynasties, Chen; Northwest China was menaced by incursions from the nomadic Turks and the Tuyuhun kingdom, and on the borders of the North China Plain there was a potential threat from Koguryō, which occupied Liaodong and the northern half of the Korean peninsula. In the realm of foreign affairs the whole of Emperor Wen's reign was devoted to consolidation. Assisted by his advisers, mostly military men of action with a pragmatic assessment of the situation, the Emperor followed a policy aimed at security and defense. One unique adviser was his wife, Empress Dugu. With no official appointment she exercised her influence from the "inner court" on all matters of state policy and her role was so important and lasting that she and the emperor together were referred to as "the two sages."²

Military and Frontier Organization

While retaining the *fubing* system, inherited from Western Wei and Northern Zhou, Emperor Wen reorganized his military forces so that the central government had stronger control. He restored the Chinese surnames of the generals and reorganized the Sui troops into twelve units, consisting of the palace armies and the *fubing*, stationed in the capital and in nearby regions. He transformed the *fubing* into militiamen who were liable for service from the age of twenty-one to sixty (using the Chinese method of reckoning age, which makes a person one year old at birth). *Fubing* came from both hereditary military families and from ordinary families. They would perform military duties periodically, as guards in the capital or at the frontier posts, and participate in expeditions. When off duty, they engaged in agriculture at home. These militiamen were given land under the equal field system, but were exempt from tax and corvée labor and were expected to provide part of their own equipment.³

In reforming local government Emperor Wen reduced the three levels of the local administrative apparatus into two: "prefecture" (*zhou*) and "county" (*xian*). To ensure secure and trouble-free frontiers, Sui followed the Northern Zhou practice of establishing "regional military commands" or "area commands" (*zongguan fu*) in areas of major strategic importance. During the Tang dynasty some of these regional military commands had their own *fubing*.

The regional military commanders (*zongguan*) exercised military

² Wright 1978, pp. 71-3; 1979, pp. 63-6.

³ Gu Jiguang 1962, pp. 98-115; Wright 1979, pp. 100-2.

authority over a cluster of neighboring prefectures. These commanders were ranked military officials, and sometimes were made concurrently civil governors of the prefectures in which they were stationed. They were classified in four grades, as grand regional military commanders, first class, second class, and third class depending on how many prefectures were under their command. By the end of Emperor Wen's reign there were about 36 regional military commands, eight in the north and northwest to defend against the Turks, and seven in the northeast to cope with the Turks and Khitan, a Mongolian speaking people in Manchuria.⁴ One major responsibility of these regional commanders was security in their jurisdiction. The degree of stability directly affected relations with neighboring non-Chinese.

Since the northern frontiers were often subject to nomadic raids, the court would appoint high-ranking officials, some of non-Chinese origin, with superior military ability and good knowledge of frontier affairs to be regional military commanders. For example, Helou Zigan, of Xianbei origin, who served as Yunzhou *zongguan*, first made his name among the Turks.⁵ Of Du Yan, his successor, it was said in one Chinese source: "When the Turks came to raid, Yan captured and executed them. The northern barbarians were afraid and the barbarian horses did not dare to come to the frontier."⁶ Zhou Yao, of Xianbei origin, was the Youzhou *zongguan*; he took care to repair the fortifications and kept close watch to safeguard the frontiers. As a result, the frontier people enjoyed peace. Qifu Hui, of Xianbei origin, served as Liangzhou *zongguan*, guarded the frontiers closely and sent reconnaissance forces so far out that the Turks were awed by his name and stopped raiding.⁷ Wei Chong, experienced in dealing with the non-Chinese, was made Yingzhou *zongguan* in the northeast. His good treatment of the Khitan and Mohe, a Tungusic tribe in Manchuria, made them willing to fight for Sui; he attracted the Xi, a Tungusic tribe in Manchuria, to come to pay tribute, and led troops to drive away the invading Koreans.⁸ During his career he accumulated knowledge about Korea and left a written work on Korea which was later presented by his

⁴ TD 32, p. 185; Cen Zhongmian 1957, pp. 7-10; Wright 1979, p. 100.

⁵ SUI 53, p. 1353.

⁶ SUI 55, p. 1372.

⁷ SUI 55, p. 1376; p. 1378.

⁸ SUI 47, p. 1270.

son to the Tang emperor Taizong before the campaign against Korea.⁹

Zhangsun Sheng and his Divide and Rule Turkish Strategy

The nomadic Turkish power, known in history as the First Turkish empire (from mid-sixth century to 630), formed the most severe threat to the newly founded Sui dynasty. Emperor Wen had first to deal with the Turks before he could launch any major campaigns into the South to complete China's domestic unification.

Soon after assuming the throne Emperor Wen discontinued the payment of silk products to the Turks, probably because of his belief that a unified north could now risk defying the Turks. The Turkish Shabolue (Ishbara) Shetu Qaghan, felt humiliated. His wife, the Northern Zhou Princess Qianjin, also resented Sui and wanted to use Turkish forces to take revenge for Sui's usurpation of the throne from the Zhou house. In 581 the Turks joined forces with a former Northern Qi officer, Gao Baoning, to attack Linyu Fortress. Gao Baoning had been the Prefect of Yingzhou before Sui and had maintained close contact with the Khitan and Mohe people in Manchuria. In the following year the Turks invaded, penetrating inside the Great Wall.¹⁰

While Emperor Wen generally followed a defensive strategy—improving fortifications along the Great Wall, and stationing troops along the northern frontiers¹¹—a policy to divide the Turks was also devised. The architect of the policy was Zhangsun Sheng (542-609). Until his death Zhangsun Sheng was Sui's expert on Turkish affairs, and played a crucial role in the formulation and implementation of policies towards the Turks.

Zhangsun Sheng was a native of Luoyang, his family originally being a branch of the Tuoba royal clan of Northern Wei. His daughter was the famous future Empress Zhangsun of the Tang emperor, Taizong, and his son became the highly prestigious minister Zhangsun Wuji under Taizong. As a young man Zhangsun Sheng was not very impressive in literary attainments but was excellent in martial arts, especially archery, making him a typical Northern military man.

In 580, at the end of Northern Zhou, he went on a mission to escort the Zhou Princess Qianjin to the Turks for a marriage alliance. In their fre-

⁹ *JTS* 77, p. 2670.

¹⁰ *SUIS* 84, pp. 1865-6; *ZZTJ* 175, p. 5450; p. 5456.

¹¹ Cen Zhongmian 1958, pp. 45-50; for the work on the Great Wall in 581, 582, 586 and 587, see p. 58.

quent diplomatic exchanges at that time both Zhou and the Turks selected men with good military skills in order to impress the other side. Zhangsun was selected for this mission because of his talent in the martial arts, and because of this talent the Turkish qaghan showed him great favor and invited him to stay over until the next year. Not forgetting the information-gathering side of his mission, he made friends with the qaghan's younger brother, who had had disputes with the qaghan, so that he could obtain invaluable first-hand information about the local geography and the Turks' internal situation. With such information China might be able to exploit the deep internal divisions among the Turks.

After the Turkish invasion of 581 Zhangsun Sheng presented a memorial to the court regarding the Turks. Even now the memorial remains our best source for the complicated internal conflicts within the Turkish empire then. The Turks were not as centralized as the Xiongnu had been. By 581 the Turkish empire had two qaghanates: the Eastern Turks were under Ishbara Qaghan, who had his headquarters in the Ötükän Mountains, and the Western Turks were under Datou (Tardu). In addition, there were other qaghans, nominally subordinate to one or the other of these, but who were disaffected because of disagreements over the succession. Each of them was militarily powerful. On the surface all these chieftains maintained a show of unity, but underneath they were riven by suspicions and ill feelings. The subjects of the Turks who had been conquered and incorporated into their khanates were living under heavy oppression and, being nomads themselves, were quick to rise in revolt when the opportunity presented itself.

Based on his observations, Zhangsun suggested a policy of playing off the Turkish qaghans against one another. In accordance with the balance of power principle of making alliance with the far and attacking the near, and abandoning the strong and joining the weak, his strategy was to make Ishbara the target and to ally Sui with the other qaghans. This, he assured the court, would weaken the Turks and, within ten years or so, China could take advantage of the situation and "empty the country at one stroke." Greatly pleased with the memorial, the emperor summoned him into the court for discussions, during which he analyzed the situation in detail, using maps. Emperor Wen accepted all his suggestions.¹²

Zhangsun Sheng's policy was subsequently put into practice. Sui

¹² *SUIS* 51, pp. 1329-31; *ZZTJ* 175, pp. 5449-51. For discussions of the political organizations of the Turks, see Ma Changshou 1957, pp. 23-9; Barfield 1989, pp. 132-6.

sent envoys to the Western qaghan and Zhangsun himself went to the Xi and Khitan people, who were under the control of the Turks, to persuade them to enter into a friendly relationship with Sui and to guide him to Ishbara's brother.¹³ Soon some results were achieved. In 582, Ishbara launched a major attack on the Sui frontier, but had to abandon his plan for further penetration because the Western qaghan decided to withdraw.¹⁴

Although Zhangsun Sheng had envisaged a period of ten years before Sui's final strike, the emperor in 583 decided to start a major war against the Eastern Turks, claiming in his edict that the Turkish empire was on the edge of collapse, with all its subjects in the west and northeast rebelling. While the battles went on, Zhangsun Sheng continued to work on the Turkish leaders to stir up further internal conflicts among them. Natural disasters added to the great difficulties that the Turks faced. The junior qaghans under Ishbara went to the Western qaghan for protection. They also sent envoys to the Sui court, suing for peace and requesting Sui military assistance, but Emperor Wen refused their petition.¹⁵ The hostility between the Eastern and Western qaghans soon came into the open.¹⁶

Unlike the Han dynasty, which had to wait for the Xiongnu empire to be split by internal struggles before it could take advantage of the situation, the Sui possessed better knowledge of the Turks, and this let them risk taking the initiative so as to drive a wedge into the Turkish ruling groups, and this succeeded in bringing the Turkish problem under control.

The Eastern Turks as Tributaries of Sui

In 584 the Eastern Qaghan, Ishbara, decided to make peace with Sui, and his wife, Princess Qianjin, asked to change her surname to Yang, the Sui royal family name, as a gesture of submission. This kind of submission, in Barfield's words, was part of the "inner frontier" strategy of the nomads, and aimed at using Chinese support to help them recover their strength. Yang Guang, the future Emperor Yang, proposed that Sui should seize the opportunity to attack the Turks, but Emperor Wen chose to make peace. This cautious decision may have been based on the consideration that Sui had yet to accomplish the unification of China, and needed to use the Eastern Turkish force to deal with the Western Turks.

¹³ *SUIS* 51, p. 1331; *ZZTJ* 175, p. 5451.

¹⁴ *SUIS* 51, p. 1331; *ZZTJ* 175, p. 5459.

¹⁵ *SUIS* 51, pp. 1329-32; 84, pp. 1867-8; *ZZTJ* 175, pp. 5463-5.

¹⁶ Ma Changshou 1957, pp. 26-7.

Ishbara, in his request for a peace settlement in 584, insisted on equal footing with the Chinese, referring to himself as “born from Heaven, the Sage under Heaven, the great Turkish Son of Heaven” in his letter to Sui, and saying: “Our sheep and horses are the emperor’s domestic livestock, and your silk products are our property. There is no difference between you and us.”¹⁷ The Chinese, for their part, addressed Ishbara merely as qaghan, and the envoy managed to demonstrate Chinese superiority by persuading the qaghan to perform the kowtow when he received the sealed letter from Emperor Wen, and to accept the status of vassal of the Chinese emperor. Princess Qianjin was granted the royal Yang surname and was given the title Princess Dayi, interpreted as meaning “sacrifice ties of blood to righteousness.”¹⁸

Having accepted Ishbara as an outer subject under the tributary system, Emperor Wen, as suzerain, took on the responsibility for assisting Ishbara politically, economically and militarily. In exchange, he was able to use the Eastern Turks for frontier defense, particularly as a deterrent force against the Western Turks. Then, in 585, when Ishbara was faced with repeated incursions from the Western Turks and from the Khitan, he requested permission to migrate south of the Gobi Desert to the Chinese frontier north of the Yellow River. The emperor permitted this, and sent troops to assist him. Ishbara, now strengthened, launched a successful attack against his rivals. When his people were attacked by the Aba (Apar) tribe, Sui sent troops in upon Ishbara’s request and inflicted a defeat upon the Apar.¹⁹

After this victory Ishbara presented a letter acknowledging himself as a Sui vassal and offering to send hostages and annual tribute to the Sui court. Still, he expressed the wish to maintain his own culture, that is, not to change the Turkish dress, hairstyle and language. Greatly pleased, Emperor Wen, in his edict, claimed that China and the Turks were no longer two countries merely bound by a peace agreement, but that the relationship was now one of unity between a ruler and subject. He ordered that the news be spread widely throughout the country and that a ceremony be held at the ancestral temple to announce the Turkish submission.²⁰ In their relations with the Eastern Turks thereafter, the Chinese followed the cere-

¹⁷ *SUIS* 84, p. 1868; *ZZTJ* 176, pp. 5475-6.

¹⁸ *SUIS* 51, p. 1332; 84, pp. 1868-9; *ZZTJ* 176, pp. 5475-6.

¹⁹ *SUIS* 54, 1368; 84, p. 1869; *ZZTJ* 176, p. 5482.

²⁰ *SUIS* 84, pp. 1869-70; *ZZTJ*, 176, p. 5483.

monial practices of the tribute system. In 586 the Sui calendar was introduced to the Turks²¹ as a symbol of their acceptance of Chinese rule. The following year, the Chinese agreed to Ishbara's request to hunt inside the Sui frontier.²²

Even after Ishbara's death in 587, the Eastern Turks continued to act as a force against the Western Turks, which was exactly what the Chinese had hoped for. In 587 the new qaghan, Chuluohou, fought victoriously under the Sui banner against Abo (Apa), a former Eastern junior qaghan now with the Western Turks. After capturing Apa, Chuluohou requested the Sui court to decide on his treatment. Some ministers proposed that he be executed. However, Zhangsun Sheng and Gao Jiong, another major adviser to Emperor Wen, opposed this high-handed attitude. They suggested that Sui spare Apa's life. Emperor Wen agreed, hoping thereby to "cause the people from far away to come."²³

Chuluohou died during his western campaign in 588, and was succeeded by Dulan Qaghan, who kept up a close tributary relationship with Sui, and took Princess Dayi as his wife. Border markets were set up at the Turks' request.²⁴ With the northern frontiers under control, the Sui switched forces to the south and succeeded in conquering the Chen regime in 589, thus completing the unification of China.

Dividing the Eastern Turks and Attacking the Western Turks

Tributary relations between Sui and the Eastern Turks entered a rocky period in 593 when a Chinese called Yang Qin fled to the Turks and told them the false story that Liu Chang, with his wife who was a Zhou princess, was planning to rebel against Sui power. He asked Princess Dayi to assist by sending troops to attack the Sui borders. Dulan Qaghan, believing this, stopped sending tribute and began making forays across the border. Zhangsun Sheng went to the Turks twice and finally was able to seize Yang Qin.²⁵

The court now planned to get rid of Princess Dayi, in part also be-

²¹ *SUIS* 1, p. 23; *ZZTJ* 176, p. 5485.

²² *SUIS* 84, p. 1870.

²³ *SUIS* 51, p. 1332; 84, pp. 1870-1; *ZZTJ* 176, pp. 5489-91.

²⁴ *SUIS* 84, p. 1871; *BS* 99, pp. 3295-6.

²⁵ This is according to the record in *SUIS* 51, pp. 1332-3; *ZZTJ* 178, pp. 5542-3. *SUIS* 84 and *BS* 99 have a different account. They say that Yang Qin went to the Turks before Sui's 589 conquest of Chen, and that Dulan Qaghan caught Yang Qin and informed Sui of the incident.

cause she had attempted to make an alliance with the Western Turks. This made Emperor Wen suspect her political intentions.²⁶ Ever since the beginning of the Sui period the Princess had actively involved herself in politics, at first remaining loyal to her family, the Zhou ruling house. After the Sui conquest of Chen she wrote a poem lamenting her sorrow as a princess of an eliminated dynasty. Her attitude eventually cost her her life. A woman participating in an international marriage alliance had the difficult task of reconciling her several tasks as diplomat, hostage, intermediary and informant. Such a woman was constantly in danger, and her life could easily be sacrificed when the two countries to which she was linked turned into enemies.

The opportunity to dispose of Dayi arose in 593 when the Turkish Rangan Qaghan (personal name Zamqan, called Tölish Qaghan) asked for marriage with a Sui princess. He was Chuluohou's son,²⁷ and a potential rival to Dulan Qaghan. Taking advantage of this request, Sui asked him to persuade Dulan to kill Princess Dayi, which he did. Dulan then himself requested the hand of a Sui princess in marriage.

When court discussion favored giving permission to Dulan, Zhangsun Sheng objected on the grounds that Dulan's submission to Sui was simply because of his ill feelings toward the Western Turks, that a Sui marriage with Dulan would strengthen his position vis-à-vis other Turkish rulers and that Dulan would eventually rebel against Sui. Instead, Zhangsun Sheng favored granting Zamqan's request for a marriage alliance since Zamqan did not possess a strong force and would, therefore, be easy to deal with. Moreover, Sui could entice him to move down to the south, and use him for defense against Dulan Qaghan. Emperor Wen agreed.²⁸

With Zhangsun Sheng's plan carried out, a close relationship was established between Sui and Zamqan. Following the marriage between Zamqan and Princess Anyi in 597, Emperor Wen deliberately granted favorable treatment to Zamqan with the intention of further stirring up hostilities between him and Dulan. Zamqan and his people moved south to the old headquarters of the Turks in the Ötükän mountains. Now, although Dulan suspended tributary relations with Sui, Zamqan Qaghan formally became a Sui vassal. The Chinese were quick to use his people as a ready

²⁶ *SUIS* 84, pp. 1871-2; *BS* 99, p. 3296.

²⁷ *SUIS* 51, p. 1333; *ZZTJ* 178, p. 5543. *SUIS* 84 (p. 1872) says that Rangan was the son of Shetu. This is probably wrong, see Cen Zhongmian 1958, p. 512.

²⁸ *SUIS* 51, p. 1333; 84, p. 1872; *ZZTJ* 178, pp. 5542-3.

force to watch over the frontiers and guard against any incursion by Dulan.²⁹

In 599 when Dulan Qaghan was making ready to invade China, Zamqan reported this to the Chinese, who readied a campaign against Dulan. Hearing this, Dulan allied himself with the Western Turks to attack Zamqan. When Zamqan suffered defeat at the hands of Dulan, he considered taking refuge with the Western Turks, but Zhangsun Sheng succeeded in persuading him to go to Sui. Greatly pleased, Emperor Wen conferred on Zhangsun Sheng the title of general commissioned with special power to protect the Turks.³⁰

Emperor Wen then conferred on Zamqan the title of Yili zhendou Qimin Qaghan (hereafter Zamqan is referred to as Qimin) and built the town of Dali for his branch of the Turks in Shuozhou. After Princess Anyi died, Princess Yicheng was sent to wed Qimin,³¹ and 20,000 Chinese troops were stationed to help Qimin Qaghan guard against the Western Turks.³² Zhangsun Sheng proposed that the Turks under Qimin should be resettled in Wuyuan with the Yellow River to the north serving as a natural line of defense against the incursions of Dulan Qaghan. The area was turned over to Qimin and his people for pasture.³³ In 602 walled towns were built in Jinhe and Dingxiang northeast of the Ordos for the Eastern Turks,³⁴ and it appears that Qimin moved to this area.³⁵

It may seem strange that a Chinese government would build towns for the nomadic Turks. In fact Sui was just following the practice of Northern Wei which built the walled towns known as the Six Garrisons on its frontiers to settle the nomads. Northern Qi and Northern Zhou both also built garrison towns.³⁶ The walled towns Sui built for Qimin and his people were intended to function as garrisons under the supervision of Chinese officials leading their own military forces.

The Eastern Turks under Qimin Qaghan assisted Sui in achieving victories over other Turkish powers. In 600, when Dulan was killed by his

²⁹ *SUIS* 51, p. 1333; 84, p. 1872; *ZZTJ* 178, p. 5558.

³⁰ *SUIS* 51, pp. 1333-4; *ZZTJ* 178, pp. 5563-4.

³¹ *SUIS* 51, p. 1334; 84, pp. 1872-3; *ZZTJ* 178, pp. 5568-9.

³² *SUIS* 74, p. 1697; *ZZTJ* 178, p. 5569.

³³ *SUIS* 51, p. 1334; 84, p. 1873; *ZZTJ* 178, p. 5569.

³⁴ *ZZTJ* (179, p. 5572) gives the year as 600. I follow Cen Zhongmian's opinion that the building of towns was begun in 602, see his 1958, pp. 83-4; 1964, p. 12.

³⁵ Cen Zhongmian 1958, pp. 83-4.

³⁶ Gu Jiguang 1962, pp. 58-61.

own men and a time of civil strife ensued among his people, Qimin's men were despatched to entice those Turks to Sui, and many more Turks submitted to Sui. In the following years, at the suggestion of Zhangsun Sheng, Sui launched major attacks on the Western Turks in alliance with Qimin Qaghan and his force. After the Western Turks suffered a severe defeat Zhangsun Sheng advised Qimin to despatch his envoys to the Tiele and other Turkish-speaking tribes who had been under the rule of the Western Turks in order to try to win them over. The envoys were successful and soon the Tiele and more than ten other tribes rebelled and came over to Sui. As a result, Tardu's rule over the Western Turks suffered a major defeat in 603 and he fled to the Tuyuhun in present Qinghai. With the submitted nomads brought under his sway, Qimin's power increased, but until his death in 609 he remained a Sui ally.³⁷

The Non-interventionist Policy Towards the Tuyuhun Kingdom

A buffer state between China and the Western Turks, the Tuyuhun kingdom was not a serious threat during early Sui. After 576 the Tuyuhun suffered internal political instability, which undoubtedly weakened its bargaining position in dealing with China. In 581, when the Tuyuhun qaghan Lükua (or Kualü) raided the frontier, Sui launched a successful military expedition against him, after which the qaghan fled, but thirteen noble princes came to submit. Emperor Wen appointed one of them the Prince of Henan, entrusting him with command of the Tuyuhun who had submitted. Lükua attacked the Sui frontier again in 583. Sui responded with force, which further weakened the qaghan's power.

From then on Emperor Wen followed a policy of non-intervention, avoiding Chinese involvement in the affairs of the Tuyuhun. Unable to deal with Lükua's tyranny, the Crown Prince of the Tuyuhun plotted against his father and applied through the Chinese frontier authorities for assistance, but Emperor Wen refused. When the plot was discovered and the prince was put to death, a Chinese frontier official proposed to intervene but the emperor again refused. In 586, in fear of being killed by his father, the new Crown Prince planned to take fifteen thousand households to submit to Sui. Declining the request, Emperor Wen made a long speech on filial piety to the envoy of the Prince.³⁸

Although we know that Emperor Wen held filial piety in high es-

³⁷ *SUIS* 51, pp. 1334-5; 84, pp. 1873-4; *ZZTJ* 179, pp. 5571-2; p. 5590; p. 5600.

³⁸ *SUIS* 83, pp. 1842-4; Molé 1970, his translation of *SUIS* 83.

teem and that his favorite handbook of public and private morality was the *Classic of Filial Piety*,³⁹ the Tuyuhun prince's disloyalty to his father does not seem to have been the primary reason for the refusal; it seems that the emperor was aware of the chaotic situation among the Tuyuhun and therefore did not regard them as a threat. In 588 another Tuyuhun noble prince proposed to submit with a thousand households, including that of the qaghan's sister. Emperor Wen ordered that no military protection should be provided them on their way; China should just pacify them when they arrived, but not entice them to submit.

With the death of the Tuyuhun qaghan Lūkua in 591, their relations with Sui took a turn for the better. The new king, Fu, decided to abandon his father's hostile attitude and sent a mission to Sui, following the generally expected procedure to declare himself a subject and offer local products and women for the Sui harem. Emperor Wen refused the women with the remark: "This is not completely sincere; the strategy is just an expedient plan."⁴⁰ Nevertheless he sent a diplomatic mission in 592 to reciprocate for the Tuyuhuns' visit and four years later formed a marriage alliance by sending Princess Guanghua to Fu. Fu died the next year. His brother Fuyun succeeded him and, following the old practice of the levirate, married Princess Guanghua. Tribute-bearing missions were sent regularly, but their purpose was not so much to demonstrate subordination as to inquire about conditions in China.⁴¹

A War of Deterrence Against Koguryō

Having achieved relative security on the northwestern and northern frontiers and having conquered the South, Emperor Wen looked to the northeast, to the threat of the Korean kingdom of Koguryō.

In the eyes of the Sui Chinese, Koguryō was potentially the most threatening among the three Korean states. It occupied the Liaodong region, which had formerly been under Chinese control. In early Sui, the major powers with an interest in Manchuria besides China were the Turkish empire and Koguryō. It was a sensitive issue which of the three could command the allegiance of other less well organized tribes, the Mongolian

³⁹ Wright 1978, p. 65.

⁴⁰ *SUIS* 83, p. 1844. I do not agree with Molè's translation of this passage in *SUIS* 83 which mistakenly states that Fu requested Chinese women for his own harem and that Emperor Wen saw this strategy as "hasty" rather than expedient. See Molè 1970, p. 43.

⁴¹ *SUIS* 83, p. 1844.

speaking Khitan and Shiwei and the Tungusic tribes of Mohe and Xi, which had formerly been controlled by either the Turks or Koguryō. The Chinese also feared Koguryō's influence in the Hebei region where separatist sentiments had surfaced from the time of Northern Qi.⁴² Campaigns into the border regions of the Northeast were thus a necessary step for the extension of imperial rule in North China and as an important coercive measure for the full consolidation of dynastic power.⁴³

Relations between the newly established Sui dynasty and Koguryō began peacefully. Soon after Emperor Wen came to the throne in 581, Koguryō sent a tributary mission to the court and King P'yōngwŏn was appointed Commandery Duke of Liaodong (*Liaodong jun gong*) and General-in-chief.⁴⁴ He dispatched seven tributary missions to Sui during the four years from 581 to 584.⁴⁵ But Koguryō turned hostile to Sui when the Eastern Turks accepted a tributary relationship with Sui and the Mohe and Khitan people sent envoys to China. Part of the Khitan who had submitted to Koguryō now left to seek support from the Sui court.⁴⁶ Koguryō sent a tributary mission to the Southern dynasty in 585,⁴⁷ and stopped its missions to Sui between 585 and 590. After the Sui conquest of Chen in 589, fearing a Sui invasion, it started preparations for war.

Other "offensive" activities engaged in by Koguryō listed in an edict of 597 by Emperor Wen include the following: 1) harassing the Mohe and preventing the Khitan from communicating with Sui, 2) smuggling precious goods to bribe Chinese crossbowmen so as to induce them to assist in secret military preparations, 3) isolating Sui envoys and prohibiting them from learning the true situation in Koguryō, 4) sending cavalymen to attack and kill people on the Sui borders, and 5) despatching envoys as spies to gain information about Sui.

To what extent these accusations were true is difficult to decide, but from the Sui point of view Koguryō posed a threat. The edict accused

⁴² Wright 1979, pp. 143-4.

⁴³ Somers 1986, pp. 981-2.

⁴⁴ *SUIS* 1, p. 16; *CFYG* 963, p. 11336. *SUIS* 81 (p. 1814) says that the title of King of Koguryō was conferred on him, see also *BS* 94, p. 3115. The title of king might not have been given at this time, for after his death his son inherited all his titles and requested Tang to confer on him the title of king. See below.

⁴⁵ For the tribute missions from Korea, see Table 2.

⁴⁶ *SUIS* 84, p. 1881.

⁴⁷ *CS* 6, p. 112.

of King P'yŏngwŏn of being insincere in submission to the Chinese emperor, and after reiterating the claim that all under heaven were subjects of the Chinese Son of Heaven, the edict ordered Koguryŏ to reform its conduct. It warned of a "punitive" attack. The warning seems to have had some effect because the King P'yŏngwŏn was preparing to send, in Chinese wording, "an acknowledgement of guilt," but he died before he could carry out his intention. His son succeeded to the throne as King Yŏngyang. Emperor Wen sent an embassy to give him official titles. Upon his request Sui conferred on him the title of king.⁴⁸

In 598 King Yŏngyang led the Mohe in raids on Liaoxi.⁴⁹ These became the direct catalyst for Emperor Wen's decision to launch a military expedition, which he justified in terms of Chinese suzerainty over Koguryŏ. Only Gao Jiong, a major adviser to the emperor, raised objection to the decision to go to war. Despite that he was appointed *de facto* commander of the campaign, with the Prince of Han in nominal charge.⁵⁰ Thirty thousand troops were despatched, some by land and some by sea, and an edict was issued to deprive King Yŏngyang of his titles. Before they reached the Liao River, however, the Chinese were already suffering logistical difficulties and were being devastated by a serious plague. Much of the navy was lost in violent storms.

The expedition cannot, however, be seen as a total defeat; the Korean troops were not strong enough to continue resistance, and King Yŏngyang sent an embassy offering "acknowledgement of guilt." He is recorded by the Chinese historian as having referred to himself as "your subject in Liaodong who is but excrement."

Emperor Wen was more than happy to withdraw the Chinese troops.⁵¹ When Paekche offered assistance in the Sui campaign against Koguryŏ, Emperor Wen did not seem interested in an alliance, since the

⁴⁸ *SUIS* 81, pp. 1815-6; *BS* 94, pp. 3116-7; *ZZTJ* 178, pp. 5559-60.

There are discrepancies concerning the dates of the edict and of King P'yŏngwŏn's death. Some sources record that the king died in 590 without mentioning the edict, see *SUIS* 1, p. 35; *BS* 11, p. 416. *SGSG* records that the edict was issued in 590 and the king died in the same year, see *SGSG* 19, pp. 7-8. *CFYG* has a different account. While volume 963 (p. 11336) states that the king died in 590, volume 996 (p. 11695) states that in 597 Emperor Wen issued the edict to Gao Tang, the King.

⁴⁹ *SUIS* 81, p. 1816.

⁵⁰ *SUIS* 41, p. 1182; *ZZTJ* 178, p. 5566.

⁵¹ *SUIS* 2, p. 43; 65, p. 1525; 81, p. 1816; *ZZTJ* 178, p. 5560; pp. 5561-2.

crisis was over.⁵² For Emperor Wen the immediate objective of the war was to deter Koguryō from making incursions across the borders. The emperor appears to have made a realistic assessment of the situation. Although he talked about asserting China's claim to superiority, he understood clearly that he was not able to extend Chinese power into Korea.

The other two Korean kingdoms, Paekche and Silla, were not of much importance to Emperor Wen. They were only accessible by sea from the Chinese mainland. To maintain its own power against the expansion of the other two states, Silla kept a friendly relationship with China. This emerged as Silla's long-term strategy, through which it eventually founded the first unified Korean state in the mid-seventh century. During the Sui period, Paekche sometimes allied itself with Koguryō and had frequent contact with Japan. It also sent tributary missions to Chen in 584 and 586,⁵³ but this did not seem to bother Sui at all. In 589 when Paekche offered Sui congratulations on the conquest of Chen, Emperor Wen declined a frequent tributary relationship with this Korean state.⁵⁴

Advance on the Southern Frontier

The conquest of Chen was accompanied by submission of the aboriginal tribes in the far south and southwest. Knowing that Chen was crushed, the southern tribal chiefs hastened to make their submission.⁵⁵ Sui established prefectures under Chinese officials but kept the tribal groups under their chiefs. In the following years (590, 597 and 601) several rebellions by aboriginal tribes in Lingnan and the southwest were suppressed either by military force or peaceful means.

In 602 the Chinese sources record that a native people in Jiaozhou made troubles, whereupon Emperor Wen appointed a capable general, Liu Fang, to lead a military expedition. Jiaozhou, the modern Hanoi-Haiphong, had from Han times been an important seaport for communication with Southeast Asia. During the Han dynasty the Chinese had administered the region, but in the sixth century, when the southern Chinese dynasties were too weak to maintain control, a local satrap of mixed Vietnamese-Chinese stock set up his own dynasty. Liu Fang's campaign successfully destroyed his rule and established Sui administration there, but

⁵² *SUI* 81, p. 1819; *ZZTJ* 178, p. 5562.

⁵³ *CS* 6, p. 111; p. 113.

⁵⁴ *SUIS* 81, p. 1819.

⁵⁵ Wright 1979, p. 111.

the Chinese did not want to stop with this. A widely held opinion at the court was that the emperor should push further south to Linyi, the Kingdom of Champa, in the southern part of present Vietnam, for the land there was known among the Chinese to be rich in "unusual treasures." Emperor Wen consented.⁵⁶ After all there was not much risk involved and there was a possibility of much gain.

Emperor Yang

In 604 Emperor Wen died, and his second son, Guang, succeeded to the throne. He is known to history as Emperor Yang. With their Confucian criteria and in the usual style of praise and blame, traditional Chinese historians portrayed the two Sui emperors as almost complete opposites: the first emperor being serious, hardworking and prudent in governing, a successful founder and good ruler; the second being licentious, irresponsible in performance of his duties and profligate, a tyrant, a bad last ruler, whose extravagance in huge projects internally and obsession with conquest externally ruined the dynasty.⁵⁷

In challenging the traditional view Arthur Wright in several works points out that the image of Emperor Yang was severely distorted by the biases and stereotypes of the Confucian tradition and by the Tang historians who, in compiling the Sui History, tried to denounce Emperor Yang so as to justify the Tang victory over Sui. In Wright's view, Emperor Yang, though a supremely egotistical monarch, was a poet with a romantic mind and a ruler with political and economic vision as demonstrated in the building of the transport canal linking North and South China.⁵⁸

Although Wright does present two very different images of the two emperors, when discussing foreign policy he concludes: "There was, in fact, no sharp break in the foreign policy of the two Sui emperors. In both emperors' reigns there were two kinds of operations beyond the borders: those started out of a desire for loot or out of personal curiosity, and those aimed at assuring the geopolitical dominance of the new empire in Eastern Asia." He concludes that the first kind was unacceptable by Confucian historians and they criticized Emperor Yang for that, whereas the second "was justified in terms of the old tradition of a central political and cultural

⁵⁶ *SUIS* 82, pp. 1831-33; Wright 1979, p. 109.

⁵⁷ See *SUIS* (2, pp. 54-5; 4, pp. 94-6) for the historians' judgment on the characteristics and government of the two emperors; see also Wright 1978, p. 163.

⁵⁸ Wright 1960, 1978, 1979.

order whose superiority in all realms excused not only its defense but the conquest of lesser peoples.”⁵⁹

This conclusion, however, is oversimplified. It is true that Confucian historians did not reject totally the use of military force in frontier affairs for the achievement of peace for All-under-Heaven, but they did draw a line between the Chinese inner group, and the non-Chinese outer group, and between defense—military campaigns to drive away or defeat frontier enemies—and expansion—establishment of Chinese rule over the land inhabited by non-Chinese. They held that any military campaigns which increased taxes and burdens on the people should be restrained.

As we have seen, Emperor Wen was primarily interested in securing his frontiers and took a cautious approach to any initiative that appeared dangerous. The only military campaign which was carried out for economic gains and political ambition was the invasion of Champa, but Champa was so far away from the Sui capital that Emperor Wen may have thought that there was not much risk involved. Since the Chinese troops were already in Jiaozhou, just one step further was needed and Champa could be taken without too much additional cost.

In the history of Chinese dynasties it generally took at least two generations to reach a fully stable and politically integrated regime,⁶⁰ and as a second ruler Emperor Yang assumed the immediate task left by Emperor Wen to complete the consolidation of dynastic power. In internal affairs he continued public works, reinforcing the Great Wall, rebuilding Luoyang as his Eastern Capital, and constructing transport canals. Even before the conquest of the south, Emperor Wen had restored a Han dynasty waterway between Chang'an and the bend of the Yellow River at Tongguan, and taken other steps to facilitate the transport of grain from the east into the capital region within the passes.

Emperor Yang embarked on a more ambitious plan to create a water route, the Bian Canal, linking the Eastern Capital to the Yangtze Valley, partly for his own comfort and pleasure in traveling to Yangzhou, where he planned to build a third southern capital, Jiangdu, but more importantly for the transport of grain from south to north. Though he was later much criticized for the hardships which this enterprise imposed on the male and female laborers who were conscripted to build the canal, the Bian Canal played a vital role in supplying the central government in

⁵⁹ Wright 1978, p. 182; 1979, p. 138.

⁶⁰ Somers 1978, p. 199.

North China throughout Tang and Northern Song and must be recognized as a lasting achievement of the second Sui ruler.⁶¹

Another major canal project was the building of the Yongji Canal linking the Yellow River with Zhuojun in the vicinity of present Beijing. This was undertaken, as we shall see, in preparation for the first military campaign against Koguryō.⁶²

In his reform of the military organization, Emperor Yang abolished the regional military commands and brought all the units formerly under them into the direct control of the twelve guards and commands in the capital.⁶³

Under the pretext of defense, Emperor Yang embarked on a course of expansion. He engaged China in foreign adventures not just for the sake of securing his frontiers and controlling hostile external forces but also because he let himself be lured on by the desire to obtain wider knowledge of the world and riches in foreign lands, to restore the glories of the Han empire and to dedicate himself to the imperial purpose of establishing an all-embracing rule as the Son of Heaven. His foreign policy objectives were, therefore, much more complex than those of his father and led to expansion beyond the limits of China's strength, and this led directly to the collapse of the dynasty.

Keeping the Eastern Turks as Sui Tributaries

When Emperor Yang succeeded his father, he inherited not only a relative stable political situation and a prosperous economy in China but also had the Eastern Turks under Qimin as a military force at his disposal as a counter to the much weakened Western Turks. In 605 the Khitan raided Yingzhou in the northeast. Sui used twenty thousand Eastern Turkish cavalry troops against them in a successful campaign.⁶⁴ When the Eastern Turk Qimin Qaghan made repeated requests to be allowed to adopt Chinese dress and hair style, even though his ministers suggested granting permission since it would be tantamount to a proof of successful sinicization, Emperor Yang refused. In his letter to Qimin he explained to the qaghan that since the north of the Gobi Desert had not yet been made tranquil, expeditionary forces still had to be sent from time to time to quell

⁶¹ Bingham 1941, pp. 15-18, citing Chi Ch'ao-ting 1936.

⁶² *SUIS* 68, p. 1595; Wright 1979, pp. 134-8.

⁶³ *TD* 32, p. 185, Wright 1979, p. 102.

⁶⁴ *JTS* 75, pp. 2631-2; *ZZTJ* 180, pp. 5621-2.

disturbances, and that as long as Qimin was sincere and obedient, it was unnecessary to change dress. To retain the good will of the Turks, Emperor Yang continued to grant Qimin the favor under the tribute system of not using his personal name when addressing him as a subject, and of giving him a rank above that of the Chinese princes. Emperor Yang also ordered the building of houses and a walled town for Qimin at Wanshou Fort, between Jinhe and Dingxiang.⁶⁵

The balance of power between the Sui Chinese and the Eastern Turks changed gradually in favor of the latter during Qimin's later years. Some Chinese ministers began to express their worry. Gao Jiong was concerned that the emperor gave too much favor to the Turks, and feared that Qimin, now with inside knowledge about China, might cause trouble in the future. Gao lost the imperial trust toward the end of Emperor Wen's reign. Emperor Yang employed him but he did not have much influence. When he expressed his concern to another minister over the Turkish issue and over other court decisions, he was reported to be slandering the emperor and was executed together with two others in 607.⁶⁶

Around 608 Duan Wenzhen, Minister of War, pointed out in a memorial that it was not advisable for Sui to accept Qimin as a subject, provide him with economic and military aid, and place the Turks inside the Great Wall. He suggested that Sui should move the Turks beyond the Great Wall, and establish frontier garrisons so as to prevent a dangerous situation from developing. But the emperor was not persuaded.⁶⁷ In 609 Qimin Qaghan died and was succeeded by his son Shibi Qaghan. In accordance with Turkish practice, Emperor Yang permitted him to marry Princess Yicheng who had formerly been married to Qimin.⁶⁸ Relations with Shibi were peaceful until 614.

Southern Expeditions

Soon after Emperor Yang succeeded to the throne, the expedition into Champa achieved some success in 605. Then Sui divided the area into three prefectures which were later changed into "commanderies" (*jun*). The three commanderies, however, were lost during the turmoil at the end

⁶⁵ *SUIS* 84, pp. 1874-5; *ZZTJ* 180, p. 5627; p. 5632; 181, p. 5641; *CFYG* 974, pp. 11440-1.

⁶⁶ *SUIS* 41, p. 1184; *ZZTJ* 180, pp. 5632-3.

⁶⁷ *SUIS* 60, p. 1459; *ZZTJ* 181, p. 5661, *CFYG* 990, p. 11632. Concerning the year of the memorial, see Cen Zhongmian 1958, p. 93.

⁶⁸ *SUIS* 84, p. 1876; *ZZTJ* 181, p. 5647.

of Sui, and the king of Champa restored his territory as a kingdom.⁶⁹

The victory over Champa stimulated Emperor Yang's ambition. In 607, he sent an envoy overseas with the purpose of "seeking and inquiring about foreign customs."⁷⁰ The envoy went either to the islands called Li-uqiu (J. Ryukyu), present-day Taiwan, or to some other islands in the East China Sea. He was sent there a second time with the mission to pacify the natives, but the king of Li-uqiu refused, upon which Emperor Yang resorted to a military expedition in 610. We are not sure if this was a success or a failure,⁷¹ but we know that Emperor Yang in the end gave up the attempt to bring Li-uqiu into the tributary system. A diplomatic mission was also sent to Chitu (in modern Malaya) in 608, which was cordially received. When the Chinese envoys returned, the prince of Chitu went with them to China for a visit, and the Chinese historian routinely records that in 610 Chitu presented tribute.⁷² More tributary missions came to Sui under Emperor Yang than during Emperor Wen's reign.⁷³

Pei Ju as Foreign Policy Adviser

Early in his reign Emperor Yang also showed his interest in the Western Regions by sending envoys there. They went as far as Kashmir, Kesh, Bohara and Persia. After their return Emperor Yang assigned Pei Ju (546-627) to be in charge of trade at Zhangye, an important trading center in modern Gansu.⁷⁴

Pei Ju was the most important adviser to Emperor Yang on frontier affairs, although Zhangsun Sheng continued to be entrusted with Turkish affairs until his death in 609. Pei Ju was a native of modern Shanxi. His forefathers served Northern Wei and Qi. At an early age Pei Ju was recognized as a highly learned man. He started with a clerical appointment, went on campaigns in the south and had the experience of dealing with the aborigines there and of being an envoy to the Turks.

⁶⁹ *SUIS* 31, p. 886; *ZZTJ* 190, p. 5965. Arthur Wright (1979, p. 109) does not mention the establishment of the commanderies and concludes that the Chinese administration there was short-lived. His conclusion is based on *SUIS* 83. It is not clear whether the king kept part of his territory and other parts were brought under the Chinese commandery or whether the king was under the control of one of the commanderies.

⁷⁰ *SUIS* 81, pp. 1824-5; *ZZTJ* 180, p. 5627.

⁷¹ Wright 1979, pp. 138-9.

⁷² *SUIS* 3, p. 75; 82, pp. 1834-5.

⁷³ Cf. *SUIS* 81, 82 and 83.

⁷⁴ *SUIS* 83, p. 1841; p. 1849; p. 1857.

Unlike Zhangsun Sheng, who was pragmatic and cautious, Pei Ju was an ambitious expansionist, became an influential advocate of an aggressive frontier policy, and a theoretician providing Emperor Yang with justifications for expansion. Knowing that the emperor was interested in foreign expansion, Pei Ju while in Zhangye made special efforts to gather information from foreign merchants. The information covered a wide range of subjects from the political situation and geographical conditions to local customs, food, clothing style and the likenesses of foreign rulers and common people.

He compiled a book entitled *Xiyu Tuji* or *Illustrated Record of the Western Regions* based on this information. He also worked out maps showing the southern and northern branches of the Silk Road in the Western Regions leading all the way to West Asia. In the preface to the book he stated that the Han dynasty had opened up the route to the Western Regions and extended its control over the area. Now China's force could reach as far as the Western Regions, but the Western Turks and the Tuyuhun now controlled most of the people there and prevented them from coming to China to pay tribute. He suggested that Sui should entice all these people to give their allegiance to Sui so that the Turks and Tuyuhun could be eliminated.

The emperor was greatly pleased and had discussions with Pei Ju which lasted for several days. Pei Ju stressed that the Western Regions were rich in precious goods and that the Tuyuhun could be easily swallowed up. The emperor then put Pei in charge of the opening up of the Western Regions and appointed him Gentleman Attendant at the Palace Gate (*huangmen shilang*), which allowed him to participate in court decision-making.⁷⁵

Pei Ju's role in foreign policy-making became so important that Sima Guang, assuming his most severe style, blamed Pei Ju for encouraging Emperor Yang to emulate the achievements of the expansionist First Emperor of the Qin dynasty and Emperor Wu of the Han dynasty. He concluded "that in the end the Central Kingdom was weakened and thereby brought to ruin was entirely because of the siren songs of Pei Ju."⁷⁶ It is not very fair to blame Pei Ju alone for the disasters in frontier affairs; Pei Ju understood the emperor's bent and said what Emperor Yang wanted to hear. Since his strategic plans did support Emperor Yang's

⁷⁵ *SUIS* 67, pp. 1578-81; *JTS* 63, pp. 2406-7.

⁷⁶ *Wright* 1979, p. 127.

ambitions, as we will see in the following section, surely the emperor must share the blame for the resulting debacle.

Defeat of the Tuyuhun Kingdom and Opening the Western Regions

On the Western front, a firm decision was taken to persuade the Tiele to attack the Tuyuhun. The Tiele had formerly been under the rule of the Western Turks. In 605 in the context of a temporary decline in Turkish power, the Tiele rose in rebellion against the Western Turks. They established a qaghanate of their own. The power and influence of the Tiele qaghanate expanded over various oasis states in the Western Regions. In 607 the Tiele launched an attack on the Sui frontier. After one encounter, the Tiele offered to make peace with Sui. Seeing this as the opportunity to put his larger plan into effect, Pei Ju went to the Tiele and succeeded in persuading them to wage war on the Tuyuhun.⁷⁷

Because of their location in Qinghai the Tuyuhun were a potential obstacle on the flank of China's route to the Western Regions. They also raided Zhangye from time to time.⁷⁸ Moreover, the Tuyuhun had intermarried with the son of Qimin Qaghan of the Eastern Turks.⁷⁹ So close a relationship was considered a threat to China. Even though the Tuyuhun qaghan Fuyun sent his son, Shun, perhaps persuaded by the Chinese Princess Guanghua,⁸⁰ to pay homage to the court when Emperor Yang assumed the throne, the Emperor nevertheless decided to destroy the Tuyuhun kingdom.

The Sui court detained prince Shun. Following the Tiele's victory over the Tuyuhun in 608, Emperor Yang took personal command in a successful campaign against the Tuyuhun in 609. The Tuyuhun territory was incorporated into the Chinese empire as the Commanderies of Xihai and Heyuan, under which were established counties, garrisons and frontier posts. A Chinese general in charge of exiled convicts employed on military farms was stationed at Heyuan to guard against the Tuyuhun in order to ensure that the routes to the Western Regions would remain open.

Emperor Yang appointed Shun as the king of Tuyuhun and sent him back with the minister who had accompanied him to China. But the minister was killed on the way and Shun returned to the Sui court. The

⁷⁷ *SUIS* 83, pp. 1844-5; 84, pp. 1879-80; *ZZTJ* 180, p. 5635.

⁷⁸ *SUIS* 39, p. 1149.

⁷⁹ *SUIS* 84, p. 1877.

⁸⁰ Yamaguchi 1983, pp. 658-9.

qaghan Fuyun and his people took refuge among the Black Dangxiang, a tribe of the Tibeto-Burman Qiang people.⁸¹

At this time the rising Tibetan kingdom was in the process of extending its power over the tribal states in its northeast. It has been claimed that to gain Tibetan support for himself, Fuyun was influential in obtaining the submission of the country of Fu, another Tibeto-Burman petty kingdom in the region, to Tibet, and so played a role in the establishment of the Tibetan kingdom.⁸² In any case the Tuyuhun acted as a bridge to link China and Tibet and later became deeply involved in relations with China and the Tibetan kingdom.

In 608 a general was sent to subjugate Yiwu (Hami), a major city state in the Western Regions northwest of the Yumen Pass. Qimin and his cavalry were expected to join but they failed to show up. The Chinese army went ahead anyway and succeeded in taking over Yiwu. A garrison of over a thousand soldiers was built there to serve as a base for trading with the Western Regions. In 609 Sui set up the commanderies of Shan-shan and Jumo in the Western Regions.⁸³

In the same year Pei Ju succeeded in enticing envoys from twenty-seven oasis states to Wuwei (in present Gansu) where the emperor granted them an audience after his campaign against the Tuyuhun and made a lavish display of the riches of China.⁸⁴ Among these states was the Gaochang kingdom. It had been under the control of the Turks and then of the Tiele. It now sought a Chinese connection. Its king went to the Sui court and even followed Emperor Yang on his Korean expedition. As a reward Sui sent Princess Huarong to marry the king in late 612.⁸⁵ The Sui court also set up the Commandant of Western Regions (*Xiyu jiaowei*) to receive envoys from the Western Regions.⁸⁶

The Sui expansion into the Western Regions attracted tribute-bearing missions to the Sui capital to trade with China. These not only brought exotic luxuries for the emperor and the upper class but their coming also enhanced the political prestige of Sui as a unified empire with no

⁸¹ *SUIS* 63, 1504; 83, p. 1845; *ZZTJ* 181, p. 5641; pp. 5643-5; Ise 1968, pp. 152-3.

⁸² Yamaguchi 1983, pp. 669-71. Beckwith regards the embassies of Fu to Sui in 608 and 609 as the first contacts of Tibetans with the outside world (1987, p. 17). According to Yamaguchi, however, at that time Fu was not yet a part of the Tibetan kingdom.

⁸³ *SUIS* 65, pp. 1533-4; 67, p. 1581; *ZZTJ* 181, p. 5642; p. 5645.

⁸⁴ *SUIS* 67, p. 1580; *ZZTJ* 181, pp. 5644-5.

⁸⁵ *SUIS* 83, p. 1847; *ZZTJ* 181, p. 5666.

⁸⁶ *SUIS* 83, p. 1841.

less a reach than the Han dynasty.⁸⁷ The political prestige of restoring the outer boundary of Han may have been achieved, but trade through tribute missions was hardly profitable.

The Chinese historians writing the Sui history complained that envoys of the various countries of the Western Regions came and left continuously, wearing out the prefectures on the way for the cost of their reception which amounted to hundreds of millions. Commanderies in the northwest also had to bear the heavy burden of providing grain to maintain garrisons in the former Tuyuhun territory.⁸⁸ We should note that it was the local government that had to bear the cost of accommodation of these envoys and of maintaining the frontier posts. However, Ise holds that the figures quoted above may be exaggerated. To pay for the supply of the garrisons Sui opened garrison farms on the frontiers and taxed the non-Chinese in Qinghai who had submitted.⁸⁹ The cost, nonetheless, was great and emphasizing such costs was always the focal point in the criticisms mounted by Confucian-minded scholar-officials of any emperor's attempts at expansion.

Success in Subduing the Western Turks

Sui's victory over the Tuyuhun and its success in the Western Regions were accompanied by success in weakening the Western Turks, who, having survived the defeat of 603, were now under Chuluo Qaghan. His lands were in the Ili Basin and his power was on the rise. His mother was Chinese and had been at the Sui court from about 603. In 608, on Pei Ju's advice, Emperor Yang sent an envoy to Chuluo and succeeded in persuading the qaghan to join the Chinese in an attack on the Tuyuhun and to send a tributary mission to Sui. The envoy said that it was Chuluo's mother who was urging the qaghan to submit to Sui.⁹⁰

But it appears that Chuluo did not participate in the campaign. When Emperor Yang, on his tour to the west in 610, asked Chuluo to pay a visit to him, Chuluo refused to do so. Emperor Yang was furious at this act of outright disobedience, but had no way to deal with the problem until a timely falling-out among the Western Turks provided the Chinese with an opportunity to attack. When, in 611, the tribal leader Shegui of the

⁸⁷ Ise 1968, pp. 160-4.

⁸⁸ *SUIS* 24, p. 687; *ZZTJ* 181, p. 5645.

⁸⁹ Ise 1968, pp. 155-6.

⁹⁰ *SUIS* 84, pp. 1876-8; *ZZTJ* 181, pp. 5636-7.

Western Turks sent an embassy to Sui requesting a marriage alliance, Pei Ju suggested that the request be accepted, so as to divide and rule. His scheme succeeded in making Shengui launch attacks against Chuluo, who then had to come in person to pay his respects to Emperor Yang at the end of the year.⁹¹

The following year saw the incorporation of Chuluo's people into the Sui hegemonic empire. They were divided into three groups: a) more than 10,000 "physically weak" people led by Chuluo's brother, were settled in the commandery of Huining, b) some stronger forces were stationed in Loufan for frontier defense, and c) Chuluo, in command of 500 cavalry men, escorted Emperor Yang on his tours of inspection, and joined in the military campaigns against Koguryō.⁹² In 614 Sui gave the hand of Princess Xinyi to Chuluo in marriage accompanied by a gift of a large amount of silk. Emperor Yang even expressed his intention of helping Chuluo recover his territory, no doubt with the long-term aim of making Chuluo responsible for frontier defense. The plan aborted, however, with the collapse of Sui.⁹³

Three Wars of Aggression Against Koguryō

After his success on the northern and northwestern frontiers, Emperor Yang directed his troops to the northeastern side. In 607, when Emperor Yang went on a tour of inspection to the residence of Qimin Qaghan of the Eastern Turks, he found that Koguryō had an embassy there. Such a liaison between two of China's strongest potential enemies alarmed Emperor Yang.

Pei Ju, who was with the emperor on the tour, reminded him that Koguryō had been an integral part of China from antiquity down to the time of the Han and Jin dynasties, but that now it was not conducting its affairs in a manner proper to a subject and was acting like an outer land. It was not proper, he said, that Sui allow this once "civilized" land to revert to control by "barbarians." He advised Emperor Yang to order the Koguryō king's attendance at court and to threaten that if the king did not obey, Sui would launch an attack.

The emperor followed this advice and delivered a warning to the king of Koguryō that if the king did not come to the Sui court, Sui would

⁹¹ *SUIS* 84, pp. 1878-9; *ZZTJ* 181, pp. 5654-5; *CFYG* 990, p. 11633.

⁹² *SUIS* 84, p. 1879; *ZZTJ* 181, p. 5658.

⁹³ *SUIS* 84, p. 1879.

lead the Turks into the land of Koguryō.⁹⁴ In spite of the demand, King Yōngyang did not go to the Sui court and only sent a tributary mission in 609.

Emperor Yang decided to go to war. In an edict issued in 612 Emperor Yang claimed that Koguryō had once been a "civilized" area but was now occupied by "barbarians." Then he accused King Yōngyang of refusing to come in person to the Sui court, fomenting troubles on the frontiers, preventing other people from coming to the Sui court, imposing cruel laws and heavy taxes on his people and having a government manipulated by powerful ministers and clans.⁹⁵

In dramatic contrast to the cautious policy of Emperor Wen, Emperor Yang's reign was marked by three large-scale expeditions aimed at conquering Koguryō, and in all three the emperor took personal command. Chuluo of the Western Turks and a ruler of the Mohe who had come over to Sui also participated in these campaigns.⁹⁶ As mentioned above, construction of the Yongji Canal from the Yellow River to Zhuojun was carried out to supply the planned expedition against Koguryō. A serious flood of the Yellow River in 611 compounded the hardships endured by the conscript laborers and led to desertions and banditry that eventually grew into the peasant uprisings that flourished in the Hebei region until the early years of Tang.⁹⁷

Having assembled his forces at Zhuojun for his first offensive, Emperor Yang asked one of his officers: "The population of Koguryō is not equivalent to one of our commanderies. Now that I am leading so massive an army to attack them, do you think we will succeed?" The reply was that Sui would win but the emperor should not campaign in person. This displeased the emperor, who was still full of confidence. Another official holding a minor position strongly opposed the war and was almost put to death for his pains.⁹⁸

In 612 an unprecedentedly large force said to total 1,133,800 men set out both by land and sea. Their goal was P'yōngyang, the capital of Koguryō. The Sui force crossed the Liao River and besieged a Koguryō stronghold but was unable to take it and had to withdraw. It is reported

⁹⁴ *SUIS* 67, p. 1581; 84, p. 1875; *ZZTJ* 181, pp. 5652-3.

⁹⁵ *SUIS* 4, pp. 79-81; *CFYG* 117, pp. 1395-7.

⁹⁶ *SUIS* 81, p. 1822; 84, p. 1879.

⁹⁷ Bingham 1941, pp. 39-41.

⁹⁸ *SUIS* 78, p. 1770; *ZZTJ* 181, p. 5659.

that of the 305,000 troops that had crossed the Liao River only 2,700 returned. The only success of the campaign had been the capture of a Koguryō stronghold on the west side of the Liao River where Sui set up the commandery of Liaodong and Tongding Fortress.⁹⁹ So meager a result would seem to suggest that it was time for Emperor Yang to cease further campaigns against Koguryō, but his ambition would not allow him to give up.¹⁰⁰

Another expedition was launched in 613. Once again a court minister remonstrated that China was exhausted and the emperor should not go personally, but the emperor refused to listen.¹⁰¹ The campaign soon had to be halted when Yang Xuangan rose in rebellion. The campaigns against Koguryō had imposed an extremely heavy burden on the people, causing popular resentment and leading to banditry and violent disturbances inside China. Many men refused to go to war and deliberately injured themselves so as to avoid conscription.¹⁰²

Taking advantage of the tense situation, Yang Xuangan, who was in charge of supplies for the campaign, rose in revolt and headed for the eastern capital Luoyang. Yang Xuangan was the son of Yang Su, a close adviser of Emperor Wen who had helped Emperor Yang to the throne but had then fallen out of favor and been put to death. The Chinese troops of the Koguryō expedition had to retreat to suppress the rebellion. Hui Zheng, the Emperor's Vice Minister of War, who was implicated with Yang Xuangan's clique, fled to Koguryō. Though it was finally suppressed, the rebellion was the beginning of a series of uprisings that finally led to the total collapse of the dynasty.¹⁰³

Oblivious to the danger inherent in the disturbed situation inside China, Emperor Yang decided on a third expedition in 614. It received so little support that during the discussions on the campaign, nobody dared to speak out for several days. China was now suffering from so much internal turbulence that many troops failed to arrive at the Liao River on time. Nevertheless, the Chinese forces brought enough pressure to bear as to oblige Koguryō to sue for peace. It sent an embassy in the seventh month of 614, offering to surrender and to hand over Hui Zheng. Emperor Yang

⁹⁹ *SUIS* 81, p. 1817; *ZZTJ* 181, pp. 5659-66.

¹⁰⁰ Bingham 1941, p. 42.

¹⁰¹ *SUIS* 50, p. 1320; *ZZTJ* 182, p. 5669.

¹⁰² *ZZTJ* 197, p. 6216.

¹⁰³ Wright 1979, pp. 144-5.

accepted this, but insisted on the king's coming to court personally. Upon receiving the king's refusal, Emperor Yang prepared for a fourth expedition.¹⁰⁴ However, this last expedition soon collapsed because of the rapidly deteriorating situation in all parts of China.

Many factors contributed to the Emperor's almost insane obsession with the conquest of Koguryō. When he began, the national economy was sound and his military force was strong. A recent study shows that the figure of 1,133,800 men given for the size of the army employed in the first expedition could be true, if the *fubing*, conscripts and non-Chinese are all counted.¹⁰⁵ So ambitious and supremely egotistical a monarch must have felt he had to win to rehabilitate his reputation and his self-esteem.¹⁰⁶ He also believed frontier defense was an adequate justification for such a war: Koguryō posed, he insisted, a threat to Sui border security and challenged China's superiority by its unsubmitive attitude.

An ideological justification for the war was sought in the traditional view of the Son of Heaven being the ruler of the world. In his persistence in taking personal command of the campaigns against Koguryō the emperor was driven by his conception of the majesty and cosmic centrality of the empire, by his urge to restore the glory of the Han and by his image of himself as destined to great victories against all who resisted the benevolent transforming influence of the Central Kingdom.¹⁰⁷

It was not only the emperor personally who was inspired by the idea of conquest so as to establish a world empire on the Han model; such a belief was held firmly and supported actively by some of his officials as well. Pei Ju was one such official, and not the only one. By the end of Emperor Wen's reign, increased prosperity in China encouraged talk of defeating Koguryō to become prevalent inside and outside the court. Such "public opinion" pushed Emperor Yang into the position of a promoter of foreign expansion. Although some officials objected to the invasion, their voices were too few and faint to have any effect on the general fever for war.¹⁰⁸

Externally, the situation on the Korean peninsula at this time seemed to have reinforced Emperor Yang's ambitions. The three Korean

¹⁰⁴ *SUIS* 4, pp. 84-8; 81, p. 1817; *ZZTJ* 182, pp. 5689-92.

¹⁰⁵ Asami 1985.

¹⁰⁶ Wright 1960, p. 58.

¹⁰⁷ Wright 1978, p. 194.

¹⁰⁸ *SUIS* 75, p. 1721.

states were engaged in competition with one another, and both Paekche and Silla hoped that Sui would assist them against Koguryō. This provided a convenient pretext for Sui aggression.

In 607 Paekche sent an envoy to Sui, repeating the request made in Emperor Wen's time that China join Paekche in attacking Koguryō. While Emperor Wen had not been interested in exploiting the competition among the Korean states, Emperor Yang asked Paekche to "watch over" Koguryō. In 611, before Emperor Yang launched the first campaign against Koguryō, Paekche again despatched an envoy to ask for details of the plan. Emperor Yang sent an envoy to Paekche with the information. Paekche, however, was also aware of the danger of Chinese aggression and therefore tried to keep secure by maintaining a delicate balance between China and Koguryō. In 612 Paekche despatched troops to its border with Koguryō, ostensibly to provide assistance to the Chinese but in fact as a precaution against a Chinese invasion. Despite its bellicose posturing, it maintained peaceful relations with Koguryō.¹⁰⁹

Silla consistently allied itself with China, since it had been under pressure from both Koguryō and Paekche. In 608 the king of Silla sent a letter to Sui, asking for troops to attack Koguryō, and in 611 a Silla envoy arrived at the Sui court requesting Chinese military assistance. Emperor Yang agreed.¹¹⁰

A complication in the situation on the Korean peninsula was Japan's involvement in Korean affairs. In the fourth century Japan had a foothold known as Kaya (Japanese Mimana) on the peninsula between the territories of Paekche and Silla.¹¹¹ While Paekche usually aligned itself with Japan and Kaya, Silla and Koguryō were often hostile to Kaya. In 562 Silla destroyed Kaya. For a time Japan continued to make attempts to restore its power base. In 600 it took over five walled towns from Silla but that success did not last long, for Silla soon retook the towns after the Japanese left.¹¹² The Japanese threat helped to push Silla toward China.

One should point out, however, that in both Korean and Chinese sources concerning the Sui period, there is no reference to either Paekche

¹⁰⁹ *SUIS* 81, p. 1819; *ZZTJ* 181, p. 5666.

¹¹⁰ *SGSG* 4, p. 10.

¹¹¹ There is controversy about Kaya's role. Ledyard (1975) argues that it was a source of either infiltrators or conquerors of Japan from Korea, while Edwards (1983) argues against that view.

¹¹² Yu Yousun 1957, p. 5.

or Silla actually joining the Chinese campaigns against Koguryō. At this time China was not entirely clear about Japan's impact on the international scene in East Asia, although it had felt challenged by Japan when the Japanese envoys first came to the Sui court and presented a letter 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." This displeased Emperor Yang, who instructed that such letters were not to be presented to him in the future.¹¹³ According to the Japanese sources, the Japanese emperor in his next mission to Sui sent a letter to Emperor Yang with the words "the Eastern Heavenly Emperor respectfully says to the Western Emperor" etc., but there is no record of this in Chinese sources, so we do not know how the Chinese reacted to it.¹¹⁴

The situation on the Korean peninsula at this time was totally different from the situation during early Han, which was why Emperor Yang failed where Emperor Wu of the Han dynasty had succeeded. Koguryō was not a loose confederation of walled towns, but a militarily strong state with an effective ruling council. It was suspicious and fearful of Chinese expansion as well as conscious of China as standing in the way of its own expansion. At first it offered submission in response to Emperor Wen's deterrent threats. Its submission to Emperor Wen may have reflected both its perception of Sui military power and its fear of Sui retaliation. However, the effect of a deterrent may depend on its not actually being used, since the effectiveness of deterrence depends mostly on the threatened state's perception of it. When Emperor Wen actually launched his attack and failed, the Koreans saw that Sui was unable to mount an effective campaign, and therefore they put up formidable resistance to Emperor Yang's invasions.

Emperor Yang did not have a good understanding of his enemy nor of China's own strength. He and his supporters failed to see that China's economy was still far from adequate to support an all-out expedition at such a distance. When it did go to war, the Sui court had to resort to measures such as taxing the rich merchants in proportion to their property. Local officials resorted to still more outrageous methods to raise funds. The burden of heavy taxation and demands for labor pushed people into slavery and banditry.¹¹⁵ The Sui military force, large as it was, was not effec-

¹¹³ *SUIS* 81, p. 1827; Wright 1979, p. 139.

¹¹⁴ Nishijima 1983, p. 436.

¹¹⁵ *SUIS* 24, pp. 672-3; pp. 687-8.

tive. Yet Emperor Yang held to the wrong perception that Koguryō, a small country equivalent only to a commandery in China, could easily be subdued. In fact China was unable to muster the resources to carry out an effective campaign in a strongly defended land a thousand miles away from the Sui capital, whose terrain and climate were also hostile to the invader.¹¹⁶

The Siege of Yanmen

The outlook in 615 was gloomy. Following his Korean campaign in 614 the tireless Emperor Yang, perhaps worried about the growing power of the Eastern Turks, went on a hunting trip to the north where he was besieged in Yanmen town by the Eastern Turks under Shibi Qaghan.

Turkish hostility had been stirred up by actions of Pei Ju. Just a year before, seeing that the Eastern Turks were growing in strength, Pei Ju devised a strategy to foment discord among Shibi's people in order to weaken him. This proved to be unwise, for Sui at this time needed the military assistance of the Eastern Turks to deal with the Koreans. Nonetheless, at Pei's suggestion, the Sui court offered a Chinese princess to Shibi's younger brother and proposed to confer the title of southern qaghan on him, but the brother was afraid to accept this rank, apparently fearing he was not strong enough to challenge his elder brother. When news of the Chinese plan reached Shibi, he quite naturally resented it.

Pei Ju then suggested that the court should get rid of Shi Shuhuxi, a capable assistant to Shibi of Sogdian (i.e. non-Turkish) origin. Shi Shuhuxi and his men were deceived into coming to trade, only to be killed in a Chinese ambush. Shibi thereupon suspended tributary relations with Sui and decided to retaliate. Shibi planned a sudden attack in 615, when the Sui emperor was on his northern tour. The Sui Princess Yicheng, who had first been married to Qimin and then to Shibi, sent an envoy to Sui to report the plan, but obviously the report arrived too late.

The Turks not only besieged Emperor Yang in Yanmen, they captured thirty-nine of forty-one walled towns in the commandery of Yanmen. The emperor was so frightened that he could only hold his son and cry until his eyes were swollen.¹¹⁷ He remembered Zhangsun Sheng with a sigh: "If Zhangsun Sheng were here, the Xiongnu (the Turks) would not

¹¹⁶ Jamieson 1969, pp. 32-4.

¹¹⁷ *SUIS* 4, p. 89; 67, p. 1582; *ZZTJ* 182, pp. 5697-8; Bingham 1941, p. 59.

have been allowed to go so far!"¹¹⁸ To meet the crisis, the emperor's advisers urged him to order the recruitment of rescue troops throughout the empire and to announce the abandonment of the costly campaign against Koguryō. A court minister suggested that, since according to the practice of the Turks, the qatun (wife of qaghan) participated in military discussions, Sui should obtain the help of Princess Yicheng. She did not disappoint the Sui court. She gave false information to Shibi that there was an emergency on his own northern border, so Shibi finally withdrew his troops.¹¹⁹ The immediate crisis was over, but the emperor then went back on his word and talked again about resuming the campaign against Koguryō.¹²⁰

The Turkish attack was the final straw. Coming after the unsuccessful campaigns against Koguryō and the turmoil inside the country caused by various internal uprisings, the Sui dynasty went into a sudden and steep decline and soon after met its end.

The Foreign Policies of the Two Emperors Compared

The differences between the foreign policies of the two emperors resulted from the evolution of the political and economic situation in China. As the founder of the dynasty Emperor Wen devoted himself to reuniting the whole of China, restoring the economy and securing the frontiers. Emperor Yang inherited his father's achievement. With China reunified, the dynasty secure, the frontiers with the Turks and the Tuyuhun under control, Koguryō suing for peace, and China's economy and population recovering, Emperor Yang had not the same concerns as those of his father. He was tempted by adventurous ideas and inspired by the ambition of restoring the Han boundaries through military conquest.

Differences in the personalities of the two emperors also were responsible for their differing decisions in policy. The prudent Emperor Wen was more realistic in assessing the strengths and weaknesses of both China and its rivals; he was ready to draw back when he ran into obstacles. The flamboyant Emperor Yang, on the other hand, was so overconfident that even when China was clearly being devastated by huge internal construction projects and external wars, he would not become discouraged. The restlessness of Emperor Yang, always going about on tours and engaging

¹¹⁸ *SUIS* 51, p. 1336.

¹¹⁹ *SUIS* 63, p. 1492; *JTS* 63, p. 2399; *ZZTJ* 182, pp. 5698-9.

¹²⁰ *SUIS* 67, pp. 1572-3; *ZZTJ* 182, p. 5700.

in military campaigns, can also be seen as reflecting the nomadic side of his inheritance.

Each of these two rulers played equally decisive roles in the making of foreign policy. It is also true, however, that we can discern a coherent working procedure pervading the whole process of foreign policy decision-making during the Sui dynasty. Officials in various capacities presented suggestions in their memorials; court discussions were held; policies deliberated and finally decided upon. Both emperors relied on their circle of advisers and Zhangsun Sheng and Pei Ju were responsible for many decisions in the foreign policy of both rulers.

Yet both emperors also undoubtedly held tightly the power of final decision-making. Being northern military aristocrats, they did not care too much about having the image of a wise Confucian ruler sitting at the top and leaving details to their servants; they had to be in control. The powerful position of the emperor was carefully preserved in the reform of governmental institutions under the reign of Emperor Wen. The Sui court set up various offices on the central level: the three central ministries (*sansheng*), the Department of State Affairs (*shangshu sheng*) with its six administrative boards, the Chancellery (*menxia sheng*) and the Secretariat (*neishi sheng*, later *Neishu sheng*), the Censorate (*yushi tai*), the Inspectorate General of Water Works (*dushui tai*, later *dushui jian*), and the nine courts.

But the office of Chancellor (*chengxiang*) was missing, and that position was the summit and pivot of the Han bureaucratic apparatus. Its holder functioned as de facto chief of government, as supreme arbiter and spokesman for bureaucratic interests as a whole. By not reestablishing this office, Emperor Wen was able to act as his own chancellor and Emperor Yang followed the same practice.¹²¹ Power was thereby concentrated in the hands of the emperor, and although each of the two emperors relied on his group of advisers, the advisers could not form a unified force able to challenge the emperor. Their competition for the support of the emperor weakened their position as a group. For instance, under Emperor Wen, Gao Jiong was accused by the empress of not exerting all his efforts in the command of the war against Koguryō,¹²² and under Emperor Yang power struggles among the bureaucrats ruined several of his advisers.

The despotic style of both emperors was shown clearly in their

¹²¹ Wright 1979, p. 82.

¹²² ZZTJ 178, pp. 5566-8.

willingness to treat their officials with punitive or even vindictive severity. Emperor Wen was especially likely to vent his anger by ordering the whipping and beating of offending officials at court.¹²³ But in decision-making Emperor Wen showed more willingness to listen to suggestions and to accept remonstrance. As the founder of a new dynasty such forbearance was needed to win the hearts of all in both the north and the only recently conquered south. Emperor Wen often expressed his wish to harmonize his policies with "public opinion."¹²⁴ Knowing very well his own limitations as an administrator, Emperor Wen followed the advice of his ministers in such major issues as the conquest of Chen, the pacification of the south, the formulation of tax policy, and formulation of law.

Emperor Yang showed a more despotic attitude when he said:

By nature I do not like remonstrance. When those in high and prestigious positions present remonstrance in order to make a name for themselves, I cannot bear it. As for those in low and humble positions, I will treat them with some tolerance but I will still cast these [memorials] down on the ground. You should know this!¹²⁵

His despotism reached its height during the Korean campaigns. He never listened to any objections to the war. As mentioned earlier, in 614 when he assembled his ministers for deliberation about the war, for several days no one dared to say anything. The anti-war proposal of Yu Shiji, a policy adviser, was raised only when the emperor was caught in the siege by the Turks at Yanmen. Yu urged the emperor to abandon the Korean campaign.¹²⁶ When Emperor Yang asked for opinions about resuming the campaign, Su Wei, another adviser, still did not dare to tell him the truth explicitly. He implied that the war should be abandoned by reminding the emperor of his promise during the siege and suggesting that the huge number of bandits and rebels could be pardoned and be sent on the Korean campaign. Even this angered Emperor Yang. Other advisers, such as Pei Yun, knew that Emperor Yang was determined to resume the war and therefore tried to hide the fact that China was in chaos and in no position

¹²³ Somers 1978, p. 204.

¹²⁴ Tang Chengye 1967, pp. 41-5.

¹²⁵ *ZZTJ* 182, p. 5684.

¹²⁶ *SUIS* 67, p. 1572.

to carry on with hostilities.¹²⁷

Short-lived as it was, the Sui dynasty restored Chinese unity. The government maintained centralized control over the *fubing* military system and developed "regional military commands" in areas of major strategic importance, following the Northern Zhou practice. It bequeathed to its successor, Tang, the basic institutional framework for its government. The building of the Bian canal linking north and south was a lasting contribution to economic development.

The Sui was initially successful in dealing with the Turks, whose nomadic empire posed a formidable challenge on their northern frontier. The Sui rulers' nomadic heritage gave them a better understanding of their nomadic rivals than their Han predecessors had possessed. The Sui rulers understood that the Turks' lack of a well established rule of succession made it hard for them to maintain a unified leadership. Rather than wait for an internal split to appear spontaneously, Emperor Wen's capable foreign policy adviser, Zhangsun Sheng, familiar with Turkish affairs, actively stirred up divisions among the Turks and thereby succeeded in making the Eastern Turks accept tributary status in 584.

Such a relationship benefitted both Sui and the Turks, for both could join forces against their common enemy, the Western Turks. The Eastern Turks obtained Chinese support and large amounts of material aid, while Sui could use the Eastern Turks as a frontier defense force. More importantly for Sui, peace in the north enabled Emperor Wen to carry out his successful conquest of the Southern Chen regime.

When the Eastern Turks under Dulan Qaghan again became hostile in 593, Zhangsun Sheng's strategy of divide and rule was again put into practice and Sui formed an alliance with Dulan's rival, Qimin Qaghan. The tributary relationship between Sui and Qimin enabled them to join forces to inflict a severe defeat on the Western Turks in 603.

Emperor Wen's cautious pragmatism also showed itself in his policies of non-intervention towards the Tuyuhun. Koguryō, Sui's major rival on the northeastern frontier, with its territory extending to the Liaodong peninsula, its tendency to ally itself with the Turks, its ambition to rule over Manchuria, and its potentially disturbing influence in the Hebei area, required more serious attention. For its part, Koguryō was deeply

¹²⁷ *SUIS* 41, p. 1188; 67, p. 1567; *ZZTJ* 183, pp. 5703-4.

concerned with Sui's ambition to expand in its direction. Emperor Wen's unsuccessful military campaign against Koguryō in 598 was, however, primarily aimed at posing a deterrent so as to maintain security on the frontier rather than at extending his territory, and could be said to have achieved its objective from that point of view.

Emperor Wen's sanctioning of an expedition against Linyi after re-establishing Chinese control over Jiaozhou in Northern Vietnam was more adventurous, but probably did not involve great diversion of resources or risk of serious loss.

In contrast to his father, Emperor Yang was enthusiastic from the beginning for expansion to restore the political prestige and imperial glories of the Han dynasty. Such an ambition was partly due to his flamboyant personality, but it can be attributed even more to the internal economic recovery of the country, the ideological pressure to extend the sphere of rule of the Son of Heaven and the precedent of Han's achievements. His foreign policy adviser, Pei Ju, dutifully offered encouragement. Under Emperor Yang the peaceful tributary relationship with the Eastern Turks lasted till 614 and the absence of trouble on the northern frontier left him free to undertake a series of moves to recreate the Han empire.

He abandoned his father's non-interventionist policy towards the Tuyuhun and took personal command in a campaign that subjugated them and brought them into the Sui commandery system in 609. In 609 Sui also established two commanderies in the Western Regions, thus ensuring its control over the area, and in 611 it succeeded in subduing the Western Turks.

In the northeast, abandoning his father's cautious pragmatism and without a rational and sound assessment of the situation, Emperor Yang took personal command in three campaigns against Koguryō in 612, 613 and 614, all of which ended in failure.

While Sui overextended itself and exhausted its strength in a futile attempt to subdue Koguryō, the Eastern Turks under Shibi Qaghan grew strong. Pei Ju attempted to counter this by reviving the divide and rule policy but this time it backfired. His attempt to win over Shibi's younger brother failed and only aroused the resentment of the Qaghan, who laid siege to Emperor Yang at Yanmen while on a tour of inspection. The emperor survived the crisis but as he planned yet another Korean expedition, the turmoil inside the country steadily increased and the Sui dynasty was replaced by Tang in 618.