

Chapter 5

Tang and the First Turkish Empire: From Appeasement to Conquest

After the siege at Yanmen, Sui was on the verge of total collapse. A series of internal rebellions quickly turned into a turbulent civil war pitting members of the ruling class against each other, and with different parts of the country under the control of local Sui generals sometimes facing rebel leaders, all of them soon contending for the greatest of all Chinese political prizes, the chance to replace a dynasty which had evidently lost the Mandate.

Those nearest the northern frontier naturally sought the support of the Eastern Turks, just as Turkish leaders had sought Chinese assistance in their own power struggles.¹

Freed of interference from a strong Chinese power, both the Eastern and Western Turkish qaghanates soon recovered their positions of dominance in their respective regions. The Eastern qaghanate under Shibi Qaghan expanded to bring into its sphere of influence the Khitan and Shiwei in the east and the Tuyuhun and Gaochang in the west. The Western Turks again expanded all the way to Persia, incorporating the Tiele and the various oasis states in the Western Regions, which one after another became their subjects, paying regular taxes to the Western Turks.

After an initial period of appeasement, Tang succeeded in conquering the Eastern Turks in 630 and the Western Turks in 659. This chapter examines the reasons for Tang's military success, and how Tang tried to bring the Turks under Chinese administration so as to build a genuinely universal empire.

¹ Liu Wuzhou, on the northern edge of Shanxi and Liang Shidu, north of Chang'an on the Ordos frontier, received the title of qaghan from Shibi Qaghan of the Eastern Turks. To all intents and purposes, they became subjects of the Turks, even though they each assumed the title of emperor of China. Wang Shichong, who held Luoyang also made alliance with the Turks. The Turks also wished to confer the title qaghan on Guo (later Li) Zihé at Yulin, at the southward bend of the northern loop of the Yellow River, but Guo was afraid to accept it. See their biographies in *JTS* 55, 56; *XTS* 85, 86, 87.

The Rise of Li Yuan and the Initial Alliance with the Turks

In the fifth month of 617, Li Yuan, the Duke of Tang, joined the many members of the Sui ruling class who were rising in revolt against Emperor Yang. Li was garrison commander of Taiyuan with control over the *fubing* and new conscripts in the area. A contingent of Western Turks under Shi Danai were included in the Tang army. Danai and his people had been previously settled in Loufan in northern Shanxi during the Sui period.²

Like most other northern warlords, Li Yuan had been obliged to make peace with the Eastern Turks and form an alliance with their powerful regime. This policy was suggested by Liu Wenjing, an important planner of Li's revolt and subsequent founding of the Tang dynasty.³ An understanding with the Eastern Turks was necessary to prevent them from invading, to try to stop them from supporting other rebel leaders, and to obtain their cooperation in the wars for the establishment of Tang power.

Li Yuan personally wrote a letter to Shibi Qaghan, which proposed that either the Turks join forces with Li to suppress other rebels and maintain Sui, in which case the captured children, women and goods would all go to the Turks; or, he suggested, the Turks could just make peace with Li himself, in which case Li Yuan would provide generous gifts so that the Turks would receive benefits without having to make any effort. The letter was signed as *qi*, a term used by an inferior to a superior. When his officials objected to this wording and suggested that, since the Turks did not read Chinese, Li Yuan should change the word *qi* into *shu*, a term used between equals, Li Yuan did not accept, saying that the Turks knew the rituals of the Chinese, and that:

Even if I show respect to them they will still not believe me. If there is neglect and rudeness, their suspicion will be even deeper. The men of ancient times had a saying, "To bend before one man and stand above ten thousand." What do the barbarians beyond the frontiers amount to in terms of this analogy? They merely amount to one ordinary person. Moreover, the word *qi* is not worth a thousand measures of gold. Even that I am willing to give away. Why should one worry about one word?⁴

By now, however, Shibi Qaghan had completely lost interest in the Sui

² XTS 110, pp. 4111-2. See also Bingham 1941, p. 98.

³ JTS 57, p. 2292; ZZTJ 184, p. 5737.

⁴ *Da Tang Chuangye Qijuzhu* 1, p. 7.

regime. He agreed to assist Tang on the condition that Li Yuan declare himself emperor. Li Yuan was too cautious to accept the condition, but offered a compromise: he declared Emperor Yang a retired emperor, and proclaimed a new Sui emperor. The red flag of Sui was changed for his retinue to a combination of crimson and white to show his difference from Sui. Shibi then despatched an envoy to Li Yuan with horses that were to be sold in China. With the Turks friendship secured, Li Yuan and his troops advanced to Chang'an. Simultaneously he sent Liu Wenjing to the Eastern Turks to ask for more horses and some troops, intending to use the Turkish force to intimidate his rivals. Shibi willingly sent two thousand horses and five hundred cavalry.⁵

Some historical records suggest that, like other rebel leaders, Li Yuan had accepted the status of vassal to the Turks, and that after his defeat of the Eastern Turks, Li Shimin, the second emperor of Tang, remarked how he had finally taken revenge and wiped out the great shame and humiliation that his father suffered as a subject of the "barbarians." Chen Yinke agrees with this suggestion and conjectures that Gaozu accepted the title of qaghan from the Turks.⁶

Though generally accepted, this idea has been challenged by other modern Chinese scholars. Li Shutong concludes that Li Yuan did not accept the status of vassal to the Turks. He believes that Xu Jingzong, the early Tang historian, on the basis of whose work the Tang official histories were compiled, intentionally distorted his narrative to depict Li Yuan as a weak, incompetent character so as to contrast the father with Li Shimin, the son, who he depicted as a strong, capable and successful leader.

Li Shutong examined the various Tang sources and based the above judgment on the *Da Tang Chuangye Qijuzhu*, or the *Diary of the Founding of the Great Tang Dynasty*, an unofficial court journal of Gaozu's reign, compiled by Wen Daya, covering the period from 617 to 626. There is nothing in this book flatly stating that Gaozu accepted the status of subject of the Turks, nor is there any record of his being given any title by the Turks.⁷

Could Wen Daya have deliberately omitted information of this

⁵ *Da Tang Chuangye Qijuzhu* 1, pp. 5-11; *JTS* 57, p. 2292; *ZZTJ* 184, pp. 5737-8; pp. 5740-1; p. 5742; p. 5749.

⁶ Chen Yinke 1973, pp. 69-80.

⁷ Li Shutong 1965, pp. 214-46; 1968. For a detailed study of Wen Daya's book, see the pioneering work in English by Bingham 1937 and a summary of studies on the book by Twitchett 1992, pp. 38-42.

kind? Li Shutong does not think that Wen Daya had any motive to do so, but we have to recognize that Wen Daya did make one thing clear: Li Yuan used the term *qi* as an inferior to a superior in his letter to the qaghan. This can, however, be interpreted as merely an expedient to gain time.

Whatever his deeper motives may have been, the existing evidence of Li Yuan's conduct in dealing with the Turks does at least show that he felt he had to adopt a very humble attitude towards them, even if some doubt may remain as to the extent to which he actually did intend to yield to them at the time. This policy proved to be both necessary and wise. With the Turks as peaceful allies, Li Yuan was able to eventually proclaim the founding of the Tang dynasty in the fifth month of 618 and himself as its first emperor, with his capital in Chang'an. Even so, several more years of fighting were required before Tang finally succeeded in defeating or winning over all the other contenders for power and bringing the whole of China under its control.

Gaozu's Appeasement Policy in the Face of Turkish Aggression

During his reign from 618 to 626, Li Yuan, also known to history by his posthumous title Gaozu, was preoccupied with consolidating Tang dynastic rule, and to that end he had to adopt very pragmatic policies toward the non-Chinese on the frontiers, particularly the Turks. A military man who had achieved his position by force and strategy, he knew very well that the formalities and rhetoric of the tribute system to mark the superiority of China over its neighbors were meaningless when China was in fact in a weak position. The new emperor's style of government was highly personal and informal, unlike that of a "proper emperor." He often invited his officials to sit beside him on the imperial dais, and he granted the Turkish envoy the same favor in 618.⁸ His small group of advisers, mostly pragmatic politicians like Gaozu himself, helped him in decision-making and contributed to his distinctive style.⁹

Gaozu consistently followed a policy of appeasement towards the Eastern Turks. The situation during Gaozu's time parallels the situation in early Han when China also had to appease and pay tribute to the Xiongnu in order to prevent them from causing trouble. Gaozu treated the Turks as "an equal adversary" (*digu*), and regularly made large payments in goods

⁸ ZZTJ 186, p. 5816.

⁹ For an introduction to his advisers, see Wechsler 1979, pp. 170-4.

to them.

Up until 625, in all letters from the Tang court to the Eastern Turks, the Chinese used the term *shu*, symbolizing the equality of status between the two states.¹⁰ In 618, when Gaozu sent a diplomatic mission to the Turks, it carried with it women performers as gifts.¹¹ The following year, when he learned that presents from Tang had not arrived on time, the qaghan planned a major campaign against Taiyuan with his vassal, Liang Shidu, but Tang immediately forwarded the delinquent payment, and thus headed off the invasion.¹² In the same year Shibi requested Tang to kill the Western Turkish leader Chuluo, who had submitted to Sui and been resettled in China. Gaozu did not at first agree to the request but later, when several ministers pointed out that if Tang refused, Chuluo himself might survive, but only at the expense of Tang's incurring the hatred of the whole Eastern Turkish qaghanate, Gaozu yielded to the inevitable.¹³

The appeasement policy was necessary since the Turks were not only themselves a rival to Tang but also provided support to other anti-Tang forces, thus posing a further threat. After the death of Shibi in 619, the Turks became more hostile under the new qaghan, Chuluo, who was Shibi's younger brother. Chuluo was married to the Sui Princess Yicheng, who remained loyal to the Sui house. Apparently under pressure exerted by Chuluo, Tang in early 620 abandoned Fengzhou and conceded Wuyuan and Yulin to the Turks. Ten thousand Turkish households then moved south of the Yellow River.¹⁴

In 620, at the request of Princess Yicheng, Chuluo received the remaining members of the Sui royal family, the empress of Emperor Yang and Emperor Yang's grandson, Yang Zhengdao, escorted by Dou Jiande, an anti-Tang military leader. Chuluo established Yang Zhengdao as King of Sui and settled other Chinese who had come to the Turks in Dingxiang

¹⁰ *XTS* 215A, p. 6030; *ZZTJ* 191, p. 5996; *CFYG* 990, p. 11635; Mori Masao 1967, pp. 178-9.

¹¹ *ZZTJ* 186, p. 5814.

¹² *ZZTJ* 187, pp. 5847-8.

¹³ *TD* 199, p. 1077; *ZZTJ* 187, p. 5865; *CFYG* 999, p. 11721. *XTS* 215B (pp. 6056-7) records that it was the Western Turks who asked Tang to kill Chuluo. Hou Linbo holds that the *XTS* is correct. Hou 1976, pp. 37-9. Whatever was the case this event shows the humble attitude and pragmatic values of the Tang court.

¹⁴ The date here given for this is according to Cen Zhongmian 1958, p. 133. The Chinese sources do not give a definite date. See *XTS* 215A, p. 6029; *CFYG* 990, p. 11633.

on the northern frontier.¹⁵ Apparently Chuluo did so partly because Wang Shichong, who was holding out as defender of Sui in Luoyang, had sent an envoy to the Turks to persuade the qaghan to do so. Wang had earlier formed a marriage alliance and trading relations with the Turks.¹⁶

However, Chuluo also sent 2,000 cavalymen to assist Tang in fighting against Liu Wuzhou, another rival of Tang, and left several hundred of his men with the Tang general in Taiyuan and in the northern outposts as garrison troops.¹⁷ The Turks seemed to be using the strategy of playing off the rival forces in China against each other so as to profit themselves. Soon, Liang Shidu advised Chuluo Qaghan to go beyond such balance of power moves and to launch a major attack on the Tang capital so that he could establish a nomadic regime inside China just as the nomadic Tuoba people had done in the fourth century. Fortunately for Tang, the plan did not proceed due to Chuluo's death.¹⁸

Chuluo was succeeded by another brother, Xieli Qaghan, who also took Princess Yicheng as his wife. Like Chuluo he was aggressive towards Tang, treating the Tang Chinese with disdain, and imprisoning their envoys when they refused to kowtow at the Turkish court.¹⁹ The Chinese records say that Xieli Qaghan addressed Tang envoys using arrogant language, and made endless demands for presents from Tang. Whenever Xieli Qaghan made such demands, he sent letters using the term "order" (*chi*). All the prefectures along the frontiers bowed before his commands.²⁰ Xieli also continued to support the Sui royal house. Moreover, since parts of the buffer zone along the frontier between China and the Turks were still under anti-Tang regimes, Tang was exposed to easy attacks from the Turks.²¹ From 619 to 626 the Turks raided Tang frontiers every year.

In 623, when Xieli Qaghan was besieging the town of Mayi, a site of strategic importance since Han times and which was under Tang control, he made a proposal for a marriage contract. Gaozu agreed on the condition that the Turks abandon the attack. The qaghan decided to withdraw but when Princess Yicheng persisted in her pleading for an attack,

¹⁵ *JTS* 54, p. 2239; 194A, p. 5154; *XTS* 85, p. 3700; 215A, pp. 6029-30; *ZZTJ* 188, p. 5878.

¹⁶ *XTS* 215A, pp. 6029-30; *ZZTJ* 188, p. 5884.

¹⁷ *JTS* 194A, p. 5154; *XTS* 215A, p. 6029; *ZZTJ* 188, pp. 5884-5; p. 5898.

¹⁸ *JTS* 56, pp. 2280-1; *XTS* 87, pp. 3730-1; *ZZTJ* 188, pp. 5895-6.

¹⁹ *JTS* 194A, p. 5155; *XTS* 215A, p. 6030; *ZZTJ* 189, p. 5912.

²⁰ *JTS* 83, p. 2775; *XTS* 111, pp. 4132-3; 215A, p. 6030.

²¹ Kang Le 1979, p. 17.

the qaghan gave in to her. Later, however, he returned the captured Mayi to Tang while negotiating for a marriage.²² It is not clear whether any marriage agreement was actually concluded during Gaozu's reign. We merely read several times in the sources of a marriage contract being discussed.²³ Perhaps the Sui Princess Yicheng was concerned that her position would be in danger once a Tang princess came and therefore disrupted negotiations, delaying any actual contract.

In 624 all the major remaining anti-Tang forces inside China were eliminated, except that the Turks still had Yuan Junzhang and Liang Shidu on their side. Both Xieli Qaghan and Tuli (Tölish) Qaghan (Shibi's son) invaded Chinese territory. Li Shimin, the future Tang Taizong, devised a strategy to drive a wedge between the two qaghans by claiming that he had formed a brotherly relationship with Tölish. The Turks retreated for a time, but before long Xieli resumed his incursions.²⁴ Traditional Chinese historians suggest that under the threat of a Turkish invasion anxiety mounted to such an extent that Gaozu even considered abandoning Chang'an and moving the capital to a less exposed place. He gave up the plan only after strong and persistent objections from Li Shimin.²⁵

Under these circumstances, Gaozu had to follow an appeasement policy. But all this apparently peaceful diplomatic activity between Tang and the Turks did not mean that the Tang rulers had given up the traditional tribute system and accepted the principle of real equality among sovereign states. The *Cefu Yuanguai* records Turkish missions coming to the court of Tang at this time as paying tribute.

In 622, the Turks attacked Taiyuan, but then expressed interest in a peace settlement. While many court officials were in favor of making peace, at the suggestion of the Chief Minister, Feng Lun, Gaozu instead decided to mobilize Tang forces for an attack and to make peace only after a victory. The plan was carried out. After attacking the Turks, Gaozu sent an envoy to the Turks with an offer of peace and rich goods. The Turks

²² ZZTJ 190, p. 5973.

²³ Kuang Pingzhang 1935, pp. 24-5.

²⁴ JTS 194A, pp. 5156-7; XTS 215A, p. 6031; ZZTJ 191, pp. 5991-3.

²⁵ JTS XTS 215A, pp. 6031-2; ZZTJ 191, p. 5989. Li Shutong (1965, pp. 55-60; p. 89) thinks that even though some suggested the removal of the capital, the narrative of Gaozu's agreement and Li Shimin's objection was a forgery by the Tang historian Xu Jingzong, who took every opportunity to make Gaozu look weak and incapable in contrast to Taizong, whom he described as firm, strong and successful. Li Shutong may be too harsh on Xu; if Xu did falsify his narrative, he surely did so at Li Shimin's order.

retreated.²⁶

In 624, Xieli despatched his uncle to pay a court-visit to Tang, proposing that the Tang emperor should rule the Middle Plain while the qaghan would occupy the territory north of the Gobi. Each would have jurisdiction over his own part and the Turks would not invade unless provoked by the Chinese. The Chinese records go on to say that the Turkish envoy asked that "the Turks should be the outer subjects of Tang for all generations."²⁷ This last request does not seem to be consistent with the rest of the proposal. It is not unlikely that it was added by the contemporary Chinese historians and never shown to the Turks.

While following an appeasement policy towards the Eastern Turks, Gaozu tried to make the Western Turks an ally. In 620, when the envoy from the Western Turks arrived, Gaozu granted him favorable treatment with rich gifts in the hope of persuading the Western Turks to join in attacks against the Eastern Turks. But when Xieli heard about the Western Turks' agreement to cooperate with Tang, he quickly made peace with his Western rivals and thereby stopped the latter from implementing their plan. In 625, when the Western Turks despatched an embassy to Tang requesting a marriage alliance, on the advice of Pei Ju, the famous Sui specialist on the Western Regions who had transferred his allegiance to Tang and become a Chief Minister, Gaozu agreed to the request, knowing that it would be viewed as a military threat by the Eastern Turks and serve as a deterrent to them.²⁸

Using the Tuyuhun Against Li Gui

Once the Sui dynasty lost its grip on China, the Tuyuhun under Fuyun Qaghan returned to Qinghai and reestablished their state. Remaining consistent with his pragmatic policy, Gaozu chose to make peace with the qaghan. In 618 he sent an envoy to Fuyun, to try to persuade him to attack Li Gui, who had set himself up as a rival emperor at Liangzhou, and promised to send back Prince Shun who had previously stayed at the Sui court and was now in Chang'an.

Fuyun gladly agreed and launched a successful attack on Li Gui.

²⁶ *JTS* 62, p. 2380; 63, p. 2397; *ZZTJ* 190, pp. 5954-5.

²⁷ *CFYG* 980, p. 11510.

²⁸ This is according to *ZZTJ* 191, p. 5995, which follows the *Veritable Records (Shilu)* of Gaozu. See also *XTS* 100, p. 3934; *THY* 94, p. 1693; *CFYG* 987, p. 11495. Other accounts say that Feng Lun gave the advice, cf. *JTS* 194B, pp. 5181-2; *XTS* 215B, p. 6057; *TD* 199, p. 1077.

He then sent repeated missions to Tang asking for his son's return. Gaozu sent Shun back but that freed Fuyun to repeatedly raid Tang's frontiers between 622 and 626, sometimes three or more times in a single year. Tang was too much occupied then by wars with regional warlords at home and by Turkish problems to react. In most cases, it had to leave the frontier authorities to deal with their own defense.²⁹

Taizong's Conquest of the Eastern Turks in 630

A few days after Li Shimin assumed the throne, the Eastern Turkish cavalry galloped down south and appeared on the banks of the Wei River, just over ten miles west of the Tang capital. This attack was launched at the advice of Liang Shidu. Knowing of the succession struggle inside Chang'an, Liang Shidu hoped to take advantage of the situation. It has also been suggested that previously Li Jiancheng had been in command of the defense of the northern frontiers against the Turks, and that his death had weakened the morale of the northern troops, who failed to effectively resist the Turkish invasion.³⁰

Faced by the formidable Turks, Taizong had to enter into a covenant with Xieli Qaghan before the Eastern Turks finally withdrew. The basic terms of the treaty were a Tang promise of rich gifts, and a pact of mutual non-aggression.³¹ This incident was referred to by the Tang Chinese as the "Shame of the Wei River," which Taizong was determined to avenge. Despite remonstrance that weapons were forbidden near the emperor, Taizong personally supervised archery training for the palace troops, calling on the soldiers to prepare against Turkish invasion.³²

Fortunately for Tang, both the Eastern and Western Turkish powers were now beginning to decline. Around 627 the Tiele tribes, including the Xueyantuo, the Uighurs and others, rose in rebellion against their Eastern Turkish overlord. In 628 the Khitan and Xi also rebelled.³³ In 628 the Western qaghanate was in turmoil. The Xueyantuo tribe, under their chief Yi'nan, left the Western Turks and went over to the Eastern Turks. Soon realizing that the situation of the Eastern Turks was as precarious as that in

²⁹ *JTS* 198, p. 5298; *CFYG* 970, p. 11396; Molè 1970, xviii; p. 49. For the raids, see *ZZTJ* 190, 191.

³⁰ Li Shutong 1965, pp. 297-304.

³¹ *JTS* 194A, pp. 5157-8; *XTS* 215A, pp. 6032-4; *ZZTJ* 191, pp. 6018-20; Li Shutong 1965, pp. 259-66.

³² *ZZTJ* 192, pp. 6021-2.

³³ Ma Changshou 1957, p. 44.

the west, Yi'nan rebelled and made himself independent of the Turks. The Uighurs joined the Xueyantuo.³⁴ Both the Xueyantuo and the Uighurs were Turkish speaking peoples, who belonged to the larger confederation known as the Tiele.

Within the ranks of the Eastern Turks, Xieli Qaghan and his nephew Tölsh Qaghan fell out amongst themselves. When the Xi people and other tribes, who were under the direct control of Tölsh Qaghan, left him to submit to Tang because of the heavy and endless burden of taxation Tölsh imposed, Xieli held Tölsh responsible for their defection. And when Tölsh failed to suppress the Xueyantuo and Uighur uprisings, he was again severely reprimanded by Xieli. As a result, Tölsh refused to obey an order to provide troops to Xieli, and began to make plans to submit to Tang.³⁵

At his own headquarters, Xieli Qaghan alienated himself from his own people by relying mostly on non-Turks, including a Chinese and various Hu (Sogdians). These advisers introduced complicated rules and regulations into the Turkish administration and kept their people constantly at war. Moreover, several years of famine as a result of bad weather forced Xieli to increase taxes in order to sustain enough revenue to support his regime. The political and economic problems engendered by this aroused great resentment among the Turks themselves as well as among their subjects, the Tiele tribes in the north and northwest, and among the Khitan, Mohe and Xi in the east.³⁶

The Chinese soon learned of this situation. In 627 Yuan Junzhang, the surviving warlord of northern Shanxi, switched his allegiance from the Turks to Tang because of the weaknesses he saw within the Turks.³⁷ As Chinese who had gone over to the Turks at the end of the Sui period returned to China, they brought ever more information about the internal

³⁴ *JTS* 194, p. 5158; 199A, p. 5344; *XTS* 217B, p. 6134; *ZZTJ* 192, p. 6045. Ma Changshou is of the opinion that the Xueyantuo were divided into two major groups, subject to the Eastern and Western Turks, respectively. Those in revolt in 627 were subjects of the Eastern Turks. See Ma Changshou 1957, p. 53, note 1. Cen Zhongmian holds that the Xueyantuo went to the Eastern Turks during Gaozu's reign and rebelled in 627. See Cen Zhongmian 1964, pp. 50-1.

³⁵ *JTS* 194A, p. 5158; p. 5160; *XTS* 215A, p. 6034; p. 6038; *ZZTJ* 192, p. 6049.

³⁶ *JTS* 194A, p. 5159; *XTS* 215A, p. 6034; *ZZTJ* 192, p. 6037; Ma Changshou 1957, pp. 39-44.

³⁷ *ZZTJ* 192, p. 6035.

troubles and natural disasters that the Turks were suffering.³⁸

Although many at his court suggested an attack against the Turks, Taizong hesitated. Though he was bound by the peace agreement concluded with the Turks in 626, he knew this was a chance that should not be lost. In the court discussions Chief Minister Xiao Yu advocated an offensive, whereas Zhangsun Wuji, also Chief Minister and brother-in-law of Taizong, suggested that Tang wait for the situation of the Turks to decline further. Taizong decided to wait.³⁹ When an envoy returned from his mission to the Eastern Turks, Taizong consulted with him about the situation there.⁴⁰ It was obvious by now that the Turks were in great difficulties. Taizong continued his patient waiting even when another envoy returned from his mission to the Turks and confirmed the Turks' desperate situation.⁴¹

Meanwhile Tang tried to sow further dissension among the Turks by allying itself with all the rivals of Xieli. One important step was that, at the end of 628, Taizong supported the Xueyantuo, the rivals of the Turks, by investing Chief Yi'nan with the title of qaghan, setting him up as a potential ally against the Turks. Later, in 629, when Yi'nan's brother came to pay respects, Taizong treated him favorably and bestowed a knife and a whip on him, symbols of the power to punish criminals in the Xueyantuo qaghanate.⁴²

In 628, after being attacked by Xieli, Tölüş asked for Tang military aid. Du Ruhui, Chief Minister holding the office of Minister of War, insisted that Tang should take advantage of this opportunity to attack the Turks regardless of any previous treaties with the "barbarians." Taizong decided to support Tölüş. He ordered a garrison in Taiyuan to prepare to

³⁸ ZGZY 8, pp. 24a-24b.

³⁹ JTS 65, p. 2447; XTS 105, p. 4018; ZYTJ 192, p. 6037.

⁴⁰ JTS 58, p. 2307.

⁴¹ ZYTJ 192, p. 6046.

⁴² It is not clear when the investiture took place. It was either at the end of 628 or in 629. For 628, see JTS 199B, p. 5344; ZYTJ 193, pp. 6061-2; THY 94, p. 1689; 96, p. 1726; For 629, see XTS 217B, pp. 6134-5; CFYG 964, p. 11337. Cen Zhongmian prefers the second date. He argues that it was after Yi'nan established himself as qaghan in 628 that Taizong invested him with the title. See Cen Zhongmian 1958, p. 181; 1964, pp. 52-3. However, it is possible that Taizong bestowed the title in order to help Yi'nan establish his power. ZYTJ and THY say that Yi'nan was supported as qaghan but was afraid to take up the title. Planning to attack Xieli, Taizong therefore sent an envoy to invest him with the title.

assist him.⁴³

In 628, one tribe of the Khitan, formerly under the rule of the Turks, offered to submit to Tang. Xieli proposed to hand over Liang Shidu in exchange for the Khitan, but Taizong refused. Preparations were already underway to inflict a major defeat on Liang Shidu, and Tang succeeded in doing so.⁴⁴

In 629, Tang started to make war on the Eastern Turks despite Xieli Qaghan's offer to become a Tang subject and request for a marriage contract. It was hoped that the Turks could be destroyed once and for all.⁴⁵ By the end of 629, Tölsh came to Tang for refuge. In 630 Tang won a victory over the Turks under Xieli and captured the Sui empress who had once conspired against Tang and Yang Zhengdao. Xieli despatched an envoy to the Tang court, admitting, in the words of the Chinese account, his "guilt" and asking to "surrender as an inner subject together with his land."

The Chinese accounts go on to say that the court accepted the surrender, and sent a friendly envoy to the Turks, but that since Xieli was only pretending to be humble and was merely waiting for an opportunity to flee to the north of the Gobi desert, the Tang generals on campaign, Li Shiji and Li Jing, made their own decision: they would wait for the Tang envoy to arrive at the Turks' encampment, and when the Turks let down their guard, the Tang troops would launch a sudden attack to eliminate them. The plan went well. The Chinese troops captured Xieli and killed the Sui Princess Yicheng, who had been married to four Turkish qaghans in succession. This Chinese woman who sacrificed her life in the political struggle, in a very real sense was also the last casualty of the Sui dynasty.

Thus ended the Eastern qaghanate.⁴⁶

Taizong as Heavenly Qaghan

Following the conquest of the Eastern Turks in 630, the chiefs of the non-Chinese peoples in the northwest requested that Taizong assume the title of Heavenly Qaghan (*tian kehan*), which he did.⁴⁷ There is an opinion that the Heavenly Qaghan system functioned as an international

⁴³ XTS 215A, p. 6034; ZZTJ 192, pp. 6049-50.

⁴⁴ JTS 56, p. 2281; XTS 87, p. 3731; ZZTJ 192, p. 6050.

⁴⁵ ZZTJ 193, pp. 6065-6.

⁴⁶ ZGZY 2, pp. 14a-15a; JTS 194A, p. 5159; XTS 215A, p. 6035; ZZTJ 193, pp. 6066-7; pp. 6070-3.

⁴⁷ ZZTJ 193, p. 6073.

institution which maintained peace within the world known to the Chinese and which persisted till 781, a generation after the An Lushan rebellion. According to this thesis, the Heavenly Qaghanate's mission was to resist first Turkish and then Arab aggression in Central Asia. It could do so because under that system the Chinese emperor had the legitimacy to regulate relations among the participating states, both Chinese and non-Chinese, to settle their disputes and conflicts, to organize military campaigns with troops from all the states to assist one of the states in an emergency, and to bestow political titles on the rulers of other states.⁴⁸

It is, however, an open question whether such a neatly organized international system ever actually existed.⁴⁹ The practices mentioned under the Heavenly Qaghan system were also the norm under the tribute system, which already governed Han relations with the oasis states in Central Asia. Even under that early version of the tribute system the Protector-general of the Western Regions was Han's representative and was given explicit responsibility for protecting Western Region subordinates, mediating disputes among them and attacking those who did not act in accordance with Chinese moral principles. In return for this, the oasis states had to provide military and labor services to the Chinese, in addition to the payment of tribute. During the Tang dynasty, the conquest of the Eastern Turks brought various non-Chinese tribes and small states into the Chinese sphere and subjected them to some degree of control by China. Whenever the Chinese exercised their hegemonic power over small states, they always adopted such practices whether there was an effectively functioning Heavenly Qaghan system or not.

Yet it should be noted that Taizong's assumption of the title of Heavenly Qaghan did strengthen his legitimacy as a ruler and no doubt had a psychological appeal to the nomads and other inhabitants of the Western Regions. It symbolized his aspiration to be looked on as both the Chinese Son of Heaven and the qaghan of the steppe, rather than simply as a Chinese emperor. No doubt it was the non-Chinese side of his background that enabled him to have a vision of world empire with the agricultural Chinese and nomadic non-Chinese as equal subjects, "each having an equal share and neither dominating the other."⁵⁰

Modern scholars have pointed out that during the Period of Disun-

⁴⁸ Luo Xianglin 1955, pp. 209-43.

⁴⁹ Zhang Qun 1986, pp. 342-66.

⁵⁰ Pulleyblank 1976, pp. 37-8.

ion the Chinese elite in the north had been profoundly affected by the centuries of alien rule, and the Sui-Tang rulership displayed distinctive features engendered by that experience. Chen Yinke's studies demonstrate that the Sui-Tang system grew out of the system of the Northern dynasties and that the origins of the Tang royal house combined key traits of both Chinese and "barbarians."⁵¹ It is widely recognized that Tang's vitality was based on its eclectic tendency to draw strength from all available sources, Chinese and non-Chinese.⁵²

Taizong's success in leadership can be attributed at least partly to the non-Chinese influences that he inherited, and it was such influences as well as Taizong's understanding of steppe politics, "his use of personal charisma, bluff, nomadic ceremonies and battle tactics" that made him able to rule over both China and the steppe as the accepted ruler of both societies.⁵³ The new concept of synthesizing Chinese and non-Chinese into one dualistic political entity won respect from the nomads, who accepted Taizong as Heavenly Qaghan. On his death, the nomadic generals Ashina Sheer and Qibi Heli even asked to follow their deceased master to the grave, but this was not allowed. As we shall see, it was that sort of special relationship between the Heavenly Qaghan and the non-Chinese that brought the Uighurs and oasis states to offer their aid when the An Lushan rebellion broke out.⁵⁴

Indeed, Taizong's background as the scion of the intermarriage of Chinese and non-Chinese families gave him a distinctly non-Chinese aura. Even while still just a prince, Taizong formed a relationship of sworn brotherhood with a Western Turkish prince and with Tölsh Qaghan of the Eastern Turks, which shows that he could interact personally with the Turks on their own terms, no matter what his motives may have been.⁵⁵

As noted in Chapter 1, ever since non-Chinese first established their regimes inside China during the fourth century, the problem of how to combine rule over both Chinese and nomads had been faced by the Northern dynasties, the most thorough-going attempt at a solution being that of Yuwen Tai of Western Wei. The Sui and Tang royal houses were direct descendants of the northwestern aristocracy formed by the inter-

⁵¹ Chen Yinke, *Sui-Tang Zhidu Yuanyuan Luelungao*, see his 1971.

⁵² Twitchett and Wright 1973, p. 1.

⁵³ Barfield 1989, p. 140; p. 144.

⁵⁴ Ise 1968, pp. 546-8.

⁵⁵ *JTS* 194A, p. 5156; 194B, p. 5183.

marriage of Chinese men with the daughters of non-Chinese leading families at that time. The advantage from the Chinese point of view for the offspring of such marriages was that they bore Chinese family names.

As successor to the Northern dynasty rulers, Taizong could take on the role of being a true ruler of a universal empire in a way different from pre-Northern dynasty rulers. On various occasions Taizong expressed this aspiration. Thus, he once said:

The Yi and Di are also just human beings, and their natures are not different from those of the Chinese. A ruler's concern is that the beneficence of his virtue may not extend to them, and he should not suspect them because of racial differences. If the beneficence of his virtue harmonizes them, then the four barbarians can be made into one family; if suspicions are many, even family members cannot avoid being enemies.⁵⁶

On another occasion he said:

The emperors from ancient times all appreciated the Chinese and depreciated the barbarians. Only I view them as equal. That is why they look upon me as their parent.⁵⁷

Before and during his reign, Taizong actively enlisted non-Chinese generals into the Tang armies, granting them military titles, the royal Li surname, or marriages, and used nomadic forces to help fight Tang's battles, all practices that were continued by later rulers, as we shall see in this and later chapters.

It is clear that Tang China as a whole was very cosmopolitan. Foreign influences can be seen in every aspect of its culture—music, dance, literature, painting, medicine, knowledge of geography and calendar making, food, costume, hairstyle, etc.⁵⁸ It was a time when different religions flourished.⁵⁹ While in 624 and 626, Fu Yi, the Grand Astrologer (*taishi ling*), presented memorials attacking Buddhism as a foreign religion that was not beneficial to the common people and was harmful to the

⁵⁶ ZZTJ 197, pp. 6215-6.

⁵⁷ ZZTJ 198, p. 6247.

⁵⁸ Many works note this feature. See for example, Xiang Da 1957, pp. 1-116; Schafer 1963, pp. 28-39; Lin Enxian 1972; Twitchett and Wright 1973, p. 1; Xie Haiping 1978, pp. 383-446.

⁵⁹ Xiang Da 1957, pp. 89-95; Xie Haiping 1978, pp. 366-83; Leslie 1981-83.

state,⁶⁰ it is interesting to note that, developing the concept of “madhyadesa” as mentioned in Chapter 1, the leading Tang Buddhist scholar, Daoxuan (596-667), in his essay, the *Shijia Fangzhi*, argued that it was not China but Middle Tianzhu, India, that was the center of the world. He concluded that it was due to their lack of knowledge, caused by the confining nature of their Confucian ideas, that some scholars held that Luoyang was the center.⁶¹ His argument was, of course, designed to refute the claims of Confucian scholars and to advance the position of Buddhism in a Chinese society, in which sinocentrism was still dominant. That such arguments needed to be made even after Taizong had created the new and larger ecumene, may be taken as a measure of the incompleteness of that ecumene’s dominance.

Debate on the Policy of Resettling the Turks

Taizong’s ambition to be a Heavenly Qaghan and his vision of a multi-ethnic empire were also reflected in his decision on the resettlement of the Turks. The victories over the Eastern Turks in 630 raised an immediate question as to how to resettle the 100,000 or so Turks who had surrendered. It was not a new issue, but it was a difficult and constant one that faced Chinese rulers from the Han onwards.

The Former Han government established the system of dependent states (*shuguo*) in which to resettle the nomadic Xiongnu who had submitted. Within each dependent state the highest office was in the hands of a Chinese, under whose direction the Xiongnu military force and political organization was placed. During Later Han the Southern Xiongnu moved inside the Chinese frontier. Although their political structure remained intact they were kept under close Chinese supervision.

During the Wei and Western Jin periods still more nomads were resettled in the interior of China. All these nomads periodically staged rebellions against Chinese rule. The most severe one was led by Liu Yuan, a Xiongnu descendant in 304. It ended the Western Jin regime and began the period of “barbarian” rule in North China.⁶² Sui attempted to return to the policy of bringing the Turks who had submitted inside the frontier.

Chinese relations with the nomads displayed an abiding pattern on both sides. When the nomads were strong, they followed “an outer frontier

⁶⁰ *THY* 47, pp. 835-6; *ZZTJ* 191, pp. 6001-2.

⁶¹ *Shijia Fangzhi*, p. 949.

⁶² For a study of the settlement policy before Tang, see Pan Yihong 1992b, pp. 41-56.

strategy", as described by Barfield, forcing the Chinese to meet their demands for subsidies and trade; when they were weak they chose an "inner frontier strategy" to submit to China and utilize Chinese assistance so that they could accumulate goods and recover their strength.⁶³ The nomads' inner frontier strategy, however, had certain inherent problems. It could result in increasing reliance on China and finally lead to their losing the chance to recover their own power and to perpetuate their identity.

For their part, the Chinese understood these nomadic strategies. From Han onwards, they realized that resettlement was always problematical. Resettlement was applied only to some nomadic peoples for some varying length of time, and there were always other nomads beyond the borders ready to entice the resettled nomads to leave China. Since the resettled nomads usually lived in border areas without a large Han Chinese population, there was little to prevent these nomads from rising in revolt or returning to the steppe and recovering their state power.

But despite the constant rebellions by nomads who had submitted, the imperial courts persisted in their settlement policies, since the "submission" of the nomadic peoples could be taken as confirmation of the benevolent and virtuous rule of the Son of Heaven, a factor that served to strengthen the legitimacy of the Son of Heaven. The Chinese rulers could not, therefore, afford to refuse the nomads' "submission" and subsequent resettlement, particularly when this was less costly than engaging in wars for the purpose of keeping peace on the frontiers. Also, the Chinese rulers wished to utilize the considerable military force of the nomads for their own purposes.

The Tang court held heated discussions on the matter, which went on for several years. After three centuries of alien rule, now that China was at last unified under a Chinese regime, the issue of redefining Chineseness inevitably arose. In this debate four opinions can be discerned.

1. The opinion that the nomads should be sinicized or assimilated. Many court officials held that the court should scatter the Turks among the Chinese prefectures and counties, make them take up agriculture and change their customs so as to convert the formerly dangerous nomads into Chinese subjects. This would increase China's population while the region north of the Great Wall would become an empty land. The sinicization of the nomads during the previous three centuries of foreign rule in North China must have been in the minds of the advocates of this policy, but it

⁶³ Barfield 1989, p. 63; p. 91.

was hardly realistic to suppose that China had the power to empty the Mongolian steppe and keep it from filling up again with other nomads from farther away.

2. The opinion that drew a clear line between the Chinese and non-Chinese, insisting on the principle of "having the various states of Xia within and keeping the Yi and Di barbarians without." Holders of this opinion urged that the Turks should be settled outside China under Chinese supervision and their power be kept fragmented. Yan Shigu, Vice Director of the Secretariat (*zhongshu shilang*), maintained that the "barbarians" had always been in the outermost zone and it was impossible to suddenly change their customs. One ought to control them, he said, in accordance with their own customs. He suggested that the Turks should be settled north of the loop of the Yellow River, that different chiefs should be appointed separately for each tribe, from high to low, that all their territories should be separately delineated by the Chinese, and that separate administrations should be set up for each region.

Dou Jing, now Area Commander of Xiazhou, held that since "barbarians" were like animals, they could neither be disciplined by rules nor taught by benevolence and righteousness. China, he said, would not benefit by gaining their allegiance, but in so far as the nomads had submitted, it was open to the court to grant them favors at its discretion, such as giving them the title of "wise king" (*xian wang*, the nomads' own rank), and providing them with wives from the imperial clan. He said that China should divide their land and split up the tribes in order to weaken their power, should control them, but with a loose rein, and should turn them into outer subjects defending Chinese frontiers.

Du Chuke, Supervising Secretary (*jishi zhong*), observed that "barbarians" were difficult to hold by virtue but easy to control by force. If the court accepted their surrender, he said, and settled them south of the Yellow River, they would definitely cause troubles.

Li Baiyao, Vice Minister of Rites (*libu shilang*), recommended that the court take advantage of the Turks' lack of unity and set up chiefs for each separate group, thereby ensuring that no one group would become dominant. Each group would have to continually protect itself against the others and would have no time or strength to challenge China. China should establish a Protectorate in Dingxiang town to supervise them.

All these men, except for Dou Jing, were civil officials with no experience dealing with nomads. Their cautious, hostile and conservative views towards the Turks were no doubt derived from their reading of ear-

lier history and their wish to reestablish a clear distinction between Chinese and "barbarians."

3. The opinion that the Turks should be sinicized gradually. Chief Minister Wen Yanbo, who was once captured and taken to the Turks early in his career, was the main advocate of this point of view. While he rejected the idea that the Turks should be scattered further inside China, probably because he foresaw that local governments would have difficulty controlling them, he suggested that the nomads be settled south of the great loop of the Yellow River and be used as a force for defending Tang, but without at first attempting to change their customs. However, he believed, they could and should gradually be sinicized. Wen Yanbo argued that the Son of Heaven should care for all creatures, show pity on the Turks who had come to surrender, settle them south of the Yellow River and provide them with means of livelihood, so they would not rebel.

He believed that the Chinese could make the settled Turks obey Chinese orders, and teach them righteousness and laws, and that after a few years the court should begin to select Turks for service in the Imperial Bodyguard, just as the Later Han had done with the Southern Xiongnu. The cause of the earlier Turkish rebellion, he believed, was to be traced to the restoration of the Turkish qaghanate by Sui Emperor Wen. Now, if the Chinese let the Turks settle at their own will, either south or north of the Yellow River, their tribes would be scattered and their power split. They could not possibly again become a menace.

4. The opinion expressed by Chief Minister Wei Zheng represented a total rejection of the Turks. He would presumably have agreed with the second opinion. His views were mainly in opposition to Wen's proposed policy of gradual assimilation. Wei argued that assimilation was not possible because though the nomads had human faces they had "animal hearts." They plundered when they were strong and submitted only when weak and then only to regain their strength. He was worried that since the Turks now numbered almost 100,000, within a few years, their population would surely increase, and they would definitely begin to cause trouble again. He cited the sad lessons of earlier times when Western Jin had "barbarians" living inside China. Within a few years, he recalled, the "barbarians" had caused the collapse of the dynasty.⁶⁴

From the historical precedents, the Tang Chinese saw that reset-

⁶⁴ ZGZY 9, pp. 18a-20a; JTS 61, p. 2361; pp. 2369-70; 194A, pp. 5162-3; XTS 91, p. 3782; 95, pp. 3848-9; 215A, pp. 6037-8; ZZTJ 193, pp. 6075-7; THY 73, pp. 1312-4.

tlement of the nomads who had submitted might have two possible results: their rebellion or their assimilation. Wen Yanbo's opinions, drawing on the Han experience, explicitly advocated that the Turks should be brought within the Chinese frontier and gradually sinicized. The final decision-maker, Taizong himself, accepted Wen Yanbo's view. In his arrangements to resettle the Turks, Taizong thus showed some bias in favor of his Chinese side despite his aspiration to have equal regard for all the subjects of his world empire.

The Resettlement of the Turks

The first step in the policy of resettlement was to deprive the Turkish leaders of their native political titles and bring them into the Chinese system of official titles. Taizong did not want to let them retain their own titles, as the Han ruler had done with the Xiongnu title *chanyu*, and the Sui with the Turkish title *qaghan*. Xieli was appointed Prefect (*cishi*) of Guozhou, even though this was an area inhabited by wild animals and most suitable for hunting. When he chose not to go to his prefecture he was given the office of General-in-chief of the Right Guard, with houses and land in the Tang capital. Nevertheless, he was spiritually crushed by memory of his defeat and died in 634.⁶⁵ Tölsh was given a dual appointment as General-in-chief of the Right Guard, and Commandery Prince of Beiping with an annual income from 700 households.⁶⁶ When Taizong gave Tölsh yet another title as Area Commander of Shunzhou in 630, he clearly stated to Tölsh what he intended by the arrangement:

When your affairs came to an extremity, you came to surrender. The reason why I do not make you *qaghan* is just because of the example of Qimin. In changing the former way I wish to give China permanent peace and your clan permanent security. I therefore make you an area commander. You should follow our laws, discipline your people, and not invade and plunder each other at will. If disobedience occurs, [the offender] will be severely punished.⁶⁷

The tribal leaders were all given Chinese military official titles and responsibilities. More than a hundred whose ranks were above the fifth, ac-

⁶⁵ *JTS* 194A, pp. 5159-60; *XTS* 215A, p. 6036; *ZZTJ* 194, p. 6099; p. 6105.

⁶⁶ *JTS* 194A, p. 5161; *XTS* 215A, p. 6038; *ZZTJ* 193, p. 6073; *CFYG* 964, p. 11337. *CFYG* says that the income was from the taxes on 1,000 households.

⁶⁷ *JTS* 194A, p. 5161.

accompanied by as many as a thousand families, settled in Chang'an.⁶⁸

The second step was to resettle all the nomads into the system of "subordinated area commands and prefectures," or "area commands and prefectures controlled by loose rein" (*jimi fuzhou*), the nature of which is discussed below. Surviving records concerning the *jimi* area commands set up to resettle the Turks are too inadequate and too confusing to yield a clear picture. One opinion holds that by 634, the Eastern Turks were divided into two major groups. One was resettled inside the frontiers under four area commands, namely, Shunzhou, Youzhou, Huazhou, and Changzhou. These were scattered south of the Yellow River in the area from Youzhou (in modern Hebei) to Lingzhou (in modern Ningxia). Another group was outside the frontiers under six prefectures, and all of them were supervised by the Area Commands of Dingxiang and Yunzhong, both north of the Yellow River. Dou Jing, well experienced in Turkish affairs, was appointed Commissioner-in-chief (*dashi*) of Ningshuo to take charge of the Turks.⁶⁹

The potential threat posed by the pacified Turks was sensed by some Chinese officials right from the beginning. Despite Taizong's decision, some continued to advocate that Tang found a Turkish state north of the Yellow River instead of settling the Turks inside China. Wen Yanbo insisted, however, that since Tang had already accepted the Turks, it would be a pity to send them away without reason. Apparently Taizong accepted Wen's advice. Nevertheless, opposition did not stop, and the debate about the proper way to deal with the Turks and other non-Chinese who had surrendered went on.⁷⁰

Adjustments in the Turkish Settlement

The policy of resettling the Turks met with its first setback in 639, nine years after it started. That year the younger brother of Tölish Qaghan, who had joined the Imperial Bodyguard after submitting to Tang, made an attempt to attack Taizong. He conspired with Tölish's son, who became the Area Commander of Shunzhou after Tölish. Though it ended in failure, the incident aroused universal opposition at court to the resettlement of the Turks south of the Yellow River. Taizong also voiced his deep regret for

⁶⁸ *JTS* 194A, p. 5163; *XTS* 215A, p. 6038; *THY* 73, p. 1311. *ZZTJ* 193 (p. 6078) says that almost 10,000 families settled in Chang'an. That number seems too large.

⁶⁹ Iwami 1987, pp. 510-6. For a different opinion, see Zhang Qun 1986, pp. 121-2.

⁷⁰ *JTS* 61, p. 2361.

having neglected Wei Zheng's warning. After reiterating the thesis that the Chinese were like roots while the "barbarians" were like leaves, he changed policy. All the Turks were to be moved north of the Yellow River with headquarters set up in Dingxiang.⁷¹ They were to be treated as outer subjects, in essence, as a client state, responsible for the defense of the Chinese frontiers. They were placed under Ashina Simo of the Turkish royal clan, the former Area Commander of Huazhou. He was granted the royal surname, Li, and the title of qaghan. The titles of Wise King of the Left and Wise King of the Right, which were titles used by the nomads, were conferred on other Turkish chiefs.

This new arrangement was also partly motivated by a desire to check the power of the Xueyantuo. With the defeat of the Eastern Turks, the Xueyantuo took their place as the dominant power on the steppe land. When Simo did not want to move because he feared an attack from the Xueyantuo, Taizong had a letter sent to the Xueyantuo stating that they were to occupy the territory north of the Gobi Desert, while the Turks should stay south of it, and that Tang was ready to come to the aid of the Turks in case any attacks were made on them by the Xueyantuo. Simo then moved out to the north of the Yellow River in 641.⁷² In 640, Tang reestablished the position of the Commissioner-in-chief of Ningshuo, with responsibility for Turkish affairs.⁷³ In 641, the Xueyantuo crossed the Gobi desert and attacked Simo. Tang sent troops to the rescue and succeeded in forcing Yi'nan to make peace with Simo.⁷⁴

In 644 Simo's people asked to be allowed to move back to the Ordos region because Simo was unable to resist the attacks from the Xueyantuo, and could not maintain control over his people. Disregarding the objections of his ministers, Taizong again resettled them inside China, claiming that the "barbarians" should be treated as members of the Chinese family. He made a point of asking Chu Suiliang to record his exact words in the court diary.⁷⁵ Taizong's real motive may have been to preserve Li Simo's tribe so that they could continue to function as a force defending the Tang frontier.

⁷¹ Iwami 1987, p. 515.

⁷² *JTS* 194A, pp. 5163-4; *XTS* 215A, pp. 6039-40; *ZZTJ* 195, pp. 6148-9; 196, p. 6165.

⁷³ Dou Jing was appointed to this position in 630, but when he moved on to another post, the position appears to have been abolished. *ZZTJ* 195, p. 6154; *CFYG* 991, p. 11638.

⁷⁴ *JTS* 199B, pp. 5344-5; *XTS* 217B, pp. 6135-6; *ZZTJ* 196, pp. 6170-2.

⁷⁵ *JTS* 194A, pp. 5164-5; *XTS* 215A, p. 6040; *ZZTJ* 197, pp. 6215-6.

The Conquest of the Xueyantuo in 646

With the defeat of the Eastern Turks, the Xueyantuo grew to be an important nomadic power on the steppe lands. Before moving Simo and his people north of the Yellow River, Taizong had already decided on a divide and rule policy to weaken the Xueyantuo. In 638 he despatched an embassy to confer the title of "minor qaghan" on the two sons of Yi'nan Qaghan, and gave them each drums and banners, "ostensibly to show favor but in reality to divide their power."⁷⁶

Then, when Yi'nan in 640 requested a marriage contract with Tang, Taizong refused after a protracted discussion and careful consideration. Fang Xuanling, Taizong's eminent Chief Minister, suggested that Tang consent on the grounds that the dynasty had not yet fully settled its frontier problems. Taizong initially agreed. At this time Qibi Heli, a former chief of the Tiele who had submitted to Tang in 632 and been appointed a general, was forced by his followers to go over to the Xueyantuo. Tang sent an envoy to the Xueyantuo with the promise of a Chinese princess in marriage in exchange for Qibi, and Qibi Heli was as a consequence returned.

But soon after he returned Qibi strongly opposed the marriage to the Xueyantuo, arguing that Yi'nan was already in a weak position, and that by refusing his request Tang could further weaken him so that there would later be an opportunity to defeat the Xueyantuo. He suggested that Tang ask Yi'nan to come to court to receive the bride personally. Tang should decline to go through with the marriage if Yi'nan refused to come to court, for Qibi was sure that Yi'nan would not dare to expose himself by coming to China.

Chu Suiliang, Grand Master of Remonstrance, on the other hand, insisted that Taizong should keep his promise, not only because it was a moral principle that an emperor should keep faith but also because history had shown that there was no way for China to eliminate the nomadic peoples.

Chu was not alone in his opinion, but Taizong preferred to accept Qibi's suggestion. The emperor stated that the policy of marriage alliance was to be used only as an expedient to further Chinese aims; the Xueyantuo ruler's submissiveness was simply because he had recently become ruler of various tribes who were not of his own clan and therefore wanted

⁷⁶ Cen Zhongmian 1958, pp. 216-7. He is of the opinion that Tang conferred on Yi'nan's two sons the titles of qaghan and yabgu, respectively.

to borrow Chinese authority to strengthen his own position. If Tang stopped the marriage, the various tribes would know that the Chinese had abandoned Yi'nan and would rebel against him. Taizong then declined to go through with the marriage on the pretext that Yi'nan had not prepared enough betrothal gifts and had not promised to come personally to receive his bride.

Four hundred years later, Sima Guang severely criticized Taizong for this breach of promise and concluded that even though Taizong eventually destroyed the Xueyantuo, it was shameful to rely on one's strength to break a promise.⁷⁷ As an astute politician, a skillful military leader with a good grasp of the nomadic situation, Taizong knew very well that policies based on peace and moral principles simply did not work in most cases in international affairs, where the decisive factor was the balance of power.

Tang's refusal of a marriage worked effectively to weaken Yi'nan's power. Seven years later, in 645, he died and was succeeded by his son, Duomi Qaghan. While Taizong was occupied with his Korean expeditions Duomi made incursions into the Chinese frontier regions, and there was a danger that Koguryō would attempt to bribe the Xueyantuo into an alliance.⁷⁸ This made Tang determine to eliminate the Xueyantuo once and for all. In 646, when Duomi's brutal rule provoked an uprising by other Tiele tribes including the Uighurs, Pugu (Buqu) and Tongluo (Tongra), Tang immediately seized the opportunity to despatch Chinese, Turkish and other non-Chinese troops to attack the Xueyantuo.

When Duomi was killed by the Uighurs, the Xueyantuo qaghanate collapsed. Taizong went to Lingzhou to encourage the troops and to entice the submission of Uighur and other Tiele tribes to forestall any chance that one of them would replace the Xueyantuo as the dominant power on the steppe. Through their envoys, the chieftains of these tribes expressed the wish to be subjects of the Heavenly Qaghan.⁷⁹

Taizong was determined to subjugate all the nomads. In 649 he ordered an attack on an Eastern Turkish tribe under Chebi Qaghan, who had been attached to the Xueyantuo after 630, but since had become indepen-

⁷⁷ *JTS* 80, pp. 2732-3; 109, pp. 3291-2; 199B, pp. 5345-6; *XTS* 105, p. 4027; 110, pp. 4118-19; 217B, pp. 6136-7; *ZZTJ* 196, pp. 6179-80; 197, pp. 6199-202.

⁷⁸ *JTS* 199B, p. 5346; *XTS* 217B, pp. 6137-8; *ZZTJ* 198, pp. 6227-8.

⁷⁹ *JTS* 199B, pp. 5346-8; *XTS* 217B, pp. 6138-9; *ZZTJ* 198, pp. 6232-3; pp. 6236-40.

dent and strong. The Tang attack succeeded in the following year.⁸⁰

Resettlement of the Xueyantuo and Other Tiele Tribes

In accordance with his grand design for a universal empire, Taizong in 647 established six area commands and seven prefectures for the Xueyantuo and other Tiele people on their own territory, with their chieftains as area commanders and prefects.⁸¹ As in the Chinese bureaucratic system, the offices of administrator and assistant were also set up for the Tiele. These institutions were placed under the administration of the Protectorate of Yanran north of the great loop of the Yellow River with a Chinese as Protector-general. Over sixty relay stations were set up along the route stretching from south of the Uighurs to the Protectorate of Yanran. Annual payments in the form of marten pelts were levied as tax.⁸²

It should be noted that instead of moving the non-Chinese who had submitted inside the frontier, Taizong established a Chinese administrative system in their own areas. In any case, it would have been physically impossible to move so many of them inside China, and after 639, when the Turks rebelled against Tang, there was not much political will at court to adopt so radical a policy for dealing with the nomads. Even when the Uighurs were brought under the *jimi* area command-prefecture system, they continued to use the title of qaghan. The Chinese were aware of this fact, but chose not to do anything about it.⁸³

The aim of the Chinese resettlement of these nomads was to keep them peaceful under the Chinese *jimi fuzhou* system and to use them in military campaigns. In 648, when an internal conflict occurred between the Uighur chief Tumidu and his two pro-Turkish nephews, both sons-in-law of Chebi Qaghan, the Vice Protector-general of Yanran had one of the nephews executed. Fearful of the disintegration of the Uighurs, Taizong sent Cui Dunli, the Minister of War, experienced in frontier affairs, as a pacification missionary to the Uighurs. Tumidu's son was appointed General-in-chief, great *iltäbär* (*da silifa*) and Area Commander of Hanhai, succeeding his father, who had been killed by the pro-Turkish party.⁸⁴ After

⁸⁰ *JTS* 194A, p. 5156; *XTS* 215A, pp. 6041-2; *ZZTJ* 199, p. 6265.

⁸¹ For their names, see Cen Zhongmian 1958, pp. 1066-73.

⁸² *JTS* 195, p. 5196; 199B, pp. 5348-9; *XTS* 217A, pp. 6112-3; 217B, pp. 6139-42; p. 6145; *ZZTJ* 198, pp. 6244-5; Ma Changshou 1957, pp. 57-8.

⁸³ *JTS* 195, p. 5196; *XTS* 217A, p. 6113; *ZZTJ* 198, p. 6245.

⁸⁴ *JTS* 81, p. 2747; 195, p. 5197; *XTS* 106, p. 4044; 217A, p. 6113; *ZZTJ* 199, p. 6262; p. 6263.

resolving their own crisis, the Uighurs joined several Tang frontier expeditions in 649 and during Gaozong's reign.⁸⁵

Tang Expansion into the Western Regions

At the beginning of Taizong's reign, the Western Turkish qaghanate was divided into a number of contending groups. Each of the various rulers tried to obtain Tang assistance to strengthen himself, but Taizong tried to keep friendly relations with them all. Because of their internal political instability and power struggles, the Western Turks did not pose much of a direct threat to Tang, but collectively they managed to maintain their control over the Western Regions.⁸⁶

Right after the conquest of the Eastern Turks in 630, Taizong appointed Li Daliang, the Area Commander of Liangzhou, as commissioner to attract the submission of the Western Turkish tribes who were scattered around Hami in the Western Regions. He was to accomplish this by providing them with food supplies. Li objected in a memorial, saying that the Chinese people were like the roots of the empire but the "barbarians" were like branches and leaves, and that disturbing the root in an attempt to strengthen the branches and leaves had never been a successful basis on which to seek long-term peace. He criticized the Han and Sui attempts to subjugate the Western Regions, and also disagreed with the settlement policy as it was directed toward the Eastern Turks.

Some accounts state that Taizong accepted Li's analysis.⁸⁷ The *Zhenguan Zhengyao*, on the other hand, says the opposite,⁸⁸ which seems correct, for in the same year, Hami, formerly a Sui commandery then under the Turks, submitted to Tang. Taizong established the prefecture of Xiyizhou there, later changed to Yizhou.⁸⁹ Control over Hami opened for Tang a gateway to the Western Regions.

However, Taizong was not in a hurry to expand in that direction. During early Tang, the king of Gaochang kept up a friendly relationship with China and acted as informant to China about other oasis states. But the king gradually began to display a quite strong tendency toward independence. He developed a close relationship with the Western Turks, which

⁸⁵ See Table 3.

⁸⁶ *JTS* 194B, pp. 5182-5; *XTS* 215B, pp. 6057-60.

⁸⁷ *TD* 197, p. 1071; *JTS* 62, pp. 2388-9; *XTS* 99, pp. 3911-2; *ZZTJ* 193, pp. 6081-2; *THY* 73, pp. 1311-2. *THY* and *TD* do not say whether Taizong accepted it or not.

⁸⁸ *ZGZY* 9, pp. 20a-21b.

⁸⁹ *XTS* 215A, p. 6036; *ZZTJ* 193, p. 6082.

is described in the work of Xuanzang, the famous Tang monk then traveling through Central Asia,⁹⁰ and he allied himself with the Western Turks in an attack on Hami and another oasis state, detained Chinese who had fled first to the Turks and then to Gaochang, blocked the way of the envoys of other oasis states to present tribute to Tang, and sent an envoy to the Xueyantuo asking their qaghan not to be subject to Tang.

When the Xueyantuo expressed the wish to guide the Chinese in an attack on Gaochang, Taizong agreed. Ignoring strong opposition from many court ministers Taizong ordered an expedition against Gaochang in 639. The Eastern Turks, the Qibi tribe of the Tiele, and Yanqi (Karashahr), a state in the Western Regions, joined the campaign.

Following the success of this campaign in 640, Taizong established a prefecture—Xizhou—in Gaochang and the Protectorate of Anxi (*Anxi duhu fu*), the first of a series of protectorates established during the Tang dynasty, with more than 1,000 Chinese troops and ex-convicts stationed there. At the same time the garrison of the Western Turks in Futu town (in Jimsa) surrendered to Tang, and Futu was renamed Tingzhou.⁹¹

Wei Zheng and Chu Suiliang objected strongly to the decision on the grounds that a great number of Chinese troops and supplies would be needed to keep control there, and China would not gain any benefit from the expense.⁹² Both were typical Confucian scholar-officials and both held fast to the conservative view that a line must be drawn between Chinese and non-Chinese. Taizong ignored them. He seems to have understood clearly that Gaochang occupied too strategically important a location for gaining access to the Western Regions to be neglected.

Now that Tang began to press into the Western Regions, it encountered the Western Turks directly. In 642, the Turks attacked Yizhou. Guo Xiaoke, the Protector-general of Anxi and the Area Commander of Liangzhou, drove the Turks back. Taizong expressed regret that he had not listened to Chu Suiliang at the time of the establishment of Yizhou.⁹³ But if Tang was to defeat the Western Turks, it simply had to extend its influence into the Western Regions, and once it was there, it had to deal with the problems that arose.

In 644 Guo Xiaoke proposed an attack on Karashahr since its king

⁹⁰ Lin Enxian 1988, p. 306.

⁹¹ *JTS* 198, pp. 5294-6; *XTS* 221A, pp. 6221-3; *ZZTJ* 195, pp. 6146-7; pp. 6154-6.

⁹² *JTS* 80, pp. 2736-7; *ZZTJ* 195, pp. 6155-6; *THY* 95, pp. 1702-3.

⁹³ *JTS* 194B, p. 5185; *XTS* 215B, pp. 6059-60; *ZZTJ* 196, pp. 6177-9.

had made contact with the Western Turks. Taizong agreed. Although Guo had a success, after he left, Karashahr turned back to the Western Turks.⁹⁴

In 646 when the Western Turks asked for a marriage, Taizong granted the request on condition that the Turks concede as betrothal gifts the five oasis states: Kucha, Khotan, Shule (Kashgar), Zhujubo (Karghalik) and Congling (Tashkurgan), then under Turkish control. No marriage, however, was arranged.⁹⁵ In 647 Taizong ordered a campaign against Kucha. The Chinese expeditionary force was under the command of Ashina Sheer, a former Turkish chief who had submitted to Tang in 635, been married to a Tang princess and appointed a general.⁹⁶ Troops from Anxi and contingents from the Tiele, the Eastern Turks, the Tuyuhun and the Tibetans, who had just contracted their first marriage alliance with Tang, also joined the expedition. In 648 Kucha was captured.

Karashahr was also defeated by the Tang armies. The king of Khotan sent envoys to Tang to give his allegiance.⁹⁷ In the same year Ashina Helu seized a chief of the Western Turks and submitted to Tang. Taizong thereupon resettled Helu's people in Tingzhou and made him an area commander.⁹⁸

The seat of the Protectorate of Anxi was moved farther west to Kucha.⁹⁹ Some sources say that to consolidate the Chinese foothold in the Western Regions Ashina Sheer established garrisons in Kucha, Kashgar, Suiye (Tokmak) and Khotan, thereafter known as the Four Garrisons. Due to the conflicting and confusing accounts in the sources, the issue of which oasis states constituted the Four Garrisons and the dates when Tang won and lost control over them is controversial.¹⁰⁰ In any case we can say that by the end of Taizong's reign Tang influence had penetrated into the heart of the Western Regions.

Gaozong's Conquest of the Western Turks

Soon after the death of Taizong in 649, Ashina Helu broke away from Chinese control and set up a regime that brought under his authority

⁹⁴ *JTS* 198, p. 5302; *XTS* 221A, p. 6229; *ZZTJ* 197, pp. 6211-3.

⁹⁵ *JTS* 194B, p. 5185; *XTS* 215B, p. 6060; *ZZTJ* 198, p. 6236; *THY* 94, p. 1694. *THY* records the request as in 645 whereas *ZZTJ* has it in 646.

⁹⁶ *JTS* 109, p. 3288; *XTS* 110, p. 4115.

⁹⁷ Ise 1968, pp. 185-7; pp. 197-8.

⁹⁸ *JTS* 194B, p. 5186; *XTS* 215B, p. 6060; *ZZTJ* 199, pp. 6256-7; p. 6265.

⁹⁹ Ise 1968, pp. 187-90.

¹⁰⁰ Ise 1968, pp. 190-1.

the different tribes of the Western Turks and some oasis states in the Western Regions. His power was also felt in the Tarim Basin and extended beyond the Pamirs into present Afghanistan. Helu also made incursions into Tingzhou. In 651 the court had to abandon the Four Garrisons and move the seat of the Protectorate of Anxi back to Xizhou.¹⁰¹

Gaozong, however, was determined to continue his father's forceful foreign policy. He sent three expeditionary armies, including Uighur units, to the Western Regions. Finally, in 657, Tang succeeded in defeating Helu, who was captured and died soon after. Two years later, when Zhenzhu, a Western Turkish leader, was killed by Ashina Mishe, who had earlier submitted to Tang, the Western Turks were decisively defeated by Tang.¹⁰²

The victory brought the Western Turks and the states in Central Asia which had formerly been subjects of the Western Turks under the subordinated area command and into the prefecture systems. Between 658 and 661, over a hundred identifiable area commands and prefectures were set up. The vast area under this Tang administration covered Central Asia, reaching as far as the borders of Persia.¹⁰³ For a brief period in Gaozong's time, Chinese suzerainty covered more territory than at any other time in Chinese history.

To consolidate Tang administration over so large an area, the seat of the Protectorate of Anxi was again moved from Xizhou west to Kucha in 658, from which Tang authorities supervised all the oasis states. The Protectorates of Kunling and Mengchi were established to supervise the Western Turks.¹⁰⁴ Gaozong appointed as their Protectors-general two formerly rival Turkish leaders, Ashina Mishe and Ashina Buzhen, both of whom had submitted to Tang earlier, during the reign of Taizong. The title of qaghan was conferred on both. Both were entrusted, along with a Chinese minister, with the power to bestow Chinese official titles on the tribal chieftains in the protectorates.¹⁰⁵ In 662 the Protectorate of Jinshan was set up in Tingzhou to consolidate Tang control over the Western Turks.

From 670 onward Tang control of the Western Regions was con-

¹⁰¹ Ise 1968, pp. 201-4.

¹⁰² *JTS* 194B, pp. 5186-7; *XTS* 215B, pp. 6060-4; *ZZTJ* 199, pp. 6273-7; 200, pp. 6301-2; pp. 6305-7; p. 6311.

¹⁰³ This is according to Chavannes 1969, pp. 55-8; pp. 192-202. See also Cen Zhongmian 1958, *Xi Tujue Shiliao Buque ji Kaozheng*, pp. 139-53; Ise 1968, pp. 207-16.

¹⁰⁴ Chavannes 1969, p. 192; Ise 1968, pp. 207-16.

¹⁰⁵ *JTS* 194B, pp. 5187-90; *XTS* 215B, p. 6063; *ZZTJ* 200, pp. 6307-8.

tested by the Tibetans (Chapter 7). Following a period of Tibetan control, the Protectorate of Beiting was set up in 702, with its headquarters in Tingzhou.¹⁰⁶

The System of *jimi fuzhou* and the Protectorate

As we have seen, the Tang dynasty established the *jimi fuzhou* or subordinated area commands and prefectures to organize the non-Chinese who had submitted to Tang into the empire's administrative apparatus. This arrangement had its model in the Han dynasty when the Chinese government brought the non-Chinese who had submitted to China under the Chinese bureaucratic system in three ways: 1) by establishing dependent states in which the non-Chinese maintained their traditional way of life under their own chiefs; 2) by organizing them directly under the Chinese "commandery" (*jun*) and "district" (*xian*) system, with a *xian* to be called *dao* in case there were non-Chinese under its jurisdiction; 3) by organizing the non-Chinese under *bu*, a military subdivision of a commandery; it was usually frontier commanderies that had such subdivisions. Over time, many *shuguo* and *bu* were transformed into *jun*.¹⁰⁷

The Tang establishment of the *jimi fuzhou* started in Gaozu's time. For example, Shenzhou was placed over the Mohe tribes in the northeast and Nanningzhou, Kunzhou, Lizhou etc. over aboriginal tribes in the southwest.¹⁰⁸ After Taizong's conquest of the Turks, more *jimi fuzhou* were established. The Tang *jimi* system was more rationalized than the parallel Han system and covered a larger area. Under the *jimi* system, the non-Chinese, like the Chinese, were organized into districts, several of which were placed under a prefecture, and in strategic areas, prefectures were in turn attached to an area command. Tang systematized the practice by designating these non-Chinese districts, prefectures and area commands with the name "control by loose rein" (*jimi*) to clearly distinguish them from regular Chinese ones and to make explicit the fact that China would not impose direct control over the *jimi* institutions.¹⁰⁹ At its height the *jimi fuzhou* numbered at least eight hundred and fifty-six in all frontier regions.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁶ ZZTJ 207, p. 6561; Ise 1968, pp. 237-9.

¹⁰⁷ Yü Ying-shih 1967, pp. 70-8. For *shuguo*, see also Zhang Qun 1990, pp. 25-31.

¹⁰⁸ XTS 43B, p. 1127; p. 1140. For a survey of the Tang *jimi fuzhou*, see also Lin Chaomin 1985.

¹⁰⁹ XTS 43B.

¹¹⁰ XTS 43B, p. 1120; THY 70, p. 1232.

While the regular Chinese area commands and prefectures were directly under the central government, the *jimi fuzhou* in the frontier regions were placed under “protectorates” (*duhu fu*), the highest office in charge of the resettled non-Chinese. Copying the Han institution of the Protectorate of the Western Regions, Taizong set up the Protectorate of Anxi in 640 for administration of the Western Regions, and the Protectorate of Yanran in 647 for the control over the Uighurs and other Tiele tribes. The protectorate combined civil and military administration, and had a civilian staff backed by a standing army to supervise the non-Chinese prefectures and area commands.

It was under the command of a Protector-general, who was either a Chinese or a non-Chinese who had submitted and was serving in the Chinese office. He was to “be in charge of the various barbarians, to pacify them, to take punitive actions, to keep record of their meritorious conduct, to punish their failings and to have overall control of the affairs of the protectorate.”¹¹¹

The protectorate did not rely totally on military force to maintain control. Rather it followed the principle of “using barbarians to control barbarians” and relied on the non-Chinese local chiefs to exercise most of the control.¹¹²

The *jimi fuzhou* system continued, with improvements, during Gaozong’s reign. In 650, Chebi Qaghan, who had ruled the remnants of the Eastern Turks, was defeated and Gaozong resettled his people under the *jimi fuzhou* system in the area of the Ötükän Mountains. The court established the Protectorate of Hanhai in addition to Yanran to govern all the *jimi fuzhou* over the Eastern Turks including the Tiele.¹¹³ From then on “the northern frontiers were free of problems for over thirty years,” the Chinese sources claim.¹¹⁴

After the conquest of the Western Turks, many more *jimi fuzhou* were established. Obviously now the area to be defended was greatly enlarged, and Chinese control lacked sufficient military force to back it up. Yet Gaozong and Empress Wu made efforts to maintain the *jimi* system. In 660 the Xi and Khitan in the northeast rebelled, and were suppressed.¹¹⁵

¹¹¹ XTS 49B, p. 1317; Wechsler 1979, p. 226.

¹¹² Hino 1984, p. 23.

¹¹³ The names of the two protectorates are confusing in Chinese sources. This is according to Cen Zhongmian 1958, p. 270.

¹¹⁴ JTS 194A, p. 5166.

¹¹⁵ ZZTJ 200, p. 6320.

From 659 to 663, the Sijie, Uighurs, Tongra, Buqu and other Tiele people in the north also rebelled, but all were suppressed.¹¹⁶

After the final suppression of these rebellions in 663, Tang adjusted the system of protectorates to strengthen its control over the nomads. It moved the Protectorate of Yanran to north of the Gobi and changed its name to Hanhai to exercise a close watch over the Uighurs and other Tiele tribes; later, in 669, the name was changed again to Anbei. The former Protectorate of Hanhai was moved to Yunzhong (present Tuoketuo county, Inner Mongolia) and was renamed Yunzhong to exercise control over the Tujue Turks south of the Gobi, and in 664 it was raised in status to become the Grand Protectorate of Chanyu with a Tang prince as its nominal Protector-general.¹¹⁷

By early in the eighth century, a comprehensive system of protectorates had been established in a loose chain surrounding China's frontiers. Altogether there were six protectorates of major importance plus several others of less importance. The six were Anxi (mainly for dealing the Western Turks, the Western Regions and Tibet), Beiting (set over the Türgish of the Western Turks in the northwest), Chanyu (ruling over the Eastern Turks), Anbei (placed over the Uighurs and other Tiele nomads in the north), Andong (over the Koreans, Khitan, Xi and Mohe in the northeast) and Annan (to rule over the non-Chinese in the south).¹¹⁸ The Protectorate of Annan was formerly the Area Command of Jiaozhou which was promoted to the rank of protectorate in 679.¹¹⁹ Before the rise of the Nanzhao kingdom in present Yunnan during mid-Tang, China's southern frontiers were relatively peaceful.

The *jimi* institutions were set up with the purpose of pacifying and eventually sinicizing the submitted non-Chinese. Those on the northwestern frontiers had the additional task of "defending the frontiers."¹²⁰ From 634 to 669, the submitted Eastern Turks and the Tiele joined Tang military campaigns against the Tuyuhun, Gaochang, Koguryō, Kucha, Xueyantuo, Xi and Khitan, and the remnants of both Eastern and Western Turks.¹²¹

¹¹⁶ *JTS* 195, pp. 5197-8; *XTS* 217B, p. 6140; *ZZTJ* 200, p. 6319; p. 6322; pp. 6327-9; 201, p. 6333.

¹¹⁷ Cen Zhongmian 1958, pp. 285-6; p. 1070; Lai 1986, pp. 96-8.

¹¹⁸ Zhang Qun 1955.

¹¹⁹ *THY* 73, p. 1320.

¹²⁰ *JTS* 121, p. 3477.

¹²¹ See Table 3. One would assume that there would have been many more occasions when the nomads participated in Chinese military activities which are not recorded.

During Taizong's and Gaozong's reigns, the nomadic area commands not only played an active role in Tang campaigns, but also formed an important defense line, acting both as sentries and as buffer areas within the Tang frontier system.¹²² The oasis states in the Western Regions were also expected to participate in Tang battles or to provide provisions for Tang military expeditions.¹²³

The *jimi fuzhou* differed from Chinese area commands and prefectures in that the non-Chinese were governed autonomously by their own chieftains, who were appointed area commanders and prefects. Though these were offices in the Tang bureaucratic system, the appointments were hereditary. Normally, the registers of the tribute or taxation owed and the household census records were not sent up to the Ministry of Revenue.¹²⁴ Those with noble titles, such as commandery prince, were given an annual income comprised of the taxes from a fixed number of households. That the Chinese often provided these officials with supplies of food is evident from Taizong's edict of 639 which says that the Chinese conferred offices on the Turks, chose fertile land for them, established commanderies and districts to settle them in, opened up granaries to relieve their hunger and cold, and sent people around to inquire about their grievances.¹²⁵

To perform the bureaucratic duty of supervision, the Chinese sometimes intervened in the internal affairs of the settled people. When the Uighur tribe was in danger of attack from the Xueyantuo remnants in 648, the Chinese provided military and political assistance.¹²⁶ And when the Uighurs were endangered by an internal conflict in 648, Taizong, fearful of the disintegration of the Uighurs' dependent state, intervened to support the pro-Tang ruler.¹²⁷

That the Turks in the *jimi fuzhou* were subject to Chinese laws is shown in Taizong's statement in a speech to the former Turkish qaghan that the Turks were to follow Chinese laws, discipline themselves, and not

¹²² Kang Le 1979, pp. 44-54.

¹²³ Ise 1968, p. 531-2.

¹²⁴ XTS 43B, p. 1119. Hucker gives a brief definition of the *jimi fu-hou*, which shows its basic nature: "Subordinated Prefecture, a category of administrative units into which submissive foreign and aboriginal groups were commonly organized to fit into the Chinese governmental hierarchy, usually headed by hereditary native chiefs and subordinated to a Chinese Area Command (*tu-tu fu*). See his 1985, p. 132.

¹²⁵ CFYG 964, pp. 11338-9.

¹²⁶ CFYG 973, p. 11432.

¹²⁷ JTS 195, p. 5197; XTS 217A, p. 6113; ZZTJ 199, p. 6262; p. 6263.

invade and plunder each other. If disobedience occurred, Taizong said, the offender would be punished.¹²⁸ In 648, Taizong personally settled a dispute among the nomadic people over runaway horses.¹²⁹

The non-Chinese under the *jimi* system were subject to taxation, corvée labor, and payment of tribute just like the Chinese, although in a less regular and systematic way and at lower rates. In the surviving fragments of the Tang Taxation Statutes (*fuyi ling*) are articles concerning the non-Chinese. These items were applicable to non-Chinese both in the *jimi fuzhou* and in the regular prefectures, and contain no specific item concerning taxation of the nomads, the Turks and the Uighurs.¹³⁰ Nonetheless we do read that in 644 the Turks and people of Gaochang who were attached to the various Chinese prefectures were granted tax exemption.¹³¹ In 647, when the Uighur and other Tiele tribes submitted to Tang and were brought into the area commands and prefectures system, an annual payment in the form of marten pelts was imposed as tax.¹³² The prefectures and area commands in the Western Regions under the Protectorate of Anxi paid tribute rather than taxes until the outbreak of the An Lushan rebellion in 755.¹³³ It is assumed that the *jimi fuzhou* in Eastern Turkestan would have paid taxes.¹³⁴

Some prefectures changed their status from *jimi* to regular and vice versa. For example, Weizhou (in present Sichuan) was first set up in 618 for the submitted Qiang people, and then in 627 was abolished because of a Qiang rebellion. A year later, at the request of the Qiang chieftain, Weizhou was again set up and brought under the control of the Area Command of Maozhou as a *jimi* prefecture. In 665 it was promoted to be a regular prefecture. After the suppression of the Qiang rebellion in 677 Weizhou again became a *jimi* prefecture until 687. Then it again became a regular prefecture.¹³⁵

Some *jimi fuzhou*, such as the Area Command of Bosi, and those

¹²⁸ JTS 194A, p. 5161.

¹²⁹ JTS 3, p. 61

¹³⁰ These fragments are collected and translated in Twitchett 1970, pp. 142-5.

¹³¹ XTS 2, p. 43.

¹³² XTS 217A, p. 6113; ZZTJ 198, p. 6245. Some modern scholars do not think of this as a tax, but rather as a form of tribute. See Lin Chaomin 1985, p. 55; Yang Shengmin 1991, p. 61.

¹³³ JTS 40, p. 1650.

¹³⁴ Ise 1968, p. 531.

¹³⁵ JTS 41, p. 1690; XTS 42, p. 1085.

which were set up after the conquest of the Western Turks in 659, were just nominally under Chinese control, a control soon weakened by competition from the Tibetans.¹³⁶ Tang also set up some prefectures in which non-Chinese were administered by Chinese officials. For example, the six Hu (Sogdian) prefectures, Lu, Li, Han, Sai, Yi, and Qi, which were organized in 679 for submitted non-Chinese, all had Chinese as prefects and were not included in the section of the *jimi zhou* of the *Xin Tangshu*.¹³⁷

From the time it made its claim to replace Sui, the dynastic house of Tang was faced with the reborn Eastern Turkish empire as well as with Chinese generals as powerful as the Tang founder who had allied themselves with the Turks. Faced with this awkward situation Gaozu demonstrated a remarkably pragmatic and flexible attitude. Soon after rising against Sui, he sought the aid of the Turks, as well as the Tuyuhun, through provision of large subsidies, and throughout his reign he followed a policy of appeasement towards the Eastern Turks so as to deter them from raiding and so as to weaken their support for his rivals. Meanwhile, he made peace with the Western Turks and even attempted, albeit unsuccessfully, to win them over in his struggle against their Eastern cousins. His policy won time for the newly established dynasty to consolidate its frontier defenses and gradually go over to a course of empire building.

Taizong finally succeeded in conquering the Eastern Turks in 630. The Tang success was first of all due to the internal problems faced by the Eastern Turkish rulership: rebellions of the Xueyantuo and other subjects, power struggles around the qaghan and natural disasters, all of which severely weakened their unity and hence their power. Taizong, himself a great military leader with clear knowledge of the nomadic situation, waited for the decline of the Turks to reach a critical level while making alliance with Xieli Qaghan's rival, Tölsh, and the Xueyantuo. The final defeat of Xieli was swift and decisive.

Taizong next took steps, using the strategy of "divide and rule," to prevent the Xueyantuo from consolidating their position as the new power on the steppes. Taizong's policy of expansion into the Western Regions was carried out step by step despite strong opposition at court from Wei Zheng and Chu Suiliang, and was eventually completed by Gaozong's

¹³⁶ Chavannes 1969, pp. 192-203.

¹³⁷ *XTS* 37, pp. 974-5.

conquest of the Western Turks in 659.

After conquering the Eastern Turks, Taizong assumed the title of Heavenly Qaghan to express his wish to be looked upon not merely as the Chinese Son of Heaven but also as the universal ruler of the peoples of the steppes, a claim that was taken over and continued by his successors. The non-Chinese background of the Tang house and the non-Chinese social and cultural legacy that Tang inherited from its non-Chinese maternal ancestors enabled Taizong to conceive a vision of world empire in which Chinese and nomads were equal subjects.

Nevertheless he also accepted Wen Yanbo's concept of using the *jimi fuzhou*, or subordinated area commands and prefectures, system as a way of gradually converting the nomads to Chinese ways. This system, with its over-arching protectorates, was extended under Gaozong and Empress Wu. In practical terms, the *jimi* institutions provided China with a frontier defense line, and the non-Chinese incorporated into that defense line played an important role in Tang frontier campaigns.

These institutions could not, however, always maintain permanently effective control over the nomads. As we will see in chapter eight, the Turks eventually broke away from the Tang administration and restored their empire.