

Chapter 7

Competition Between Tang and Tibet Before the An Lushan Rebellion

While the presence of nomadic powers on the northern frontier was a perennial problem for China from Han until Ming, the rise of a powerful kingdom in Tibet was a one-time phenomenon. During its period of strength from early in the seventh century to about 840 Tibet posed a very serious problem to China, as a direct threat to the security of its frontier as well as to its ideological claims of superiority over its neighbors. Before the An Lushan rebellion, Tang relations with the Tibetan kingdom focused first of all on competition for control of the Tuyuhun kingdom, then on the Western Regions and the southwest.

The Tibetan Challenge

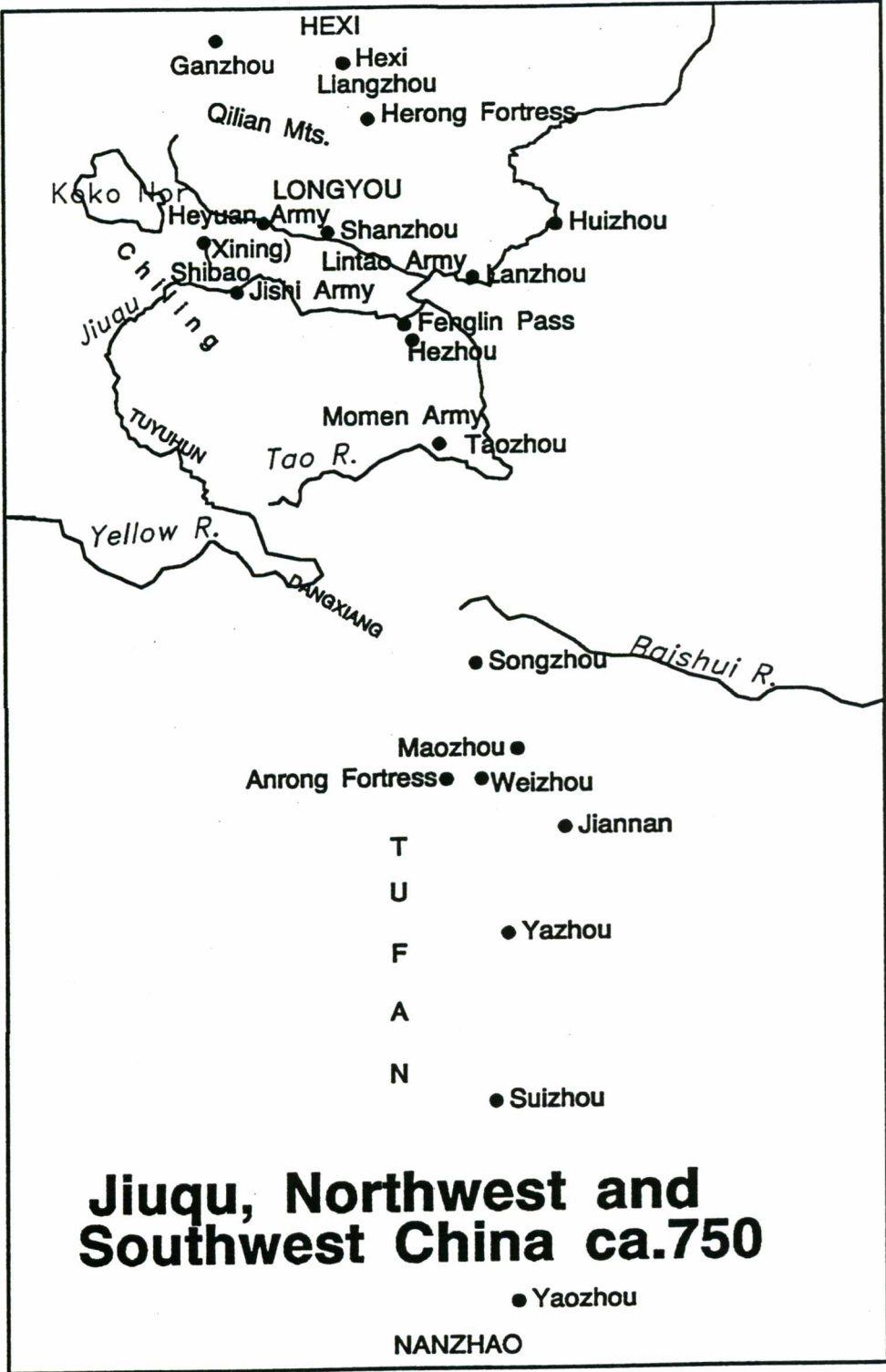
Tibet, called Tufan in the Chinese sources, rose as a unified and powerful kingdom under the Yarlung dynasty around the end of the sixth century and the beginning of the seventh. The Yarlung dynasty had existed previously for a number of generations as chiefs of a smaller tribal state. During that period the main power lying between China and what became Tibet was the Tuyuhun kingdom. In his study of the establishment of the Tufan kingdom, Yamaguchi Zuihō describes how the hostile policy of the Chinese towards the Tuyuhun during the Sui and Tang periods not only provided the Yarlung dynasty with the opportunity of expanding and evolving into the Tufan kingdom, but also planted in the minds of its rulers the desire to replace the Tuyuhun as an international power. As a result, Tufan, by learning from the Tuyuhun, was able to absorb the latter and eventually surpass it.¹

No dates can be assigned securely to the history of Tibet before the sixth century of our era.² Some scholars have attempted to reconstruct an earlier history,³ but it is clear that until the formation of the Tufan king-

¹ Yamaguchi 1983.

² Stein 1972, p. 45.

³ See such works as Beckwith 1977 and Yamaguchi 1983.



dom there is no record of any powerful political organization in Tibet which could have attracted China's attention or played a role in its foreign policy. When it did finally arise, the Tibetan kingdom presented an unprecedented challenge to China.

In contrast to the nomadic peoples who typically refrained from attempting to occupy the territory of settled peoples, the Tibetans were noted for their territorial ambitions. To the Tibetan rulers, expansion seemed ideologically necessary and economically profitable.⁴ Once in 822 a Tibetan marshal asked a Tang envoy why Tang treated the nomadic Uighurs more favorably than Tibet even though the Uighurs were a smaller country than Tibet and could be defeated very easily. The envoy answered:

The Uighurs have the merit of having rescued the country (China) in times of danger. Also they have never invaded and stolen even an inch of our territory. Why should we not treat them favorably?⁵

It is impossible here to go into a detailed comparative study of the political, military and economic structures of the nomadic and the Tibetan powers. It should be pointed out, however, that basic differences in their natural environment and economic structures made the nomads rely on the Chinese more than the Tibetans had to, and also led the Tibetans to be more ambitious in competing with China for territory. Ise Sentarō concludes that Tibet had a different economic structure from that of the Turks or Uighurs, whose economy was based on unstable nomadism, thus rendering them vulnerable to military defeat and natural disaster. The nomads, therefore, were more easily affected by Chinese influence, and through contacts with China they would gradually lose their advantage as a nomadic people. Ise further concludes that Tibet had a more solid economic structure which was based on three activities: 1) agriculture, animal husbandry, and mining; 2) foreign trade and taxation, applied both internally and to subordinate countries; 3) pillage of people, animal and grains, mostly from the Tang Chinese. Culturally, Tibet absorbed elements from the Chinese, Indians, and Western Turks and this cosmopolitanism helped engender a strong sense of independence.⁶

Ise's comparison needs to be supplemented by other considera-

⁴ Beckwith 1980, p. 30.

⁵ *JTS* 196B, p. 5265. See also *XTS* 216B, pp. 6103-4; *CFYG* 660, p. 7900.

⁶ Ise 1968, pp. 373-418. For trade see also Beckwith 1977b.

tions. The nomadic empires also had agriculture, engaged in mostly by captured Chinese and sedentary local people who became their subjects in the Western Regions. The nomadic empires imposed a taxation system on their sedentary subjects and conducted very active trading activities between east and west.⁷ But nomadic imperial power was based, to a large extent, on exploiting the Chinese economy, and thus was dependent on China. In his study of the nomadic empires, Barfield observes that the ruling class of nomadic states in particular maintained themselves by exploiting China's economy, and not by exploiting the production of scattered shepherders. In the early stages of their evolution they did not attempt to conquer Chinese territory, nor did they have the necessary administrative institutions to govern an agricultural society. By continuous raids, plundering or providing military assistance, however, the nomadic rulers demonstrated their strength sufficiently to increase their bargaining power for obtaining large quantities of Chinese goods as subsidies, and made China accommodate their demands for trade.⁸

The Tibetans also traded with China, but their economy was more independent of China's. The difference between the economic structure of the Tibetan kingdom and that of a nomadic empire may have been a matter of degree, and was determined primarily by their different ecological environment. The Tibetans, possessing less pasture and more arable land than the nomads who occupied the steppes, could develop a more extensive and solid agriculture. While the ruling classes of Tibet controlled the agricultural peasantry, they themselves, including both the *btsan-po* and the noble families, led a nomadic life. Agricultural production was entrusted to the peasantry, who served not only to supply agricultural income to their masters but also as a source of military manpower.⁹ The more balanced semi-agricultural and semi-nomadic economy of Tibet thus could be more independent than that of the nomads. Rather than demanding subsidies as the nomads did, Tibet competed with China for more of the same kind of territory, and its expansion into agricultural land as well as pasture was a natural process. Its collection of taxes in occupied areas was a natural extension of its state's power, a reflection of the nature of the state before such expansion.

As Ise points out, Tibet enriched its culture and reenforced its po-

⁷ Hayashi Toshio has studied the role of agriculture in Turkish society, see his 1985.

⁸ Barfield 1981, pp. 46-7; 1989, pp. 8-9 and *passim*.

⁹ Sato 1959, English summary of the contents, p. 30.

litical strength through contacts with India, China, and the several political powers in Central Asia. Even though the Tibetans showed enthusiasm in adopting certain aspects of Chinese civilization—its bureaucratic system, religion, architecture and production skills—unlike the Koreans, for whom China was the sole foreign source of inspiration in matters pertaining to the higher aspects of civilization as well as political and military assistance, Tibet could also draw many cultural elements from Central Asia and India. Tibetan written script was from India, and this is significant since written language is the most important single element of any culture. There were also debates in Tibet between the different Buddhist sects of China and India before Tibet finally developed its own variant of the Buddhist tradition.¹⁰

Since the Tibetan kingdom was more economically independent, the Chinese could not as easily use their products to buy peace from the Tibetans or to attract them to move and settle close to the frontiers under Chinese supervision as they could with the nomadic people. Nor could they effectively use the political investiture system to persuade the Tibetans into so close a tributary relationship as existed between the Chinese and the Koreans. Tibet, therefore, posed a different kind of challenge to the Tang empire.

Taizong: Subduing the Tuyuhun

The Tuyuhun were the second major problem on the Tang frontiers after the Eastern Turks during Gaozu's time. Soon after Taizong assumed the throne, the Tuyuhun Fuyun Qaghan sent an envoy to the court, but before his return, the Tuyuhun raided the frontier. In contrast to Emperor Yang, who eliminated the Tuyuhun kingdom, Taizong tried to make it into a buffer state. A Chinese mission was despatched to reprove the Tuyuhun for the raid and summon the qaghan back to the court. Sensing the danger involved, Fuyun did not go. He then requested a marriage for his son Zunwang. With the idea of keeping him under control, Taizong asked the prince to come to the court to receive the bride, but the prince excused himself on account of illness. The marriage did not materialize and the Tuyuhun raids resumed.

Military force then was resorted to subdue the Tuyuhun. In 634 general Li Jing led an expedition army joined by the Turks and the Qibi tribe against the Tuyuhun. In the following year two more military expe-

¹⁰ Demiéville 1952.

ditions campaigned across the whole of the Tuyuhun territory, ending Fuyun's life. Supported by Tang military force, the pro-Chinese prince Shun became the next qaghan, but he was soon killed by his ministers for his inability to rule effectively. His son Nuohebo succeeded him.¹¹ One consequence of these expeditions was that the Tuoba tribe of the Dangxiang Qiang people, a former ally of the Tuyuhun, also submitted to Tang. Most other Dangxiang Qiang had submitted to Tang earlier. The Qiang were organized into *jimi* prefectures on their own land scattered in modern Sichuan, Qinghai and Gansu.¹²

Nuohebo adopted a pro-Tang policy. In return, Tang supported him with grant of the titles of king and qaghan and military assistance. They gave him the hand of a princess in 640. In 641, his Chief Minister planned a revolt, to begin with a surprise attack on the Tang princess. The Chief Minister hoped to capture Nuohebo and take him to the Tibetans. The Tang troops intervened. The Chief Minister was killed and Nuohebo's position was maintained.¹³ Obviously there was a pro-Tibetan group among the Tuyuhun. It has been suggested that the pro-Tibetan faction developed around Fuyun's second son Zunwang, who had married a Tibetan princess. After the death of Fuyun in 635, the Tibetans continued to support Zunwang's son by the Tibetan princess.¹⁴ Clearly, the Tuyuhun's complex interactions with Tang were influenced by their relations with the Tibetans.

The First Encounter with Tibet and Achievement of Peace through the Marriage of Princess Wencheng, 634-660

Official contact between Tibet and Tang started in 634, when the Tibetan *btsan-po*, Srong btsan sgam-po, despatched a mission to the Tang court. Taizong returned the visit by sending an envoy to Tibet.¹⁵ When Srong btsan sgam-po heard that both the Turks and Tuyuhun had concluded marriage alliances with Tang, he sent an embassy to Tang to accompany the returning Chinese envoy, and make a marriage proposal, but Taizong turned it down. The Tibetan envoy reported to Srong btsan sgam-po that Tang at first had promised the marriage but later changed its deci-

¹¹ *JTS* 198, pp. 5298-300; *XTS* 221A, pp. 6224--6.

¹² *JTS* 198, pp. 5291-2; *XTS* 221A, p. 6215. See also Dunnell 1994, pp. 158-9.

¹³ *JTS* 198, p. 5300; *XTS* 221A, p. 6226; Molè 1970, pp. 49-57.

¹⁴ Yamaguchi 1983, pp. 673-84.

¹⁵ *JTS* 196A, p. 5221; *XTS* 216A, p. 6073; *ZZTJ* 194, pp. 6107-8.

sion after the Tuyuhun qaghan arrived at the Tang court and fomented discord. Srong btsan sgam-po then attacked the Tuyuhun, and subjugated the Dangxiang and the Bailan tribes, who were located close to both Tibet and the Tuyuhun.¹⁶

Tang's change of attitude may have been due to Taizong's concern with maintaining good relations with the Tuyuhun. In 634, when Tang and the Tuyuhun were at war, Taizong would have welcomed an alliance with Tibet so as to check the Tuyuhun from the rear. However, between 634 and 636 the situation in the Tuyuhun kingdom changed drastically with the establishment of a pro-Tang regime headed first by Shun and then by Nuohebo. When Nuohebo came in person to Tang in 636 to show his loyalty and asked for a marriage alliance, he realized the great danger implied by a Tang-Tibetan marriage alliance, and therefore endeavored to stop it. Once the situation among the Tuyuhun became peaceful under a pro-Tang regime, the necessity to ally with Tibet against the Tuyuhun disappeared. The 636 Tibetan envoy to the Tang court saw the Tuyuhun's interference and its consequences and upon his return to Tibet the following year, he reported this to the Tibetan *btsan-po*.¹⁷

Following his attack on the Tuyuhun, Srong btsan sgam-po stationed a large number of troops on Tang's western border at Songzhou in modern Sichuan, and again despatched an embassy to the Chinese court claiming the hand of a Tang princess. A Tibetan source says that Srong btsan sgam-po sent a letter to Taizong, saying that if Tang did not assent to the marriage request, he would lead 50,000 troops to attack Tang, kill the emperor and obtain a princess directly.¹⁸ The year 638 saw the Tibetans mount continuous attacks on Songzhou and subjugate two Tang *jimi* prefectures. Finally, as a result of Tang counterattacks, Srong btsan sgam-po withdrew his troops. He petitioned again for a marriage contract in 640. Even though Tang claimed a victory over the Tibetans, it finally had to accommodate the Tibetan request so as to prevent Tibet from launching

¹⁶ *JTS* 196A, p. 5221; *XTS* 216A, p. 6073; *ZZTJ* 195, p. 6139.

¹⁷ Sato 1958, pp. 248-52. Without referring to Sato's opinion, Beckwith questions the account of Tuyuhun's interference. He conjectures that Taizong "made a private agreement with the Tibetans to conclude a marriage alliance if they would finish off the still-troublesome 'Azha (Tuyuhun).'" See his 1987, p. 23, note 53. The fact that the Tibetans launched an attack against the Tuyuhun and then brought pressure on the Chinese frontier to strengthen their demand for a Chinese princess does not support Beckwith's conjecture.

¹⁸ Wang Zhong 1958, p. 29.

further attacks.¹⁹

The Chinese princess, Wencheng, left for Tibet in 641, marking the beginning of a period of peaceful and frequent communication between the two states that lasted until 660, well into Gaozong's reign.²⁰ The Tibetan Chief Minister, Ludongzan (Mgar Stong rtsan), who came to the Tang court to receive the princess, was given the Chinese title of general.²¹ The Tibetan sources say that after the confrontation between Tibet and the Chinese in 638, Tang and the Tuyuhun came to Tibet to pay tribute.²² However, the Chinese records say that Tibet at this time did not object to taking on vassal status within the tribute system, at least not openly to the Chinese.²³ During this period, thirteen Tibetan missions arrived at the Tang court, eleven of them being tributary missions, according to the record in the *Cefu Yuangui*.²⁴ After the marriage, Tibet assisted Tang in two wars. The first campaign was in 647, when Tang launched a "punitive" attack on Kucha.²⁵ The second time was in 648, when the Tang envoy Wang Xuance was attacked while on a mission to northern India and the Tibetans sent troops to rescue him and defeated the Indian attackers.²⁶

Considering that the reign of Srong btsan sgam-po was for Tibet a time of consolidating state power, one can see that it was in their own interest that the Tibetans joined Tang troops to attack India so as to demonstrate their strength, and cultivated friendship with Tang the better to engage in political, religious and cultural borrowings. Tibet sent young aristocrats to Tang to study the Confucian classics and doctrines, and Chinese scholars were invited to Tibet to compile official reports to the Tang em-

¹⁹ Sato 1958, p. 267.

²⁰ Yamaguchi rejects the traditional view that Princess Wencheng was married from the outset to Srong btsan sgam-po. He concludes instead that Princess Wencheng first married King Gung srong gung rtsan, who was the ruler at that time, bore him a son, Mang slon mang rtsan, and only after the king's death did she marry Srong btsan sgam-po when he re-ascended the throne. Yamaguchi 1983, pp. 547-62.

²¹ *JTS* 196A, p. 5223; *ZZTJ* 196, p. 6164.

²² Yamaguchi 1983, p. 683.

²³ One example is the memorial of 646 to Tang by the *btsan-po*'s to congratulate Taizong on his return from the Koguryō campaign. *JTS* 196A, p. 5222; *XTS* 216A, p. 6074; *CFYG* 970, p. 11400. See also Kaneko 1974, p. 39; 1988, p. 96.

²⁴ Su Jinren and Xiao Lianzi 1981, pp. 359-60.

²⁵ *ZZTJ* 198, pp. 6250-1; *CFYG* 985, pp. 11571-2.

²⁶ *JTS* 198, pp. 5307-8; *XTS* 216A, p. 6074; *ZZTJ* 199, pp. 6257-8.

peror on behalf of Tibet.²⁷ Marriage to a Chinese princess allowed the Tibetan *btsan-po* to demonstrate to his own people the extent of his power, to increase his prestige and reinforce his position vis-à-vis the nobles, who posed a potential threat to the royal family's hegemony.²⁸

In 649, at the beginning of Gaozong's reign, Tang conferred on King Srong btsan sgam-po the titles of Commandant-escort (*fuma duwei*), which was the usual title for an imperial son-in-law, Commandery Prince of Xihai and Precious King (*baowang*). This was, however, the only time throughout the history of Tang-Tibetan relations when the Tibetan king received Chinese political investiture.²⁹

Confrontations with Tibet over the Tuyuhun, 660-680

After the death of Srong btsan sgam-po in 649, his grandson succeeded him. The real state ruler however was the competent minister Mgar Stong rtsan. Taking over full control of the already consolidated kingdom, Mgar Stong rtsan continued the expansion which had started in Srong btsan sgam-po's time. The Tibetans' subsequent expansion in all directions was bound to lead to confrontation with the Chinese. They also challenged Chinese superiority by asking the Tang envoy to perform the kowtow at their court. The envoy refused and was, as a consequence, detained in Tibet for over ten years. He finally died in captivity.³⁰

The Tang court under Gaozong took a firm stand against this powerful new rival. In 658, the Tibetan request for a marriage produced no result, perhaps because Tang was following a policy of supporting the Tuyuhun, who would have hated to see a marriage contract between Tang and Tibet.³¹ Soon, in 660, the Tibetans launched their first attack on the Tuyuhun.³² When at war with each other in 663, both Tibet and the Tuyu-

²⁷ *JTS* 196A, pp. 5221-2; *XTS* 216A, p. 6074; *CFYG* 978, p. 11496.

²⁸ Sato 1958, p. 287.

²⁹ *JTS* 196A, p. 5222; *XTS* 216A, p. 6074; *ZZTJ* 199, pp. 6269-70; *CFYG* 964, p. 11340. Concerning the last title, the above sources say that the title is *binwang* or *zongwang* instead of *baowang*. But Wang Zhong holds that these are mistaken readings of *baowang*, see his 1958, p. 35. Beckwith (1987 p. 25, note 71) also discusses these titles. He questions the accuracy of Chinese historians who record the conferring of the title equivalent to the imperial-son-in-law to the Tibetan king.

³⁰ *XTS* 216A, p. 6078; *CFYG* 138, p. 1675. Wang Zhong (1958, p. 50) believes the envoy was detained around 665.

³¹ *XTS* 216A, p. 6075; *ZZTJ* 200, p. 6310; Sato 1958, pp. 307-9.

³² *ZZTJ* 200, p. 6321.

hun sent in requests for Chinese military intervention. Gaozong at first refused, but Tibet allied itself with the Tuyuhun's pro-Tibet faction, and inflicted a disastrous defeat on the pro-Tang Tuyuhun qaghan Nuohebo. This forced him to flee with his people to Liangzhou. Gaozong thereupon ordered a Tang general to assist the Tuyuhun, while at the same time Tang stationed troops in Liangzhou and Shanzhou to defend against Tibet.

When Mgar Stong rtsan followed up his occupation of the Tuyuhun lands with an embassy to Tang, making accusations against the Tuyuhun and petitioning for a marriage contract, Gaozong not only refused the petition, but also sent an envoy to Tibet to deliver a sealed letter blaming the Tibetans for their aggression.³³ In the eyes of the Chinese at that time Tibet could only be a vassal, not an equal. In 665 another Tibetan mission arrived at the Tang court, this time with the purpose of restoring peace with the Tuyuhun. As their reward, the Tibetans requested the land of Chishui in Tuyuhun territory for raising livestock. Gaozong again refused.³⁴ The demand of the Tibetans for Chishui may indicate either that the area had not yet been subjugated, or that the Tibetans wished to assuage Chinese fears and anger by requesting Tang recognition of the new *de facto* situation.³⁵

In 669, a court discussion in Chang'an was held to consider a plan for settling the Tuyuhun in the Southern Qilian mountains. General Qibi Heli suggested waging war on Tibet rather than assisting the Tuyuhun. Yan Liben, a Chief Minister but better known for his talent in painting, argued against any war since China had suffered a severe famine the year before. A third opinion, raised by Chief Minister Jiang Ke, was to aid the Tuyuhun so that they would be able to remain a buffer state. However, no decision was reached and the resettlement of the Tuyuhun was not implemented.³⁶

It turned out that the final decision was to be for war against the Tibetans, with the Tuyuhun to be restored as a buffer state to check the Tibetan advance into the Western Regions. The Chinese mounted a campaign against the Tibetans in 670, but Tang suffered a severe defeat, with its entire army lost in battle near Koko Nor. All the territory of the Tuyu-

³³ *JTS* 196A, p. 5223; 198, p. 5300; *XTS* 216A, p. 6075; 221A, p. 6227; *ZZTJ* 201, pp. 6335-6.

³⁴ *XTS* 216A, p. 6075; *ZZTJ* 201, p. 6343.

³⁵ Sato 1958, pp. 312-3; Beckwith 1987, p. 32.

³⁶ *XTS* 216A, p. 6075; *ZZTJ* 201, p. 6359; *CFYG* 991, p. 11642.

hun was brought under the control of Tibet.³⁷ The Tuyuhun qaghan Nuohabo and his people had to be resettled within northwest China under Anlezhou and Lingzhou in 672. The Tuyuhun kingdom had disintegrated, never to be revived.³⁸

Despite Tang's weakness, Gaozong insisted on maintaining a firm attitude toward the Tibetans. He refused the latter's request for peace in 675.³⁹ In 676 and 677, the Tibetans raided China's northwestern prefectures, causing Gaozong to plan a military campaign against them.⁴⁰ Finally, in 678, 180,000 troops were despatched to do battle with the Tibetans at Koko Nor. Again Tang was defeated.⁴¹

In a court discussion after Tang's defeat, some suggested a cautious policy of strengthening defense but eschewing attack, while the emperor, though aware of the fact that fighting on two fronts had exhausted China, still insisted on a bellicose attitude: "These bandits are arrogant and ferocious. They do not understand our benevolence and majesty, and ought to be captured right away. Peace-making is obviously impossible."⁴² The Chinese were caught in a dilemma. If they attacked the invading Tibetans on the frontiers, they would simply waste their resources without solving the problems. On the other hand, if they did not counterattack because they deemed themselves not capable of penetrating into Tibetan areas, they would not be able to root out the source of their problems. No final decision was made.⁴³

The weakness of Tang as compared with Tibet at that time was not merely a question of military force, but also stemmed from internal factors. The defeat of 678 can be partly attributed to the internal conflicts among Chinese high-ranking officials. In 677, Chief Minister Liu Rengui was appointed Commissioner for Defending Taohe (Taohe *zhenshou dashi*, in present Gansu) in preparation for the war with Tibet. His memo-

³⁷ *JTS* 83, pp. 2782-3; 196A, p. 5223; 198, p. 5300; *XTS* 216A, p. 6076; 221A, p. 6227; *ZZTJ* 201, pp. 6363-4.

³⁸ *ZZTJ* 202, p. 6368; Molè 1970, xxi; p. 59.

³⁹ *XTS* 216A, p. 6076; *ZZTJ* 202, p. 6368; p. 6375; *CFYG* 980, p. 11512. In the relevant passage of *CFYG*, Suzong should be Gaozong.

⁴⁰ *ZZTJ* 202, p. 6379; pp. 6383-4; *CFYG* 991, pp. 11642-3.

⁴¹ *JTS* 196A, pp. 5223-4; *XTS* 216A, pp. 6076-7; *ZZTJ* 202, pp. 6384-6. The passage in *THY* (97, p. 1731) records the year as "the second year of Shangyuan (675)," which is wrong.

⁴² *CFYG* 991, p. 11643.

⁴³ *JTS* 5, pp. 103-4; 196; p. 5224; *XTS* 216A, p. 6077; *ZZTJ* 202, p. 6386.

rials were often disputed by Li Jingxuan, Director of the Secretariat. Knowing that Li was not good at military affairs, Liu planned to discredit him by insisting that the frontier defense against Tibet must have Li as commander. Taken in by this ploy, Gaozong sent Li to replace Liu in 678. It was under the incapable command of Li that Tang troops suffered great losses in the war. Li was demoted as a result.⁴⁴

There were also problems concerning the general quality of leadership, as Wei Yuanzhong, a student from the National University, pointed out in a sealed memorial: 1) those in military service placed their emphasis on the martial arts and had no concern for strategy, and the court selected officials from generals' families and not for their abilities; 2) civil bureaucrats paid attention to prose style, but were not concerned with how to make plans; 3) ever since the time of the Korean wars, the court had not observed carefully the rule of reward and punishment. He suggested that Tang should abolish the order that forbade people to raise horses, and should raise revenues from taxation levied all over the country to purchase horses for a cavalry army of 200,000 to attack the Tibetans. People should also be allowed to buy horses from the nomads, so that the nomads would be weakened by a shortage of horses. Gaozong was impressed and appointed Wei to a position in the Department of the Secretariat. Wei later rose to the status of Chief Minister and led troops to defend against the Turks and Tibetans.⁴⁵

In contrast, Tibet had a well-organized army and an efficient leadership. The Chief Minister, Mgar Ston btsan, was well-known for his talent and skill in leadership. After his death in 670, the Mgar family continued in actual control of the political and military power of Tibet, ensuring the stability of the state to some extent. They were directly responsible for the series of expansions which continued until 699.⁴⁶ In 679, when he heard of the death of the Tibetan *btsan-po*, Gaozong wanted to take advantage of the situation to attack, but was dissuaded from doing so on the grounds that the Tibetan ruling group was united and strong. When Princess Wencheng despatched an embassy to inform Tang of the royal death and to request the conclusion of a new marriage contract, Gaozong once

⁴⁴ *JTS* 81, p. 2755; 84, p. 2795; *XTS* 106, pp. 4052-3; 108, p. 4085; *ZZTJ* 202, pp. 6384-6.

⁴⁵ *JTS* 92, pp. 2945-53; *XTS* 122, pp. 4339-44; *ZZTJ* 202, pp. 6386-8; *CFYG* 991, pp. 11643-6.

⁴⁶ Sato 1958, pp. 300-61.

more refused.⁴⁷ This time the Tibetans asked for Princess Taiping, Gaozong's own daughter by Empress Wu, to marry their king. This was refused with the excuse that the Princess was a Taoist nun.⁴⁸

Competition in the Southwest and over the Western Regions, 670-705

The Tibetans advanced across China's southwestern border by capturing the Anrong Fortress on the western border of Maozhou (in present Mao county, Sichuan) in 680 with the help of the Qiang peoples of this area. Anrong Fortress was built by Tang in 678 at a strategic spot on the major route connecting Tibet and Sichuan. By maintaining control of this point the Tibetans were able to exercise their influence over the many non-Chinese peoples in the region.⁴⁹ In 688 Empress Wu planned to open up a route via Yazhou (in Sichuan) in order to attack the Qiang people and then the Tibetans. This was strongly opposed by Chen Zi'ang, a native of Sichuan, then holding the rank of proofreader in the palace library, on the grounds that to attack the Qiang would surely lead them to make common cause with the Tibetans, who would use the Qiang as guides to attack Sichuan. Although in a minor position, Chen was on several occasions consulted by the empress.⁵⁰ The plan was not carried out, perhaps because it was obviously impossible given China's position, and also because Chen's opposition represented the dominant opinion.

On the northwest front, after the Tibetans established a base on Tuyuhun territory and thereby secured closer access to both the Tang frontier and the Western Regions, the Tibetans in 670, with the assistance of Khotan, captured eighteen Chinese *jimi zhou* and the Kuchean fortified city of Aksu in the Tarim Basin. The Chinese had to abandon their bases in the Tarim Basin, and move the seat of the Protectorate of Anxi back to Xizhou.⁵¹ As mentioned above, the Chinese unsuccessfully attacked Tibet in 670.

Despite this loss the Chinese tried to maintain their control over the Western Turks north of the Tianshan after the deaths of Ashina Mishe (in 662) and Ashina Buzhen (in 666 or 667), the Protectors-General of

⁴⁷ JTS 196A, p. 5224; ZZTJ 202, p. 6389; p. 6393.

⁴⁸ XTS 83, p. 3650; ZZTJ 202, p. 6402.

⁴⁹ Backus 1981, pp. 26-8.

⁵⁰ JTS 190B, pp. 5021-4; XTS 107, pp. 4071-4; ZZTJ 204, pp. 6455-6.

⁵¹ JTS 198, p. 5304; XTS 216A, p. 6076; ZZTJ 201, p. 6363. See also Ise 1968, pp. 244-5.

Kunling and Mengchi.⁵² Tang appointed tribal leader Ashina Duzhi as general and Area Commander to control the Western Turks in 671.⁵³ Between 676 and 678, however, Ashina Duzhi proclaimed himself qaghan and allied with the Tibetans in attacks on the Protectorate of Anxi. Pei Xingjian, a former Protector-General of Anxi back in 665 and familiar with the situation there, devised a strategy to utilize the non-Chinese in the Western Regions, and succeeded in capturing Ashina Duzhi in 679. Before his return, Pei left a general behind to build a fortress in Suiye (Tokmak).⁵⁴ Some modern scholars are of the opinion, based on the narrative in the *Cefu Yuangui*, that in 679 Tang recovered the Four Garrisons in Tokmak, Kucha, Khotan and Kashgar, but lost them again in 686 or 687.⁵⁵

Empress Wu wished to maintain Tang dominance in the Western Regions. Around 685 she appointed the son of Ashina Mishe and the son of Ashina Buzhen to succeed to their father's titles of qaghan and Protector-General in order to make them side with Tang against the Tibetans.⁵⁶ When, in 689, the Tibetans captured Kashgar she sent out an expeditionary army which suffered a severe loss.⁵⁷ In 692, on the advice of Tang Xiu-jing, Area Commander of Lingzhou and former Vice Protector-general of Anxi, Empress Wu ordered another major campaign against the Tibetans under the command of Wang Xiaojie. As a result, the Chinese recovered the Four Garrisons of Tokmak, Kucha, Khotan and Kashgar, thus ensuring Chinese influence over the area until the mid-eighth century. Thirty thousand Chinese troops stationed under the Protectorate of Anxi with its seat in Kucha, enhanced Chinese control over the Western Regions and intensified the competition with Tibet.⁵⁸

In 697, when Chief Minister Di Renjie presented his memorial suggesting the abolition of the Protectorate of Andong (see Chapter 6), he also suggested abolishing the Four Garrisons in the Western Regions, and using the Western Turks to take over the region's defense on the grounds

⁵² *JTS* 194B, pp. 5198-9; *XTS* 215B, pp. 6064-6.

⁵³ *XTS* 215B, p. 6064.

⁵⁴ *JTS* 84, pp. 2802-3; Chavannes 1969, pp. 60-1; Ise 1968, pp. 254-6.

⁵⁵ Ise 1968, p. 256, pp. 260-2; Wu Yugui 1987, pp. 91-3.

⁵⁶ *JTS* 194B, pp. 5188-90; *XTS* 215B, pp. 6064-6; Ise 1968, pp. 258-9.

⁵⁷ *ZZTJ* 204, p. 6459; Sato 1958, pp. 350-2. The army was led by Wei Daijia. Based on the various accounts in Chinese, Ise (1968, pp. 259-60) thinks that Wei went to the Western Regions twice, in 686 and 689, to fight with the Tibetans.

⁵⁸ *JTS* 93, p. 2977; pp. 2978-9; 196A, p. 5225; 198, p. 5304; *XTS* 111, p. 4148; p. 4149; 216A, p. 6078; 221A, p. 6232; *ZZTJ* 205, pp. 6487-8.

that the "four barbarians" were outside the boundaries established by China's previous rulers. They were separated from the Middle Kingdom by such natural boundaries as the sea to the east, the floating sands to the west, the desert to the north and the Wuling mountains in the south.

On the other hand, Cui Rong, a court historian, forcefully argued against Di, insisting that abandoning the Four Garrisons would give the Turks in the north and Tibetans in the south opportunities to impose their rule over the oasis states, which would in turn expose the Chinese Hexi area to danger and would in the long run cost China more when the time came to defend that region. The situation was like that during the Han dynasty: whenever Han abandoned the Western Regions, the Xiongnu would take over and from there threaten the Hexi region. Di's opinion was rejected.⁵⁹

The Tibetans, allied with the Western Turks, continued their fight for the Western Regions. They also raided China's northwestern frontiers. After a major victory over the Chinese in 696 in Taozhou (in modern Gansu),⁶⁰ Qinling (Mgar Khri 'bring, Mgar Stong rtsan's son), who became the Chief Minister in 685,⁶¹ sent an embassy to the Chinese court with a peace proposal. Empress Wu agreed and sent Guo Yuanzhen, a military officer, to the Tibetan minister to conduct negotiations, which did not produce much of a result. Since both were focusing on the Western Regions, neither was willing to compromise.

The negotiations are recorded in detail in the *Tongdian*. When Mgar Khri 'bring met Guo Yuanzhen, he demanded that Tang should abandon the Four Garrisons and let each state of the Tarim and the Western Turks become autonomous so that they would be subject neither to Tang nor to Tibet. He also demanded border trade in Yizhou (in present Sichuan). Guo Yuanzhen refused on the grounds that the Four Garrisons were there to ensure peace in the Western Regions, and that the Western Turks had long since been made subjects to Tang. He pointed out that the Tibetan request was intended to establish their own control over the Western Regions at Tang's expense.

Mgar Khri 'bring argued that his demands were based on two con-

⁵⁹ *JTS* 89, pp. 2889-91; *XTS* 115, pp. 4210-1; 216A, pp. 6078-9; *THY* 73, pp. 1326-9; *ZZTJ* 206, pp. 6524-5; Ise 1968, pp. 423-5.

⁶⁰ Beckwith 1987, pp. 55-7.

⁶¹ This is according to Sato 1958, p. 301; p. 344; Beckwith 1987, p. 50. Wang Zhong (1958, p. 38) holds that Mgar Khri 'bring was the grandson of Mgar Stong rtsan. However, Tibetan and other Chinese sources provide no evidence to support this supposition.

siderations: 1) the Chinese frontier generals in the Western Regions often started offensives to further their own interests, so their withdrawal would bring about peace; 2) the Western Turks were a major worry to Tibet for they were separated from Tibet only by a desert, thus being in a position to make quick hit and run raids. Denying any intention of acquiring territory, Mgar Khri 'bring said that if he wanted Chinese territory and Chinese goods, he would make trouble in the Ganzhou and Liangzhou areas within China proper itself, and not contend with the Turks so far away. He insisted that it was China that wanted to extend its territory.⁶² Mgar Khri 'bring was in fact threatening that Tibet could, if it came to that, make constant incursions across the Tang frontiers in Ganzhou and Liangzhou if that was what it took to force Tang to give up control over the Western Regions.

Upon his return, Guo Yuanzhen presented a memorial to Empress Wu suggesting that Ganzhou and Liangzhou were more important to China than the Western Regions and therefore that particular efforts should be made to guarantee stability there. China should reply to Tibet that the Four Garrisons were set up to control the Western Regions and divide the Tibetan forces so they could not join for invasions of China. If Tibet did not have any territorial ambitions, it should return to China the Koko Nor lands and the Tuyuhun people. In return, China would give up the five Nushibi tribes of the Western Turks. In another memorial, he further suggested that the Tibetan people were exhausted by constant wars. If Tang pressed peace proposals every year and Mgar Khri 'bring refused, the people would reject him.⁶³

The negotiation did not result in any agreement. Guo Yuanzhen's observation of the Tibetan internal situation was correct. From late 698 to early 699, the Tibetan *btsan-po*, Khri 'Dus srong, now a grown man, supported by the minister Lun Yan (Mang nyen bzhi-brtsan⁶⁴) and other ministers, staged a successful purge of the Mgar clan. Mgar Khri 'bring committed suicide and his younger brother Zampo fled to China with a thousand people. Khri 'bring's son Gongren, along with 7,000 households of the Tuyuhun who were under his control, also went over to China.

Empress Wu immediately ordered her officials to receive them and conferred official titles on Zampo and Gongren. Zampo was sent to

⁶² TD 190, pp. 1023-4; ZZTJ 205, pp. 6508-9.

⁶³ TD 190, p. 1023-4; JTS 97, pp. 3043-4; XTS 122, pp. 4361-2; ZZTJ 205, pp. 6508-9.

⁶⁴ Identified by Beckwith 1987, p. 60, note 34.

Hongyuangu (in Gansu), in command of his own troops, and charged with guarding the Chinese frontiers.⁶⁵ Lou Shide, as Vice Commander-in-chief of the Tianbing Army and Commissioner of the various armies of Longyou, was charged specifically to watch over the affairs of the submitted Tibetans.⁶⁶ In 700, the Tibetans attacked Hongyuangu, where Zampo stationed his troops, probably with the purpose of punishing the rebel Tibetans. However, the Tibetan troops were newly recruited, and their performance reflected the weakness of the Tibetan military after the Mgar brothers were purged. The Tibetans engaged in six battles with the Chinese and lost all of them.⁶⁷

In between frontier confrontations, Khri 'Dus srong sought peace with Tang. In 702 a Tibetan mission arrived at the Chinese court to request a peace settlement.⁶⁸ In 703 another mission arrived with a thousand horses and 1,000 *liang* of gold to negotiate a marriage alliance. Empress Wu agreed to the latter.⁶⁹ In a subsequent series of campaigns against Tang and other neighboring countries, Khri 'Dus srong died during the winter of 704-705.⁷⁰ Empress Wu abdicated in 705. Both sides were ready for peace.

The First Treaty with Tibet and the Marriage of Princess Jincheng, 706-710

After 705 the Tibetan royal family and nobles were engaged in a fierce struggle over the succession until 712, when Khri lde gtsug brtsan ascended the throne. During this period, while his grandmother was in actual control,⁷¹ China's frontier problems with Tibet seemed less pressing. In China, where Emperor Zhongzong had just restored the rule of the Li royal family, priority was given, among all the frontier issues facing the new government, to halting the Turkish incursions. A peaceful policy was adopted towards Tibet and in 707 it was agreed to give the hand of Prin-

⁶⁵ Wang Zhong 1958, pp. 55-6; Beckwith 1987, pp. 60-1.

⁶⁶ ZZTJ 206, p. 6540. Lou Shide died either that year or in 699, see ZZTJ 206, p. 6541. There is no mention of anyone having been appointed to be in charge of Tibetan affairs after him.

⁶⁷ JTS 196A, p. 5226; XTS 216A, p. 6080; ZZTJ 207, p. 6549; Wang Zhong 1958, p. 56.

⁶⁸ ZZTJ 207, p. 6560.

⁶⁹ ZZTJ 207, p. 6562.

⁷⁰ Wang Zhong 1958, pp. 57-8; Beckwith 1987, pp. 63-5.

⁷¹ Wang Zhong 1958, pp. 58-9; Beckwith 1987, pp. 69-70.

cess Jincheng to the Tibetan *btsan-po*. Tibet had requested this in 703.⁷² The princess left for Tibet in 710.

The emperor gave her an emotional send-off and in some farewell poems by the court ministers are lines lamenting that "Because there is lack of counsellors [who can provide a better solution to the problem], the sage ruler still has to worry [and adopt this expedient]," and "Even though the western barbarians are not on the same level as we are, the enlightened ruler impartially preserves them [by marrying the princess to the chief]."⁷³ Princess Jincheng played an active role in diplomacy and politics as we will see below.

Tang concluded a peace treaty with Tibet in 706. Details of the treaty text and the formal ceremony are not available, but from extant sources we can see that the essential items of the treaty were 1) the boundaries of the two countries were to be settled in accordance with convenience; 2) the Chinese had ten participants, including the Chief Minister Doulu Qinwang, and the Tibetan Chief Minister also took part in the oath taking.⁷⁴ A letter from the Tibetan ruler in 781 quotes a Tang edict of 708 which stipulates that when the Tang envoy arrived in Tibet, the Tibetan *btsan-po* was to first swear an oath witnessed by the envoy, and when the Tibetan envoy arrived in Tang, the Chinese emperor would personally conclude the covenant.⁷⁵

The relationship between the edict and the treaty of 706 is not clear. But since this edict was issued only two years after the treaty, it is possible that it was repeating a provision in the treaty of 706. In any case this reference demonstrates a remarkable degree of reciprocity and equality in the oath-taking ceremony by requiring that each ruler should conclude the ceremony in person in his own territory. To be sure, there is no evidence that such a practice ever did actually take place during the Tang dynasty.

The practice of concluding treaties was not new to the Chinese. There was a traditional Chinese view, however, that the conclusion of a sworn covenant reflected a situation of instability and deterioration of the state. Sworn covenants were concluded most often when trust was in

⁷² *JTS* 196A, p. 5226; *XTS* 216A, p. 6080; *ZZTJ* 207, p. 6562; 208, p. 6610; *CFYG* 979, p. 11498.

⁷³ Kuang Pingzhang 1935, pp. 34-5.

⁷⁴ Pan Yihong 1992a, pp. 127-8.

⁷⁵ *JTS* 196B, p. 5246; *XTS* 216B, p. 6093; *CFYG* 981, p. 11528.

doubt.⁷⁶ It was also the custom of Tibet to use sworn covenants to ensure stability. The Chinese records say that the Tibetan *btsan-po* made a minor covenant with his ministers every year and a major one every three years.⁷⁷ In the traditional Tibetan sources, especially the *Old Tibetan Annals* and the *Old Tibetan Chronicle*, there are records of sworn treaties among the Tibetans themselves.⁷⁸ There is, however, no record of any Tang-Tibetan treaties in these two histories. It is not clear why. It seems to be a particular Tibetan custom to erect stone tablets with inscriptions of treaty texts. Among the thirteen Tibetan inscriptions of the Tufan period, one was the sworn treaty between Tang and Tibet, four were sworn treaties between the Tibetan *btsan-po* and his subjects,⁷⁹ and three were sworn texts by the *btsan-po* and Tibetan nobles to declare their support for Buddhist temples.⁸⁰

It was hoped that the marriage alliance and the peace treaty with Tibet would help bring about peace on the frontiers, and would also encourage the Tibetans to cooperate in dealing with the Türgish, a Western Turkish tribe. But the peace policy was not adhered to in a consistent way by the Chinese. In 710, only four years after the conclusion of the pact, China breached it.

In the southwest, Li Zhigu, Acting Investigating Censor (*she ji-ancha yushi*), suggested an attack on the "barbarians" in Yaozhou (in modern Yunnan), who had formerly been subjects of Tibet. The court agreed. After bringing them into submission, Li Zhigu further asked to build walled towns establish prefectures and districts there and to impose heavy taxes on the local people. Li's harsh attitude forced the local chieftains to obtain assistance from Tibet and they killed Li. The route from Yaozhou to Suizhou was cut off.

In the northwest, Zhang Xuanbiao, Protector-General of Anxi, plundered the northern borders of Tibet. Though furious, the Tibetans did not immediately retaliate. They bribed the Area Commander of Shanzhou, Yang Ju, who had escorted Princess Jincheng to Tibet and, through him,

⁷⁶ Pan Yihong 1992a, pp. 125-6.

⁷⁷ *JTS* 196A, p. 5220; *XTS* 216A, p. 6073; *THY* 97, p. 1730.

⁷⁸ For example, in the *Old Tibetan Annals*, from 650 to 763, there are 66 years when the Tibetans made covenants among themselves, see Wang Yao 1979, pp. 1-29. According to the Dunhuang documents, when the Tibetans occupied Shazhou they also concluded sworn treaties with the local Chinese, see Ma De 1987, p. 59.

⁷⁹ Wang Yao 1982, pp. 1-128.

⁸⁰ Wang Yao 1982, pp. 151-81.

asked for the land in the Jiuqu area of Hexi (near modern Xining, Qinghai province) as a bathing place for Princess Jincheng. It was a place suitable for pasture. Upon learning of Yang's proposal the court agreed. The Tibetans soon built fortresses south of the Yellow River and a bridge over the River, thus securing a convenient base for raiding Tang.⁸¹

Conflicts and Negotiations, 712-719

After Xuanzong's assumption of power, Tibetan missions arrived at the Tang court in 712 and 713, the second time with a peace proposal.⁸² Again in 714 the Tibetan Chief Minister Bendayan ('Bon-da-rgyal, = nephew king?⁸³) asked to fix the borders on each side and to conclude a sworn covenant based on the earlier one. In response to his request, Xie Wan, an official experienced in frontiers affairs, went to Heyuan to negotiate, bearing with him the treaty with Tibet of 706.

Before Xie Wan left, he had suggested that the court deploy troops in preparation for Tibetan incursions.⁸⁴ This proved to be necessary. Even though a Tibetan minister arrived at the Tang court with a treaty text, before any peace agreement was confirmed, 'Bon-da-rgyal had launched attacks on the Chinese Lintao Army, and on Lanzhou and Weizhou, where he plundered Chinese livestock. Hearing this, Yang Ju took his own life, because he felt responsible or perhaps because he expected to be made a scapegoat by the court for allowing the Tibetans to have the land of Jiuqu, which provided with easy access to Tang lands. Xuanzong immediately ordered a counter-attack.⁸⁵ In the tenth month of 714 Xuanzong declared his intention of assuming personal command of a major campaign against the Tibetans, with over 100,000 troops including 20,000 non-Chinese. The plan was not carried out, for soon the already present Chinese troops claimed major victories in battles with Tibet.⁸⁶

After the war was over, Tang sent an envoy to Tibet to console

⁸¹ *JTS* 196A, p. 5228; *XTS* 216A, p. 6081; *ZZTJ* 210, p. 6661. Sato (1958, pp. 427-32) is of the opinion, based on the dates given in the Basic Annals of Zhongzong in the *JTS* and *XTS*, that the acts of Li Zhigu and Zhang Xuanbiao occurred in 707. I follow the dates given in the *ZZTJ*.

⁸² *CFYG* 971, p. 11405; 980, p. 11510.

⁸³ Thomas II, 1955, p. 163. He was the king of Tuyuhun and married Khri ma lod's daughter. He was in actual control of state power in Tibet. Wang Zhong 1958, pp. 62-3.

⁸⁴ *JTS* 100, p. 3113; *XTS* 130, p. 4501; *ZZTJ* 211, pp. 6699-700; *CFYG* 981, p. 11526.

⁸⁵ *ZZTJ* 211, p. 6704.

⁸⁶ *JTS* 196A, p. 5228; *XTS* 216A, p. 6081-2; *ZZTJ* 211, pp. 6704-6; *CFYG* 118, p. 1407.

Princess Jincheng.⁸⁷ When a Tibetan minister was sent to the Tao River to mourn the Tibetan soldiers and then to the Tang borders to ask for peace, Xuanzong refused. The *Zizhi Tongjian* gives as the reason for the refusal that the Tibetans "used the protocol of an equal country" when asking for peace, and the *Xin Tangshu* says that the Tibetans "relying on their power, asked to be on equal terms with the Son of Heaven and used arrogant language."⁸⁸ This was an open challenge to Chinese superiority. To the Chinese, the Tibetans could only be an outer subject. Such an attitude was reflected in the edict of 714 and in all the official letters from Tang to Tibet before 780.⁸⁹

In 715, Tibet allied itself with the Arabs for the first time and established a new king in Ferghana, a tributary state to the Tang court. They launched an attack against the former king, who then fled to Kucha, the headquarter of the Protectorate of Anxi, asking for rescue. A Tang Investigating Censor who was on a mission there, joined with the Protector-General of Anxi in a military action, fighting successfully all the way from Kucha to Ferghana.⁹⁰

From 716 to 719, Tibet made several requests for a peace agreement which Xuanzong did not reject, but no specific treaty was concluded until 732. There were two reasons for the delay. First, border conflicts between the two countries remained active, such as the one in Songzhou in 716 and the clashes in Qinghai and the Western Regions in 717.⁹¹ The second obstacle was Xuanzong's refusal to place his personal signature on a treaty text. To the Chinese, signatures on a treaty agreement may not have seemed so important as they did to the Tibetans. Also, it was considered demeaning for the Chinese emperor to personally sign an agreement. It was a Tibetan custom to have signatures of the sovereigns on a treaty.

⁸⁷ *XTS* 216A, p. 6082; *ZZTJ* 211, p. 6706.

⁸⁸ *XTS* 216A, p. 6082; *ZZTJ* 211, p. 6706. Wang Zhong holds that this reason does not seem right since, having been recently defeated, the Tibetans would not have been likely to use arrogant language when asking for peace. The *JTS* 196A (pp. 5228-9) has a different version of this story, stating that the Tibetans' request for equal terms was raised several years after the peace proposal. Wang Zhong surmises that the reason for Tang's refusal may lie in the fact that the Tibetans continued to make incursions even after they had proposed a treaty agreement. Wang Zhong 1958, p. 64.

⁸⁹ Kaneko 1974; 1988.

⁹⁰ *ZZTJ* 211, p. 6713; Beckwith 1987, pp. 81-3. An inscribed stone tablet was erected to commemorate this campaign, see Cen Zhongmian 1964, pp. 166-7.

⁹¹ *ZZTJ* 211, p. 6716; p. 6728. Regarding the battle in Qinghai, *JTS* (103, p. 3190) says that Guo Zhiyun was in command during the 718 battle.

Princess Jincheng presented a memorial in 717 urging a signed treaty:

The Chief Ministers here have told me that the *btsan-po* very much wants a peace treaty, and that it is also proper that the emperor should personally sign the sworn treaty text. In the past you did not agree to do so personally. When I came to wed, it was for friendship. But now, there are disturbances. The situation is becoming uneasy. Please show pity on me, far away in another country. Your personal signature will not establish a regular practice. It will achieve the long-term friendship of the two countries.⁹²

In 718 the Tibetan *btsan-po* sent a letter to Xuanzong, pressing further his demand for a new sworn treaty bearing the signatures of the emperor and Chief Ministers. The letter stated that it was because the Tang officials Zhang Xuanbiao and Li Zhigu attacked the Tibetan people that Tibet had despatched troops. It accused Tang of violating the treaty by building a fort in Baishui, which was stipulated in the treaty to become a no-man's-land between Tang and Tibet, and said that Tibet had therefore also built a fort in Baishui. The letter also requested that neither Tang nor Tibet should communicate with the Turks.⁹³ Obviously, Tang did not agree to write another treaty, for in 719 Tibet made yet another request for one, which Xuanzong refused on the grounds that if there was no good faith, there was no use in having a sworn covenant.⁹⁴

Conflicts from 722 to 729

Competition continued in the Western Regions, especially over Little Balur (present Gilgit in northern Kashmir), which was a crucial passageway from Tibet to the Tarim Basin. Tang had a father-son relationship with its king and established the Suiyuan Army there around 712. This effectively checked the advance of the Tibetans.⁹⁵ Tang also gave the title of king to the ruler of Great Balur (Baltistan) in 717,⁹⁶ southeast of Little Balur. Little Balur had split off from Great Balur some time earlier. The Tibetans several times remarked to Little Balur's king that "It is not that

⁹² CFYG 979, p. 11500; QTW 100, pp. 1289-90.

⁹³ XTS 216A, pp. 6082-3; ZZTJ 212, p. 6734; CFYG 981, pp. 11526-7; QTW 999, pp. 13078-9.

⁹⁴ ZZTJ 212, p. 6736; CFYG 980, p. 11511.

⁹⁵ Sato 1958, pp. 442-3.

⁹⁶ Beckwith 1987, p. 87.

we want your country. We just want to pass through to attack the Four Garrisons.”

In 722, the Tibetans laid siege to Little Balur. The king asked for assistance, saying that if Little Balur fell into Tibetan hands, the whole of the Western Regions would belong to Tibet. Accordingly, the Protector-General of Beiting sent an army made up of Chinese and non-Chinese to drive the Tibetans back.⁹⁷ The uncertainties of politics at the Tibetan court placed Princess Jincheng under considerable pressure. In 724 Tegin, the king of Zabulistan, sent an envoy to Tang bearing a report that in 723 Princess Jincheng had sent a secret letter to the king of Kashmir, asking for asylum. The king of Kashmir had gladly assented to that request, but was afraid of Tibetan attacks, and therefore had asked for military assistance from Tegin. Tegin consented and sent the envoy to Tang for advice. Xuanzong expressed appreciation and awarded him silk.⁹⁸ The princess did not, however, go to Kashmir.

In 724, clashes with Tibet again broke out along the northwestern border. Wang Junchuo, the Military Commissioner of Longyou, reported success in battles with Tibet and presented captives to the court.⁹⁹ Supported by Wang Junchuo, who was an advocate of a strong-arm policy towards the non-Chinese, Xuanzong became more interested in a bellicose policy even though other officials such as Chief Minister Zhang Yue urged a peace policy. In the winter of 726-727, following a Tibetan raid on Ganzhou, Wang Junchuo fought successfully west of Koko Nor.¹⁰⁰ Unfortunately, Wang was killed in 727 by the Uighurs.¹⁰¹ About the same time, the Türgish, allied with the Tibetans, attacked the headquarters of the Protectorate of Anxi in Kucha.¹⁰² The period between 727 and 729 saw a series of encounters between Tang and Tibet. Tang recaptured the Fortress of Shibao from Tibet near Koko Nor and set up an army there.¹⁰³

The Second Treaty with Tibet in 732

In 730, Tibet made a peace proposal. Xuanzong was going to refuse the request, the reason still being the Tibetans' previous use of arro-

⁹⁷ *XTS* 216A, p. 6083; 221B, p. 6251; *ZZTJ* 212, p. 6752; see also Sato 1958, pp. 444-6.

⁹⁸ *ZZTJ* 212, p. 6762; *CFYG* 979, p. 11501.

⁹⁹ *CFYG* 42, p. 480.

¹⁰⁰ *ZZTJ* 213, pp. 6776-7.

¹⁰¹ *JTS* 103, p. 3192; *XTS* 133, p. 4547.

¹⁰² *JTS* 194B, p. 5191; *XTS* 215B, p. 6067; *ZZTJ* 213, pp. 6775-6; p. 6779.

¹⁰³ Sato 1958, pp. 459-61.

gant language. Huangfu Weiming, then Companion of Prince Zhong, tried to persuade the emperor to agree to the peace request, blaming the Tibetan frontier generals, who had sought to gain merit through military success, for the arrogant attitude. He pointed out the great losses Tang had suffered from the constant wars and suggested that Tang send envoys to comfort Princess Jincheng and discuss peace with Tibet. This may have been an attempt to use Princess Jincheng to intercede. Xuanzong then despatched Huangfu to Tibet.¹⁰⁴ Huangfu was later promoted to the position of the Military Commissioner of Longyou and led battles against the Tibetans.¹⁰⁵

According to the Chinese sources, the Tibetan *btsan-po* was very pleased to see the Chinese envoys and showed them all the letters sent by Tang since Taizong's time. He sent a high-ranking official, Lun Mingxilie (Blon Mye-slebs¹⁰⁶), who had a good command of the Chinese language, to go to Tang with Huangfu. In the tenth month of 730 Mye-slebs arrived at the Tang court with a letter from the *btsan-po* to Xuanzong, which was carefully worded in accordance with the proper rhetoric that the Chinese had established, while stating clearly that it was the Chinese who had violated the peace agreement and started hostilities on the border. The *btsan-po* said he had sent envoys to Tang several times, but that they had been obstructed by the border generals, and that the *btsan-po* had already ordered the border generals to make no incursions and to return any Chinese who had earlier defected to Tibet.¹⁰⁷

In reply, Xuanzong gave Mye-slebs favorable treatment and offered him Chinese official dress. Xuanzong despatched Cui Lin, Chamberlain of the Court of State Ceremonial and Censor-in-chief, to Tibet to confirm the peace agreement. Cui Lin left in early 731, bringing with him letters from Xuanzong to the *btsan-po* and to Princess Jincheng, imperial gifts and Confucian classics and literary works. These works had earlier

¹⁰⁴ It is not clear when Tibet made the peace request and when Huangfu Weiming went to Tibet. *JTS* 196A (p. 5230) and *THY* 97 (p. 1733) record the year as 729, while *ZZTJ* 213 (p. 6789; pp. 6790-1) records it as 730. *XTS* 216A (p. 6084) gives no specific time. According to a Tibetan source, in both 729 and 730 there were Tang envoys to Tibet, see Wang Zhong 1958, pp. 72-3.

¹⁰⁵ *XTS* 5, p. 143.

¹⁰⁶ Francke 1914, p. 39.

¹⁰⁷ *JTS* 196A, pp. 5230-1; *XTS* 216A, pp. 6084-5; *ZZTJ* 213, p. 6791; *CFYG* 979, pp. 11502-3.

been requested by Princess Jincheng.¹⁰⁸

In 731, another Tibetan mission arrived at the court. Tang agreed to the Tibetan request to set up a border market at Chiling in modern Qinghai.¹⁰⁹ A peace treaty was concluded in 732.¹¹⁰ Both Tang and Tibet erected steles to mark the borders as discussed below. The Chinese text of the treaty is preserved.¹¹¹

The Chinese treaty text refers to China as uncle and Tibet as nephew. It also says: "We shall establish a calendar," and "The law upholds the principle of having a single calendar, and does not recognize the ritual of two beginnings of the year." This implies that the Chinese attempted to impose the superiority of the Son of Heaven on Tibet by the introduction of their calendar to Tibet. This made the treaty more like a declaration of incorporation from the Chinese point of view rather than a mutual agreement between equals, because in the Chinese hierarchical political system only the Son of Heaven had the right to issue the calendar. This symbolized the relations between Heaven and the Son of Heaven, who was to rule the world on behalf of Heaven, and between the Son of Heaven and the various lords, who were his chief subjects. The *Zhouli* says that at the end of each year, the Son of Heaven "distributes the calendar to the feudal states."¹¹² On several occasions during the Sui-Tang period the Chinese calendar was received by foreign countries.¹¹³

Through a Chinese envoy, Princess Jincheng in 733 requested that the two sides should establish a stone stele in Chiling to mark the demar-

¹⁰⁸ *JTS* 196A, p. 5231; *XTS* 104, p. 4007; 216A, p. 6085; *ZZTJ* 213, p. 6794. When the request was first received, Yu Xiulie, with the rank of proofreader, objected, saying that Tang could give the "barbarians" large quantities of material goods but should not give them the classics for fear that the Tibetans would learn from them tactics and military stratagems. But Chief Minister Pei Guangting and other ministers argued that these works would also teach loyalty, faith, proper conduct and righteousness and would gradually "civilize" the Tibetans. Xuanzong agreed with Pei.

¹⁰⁹ *XTS* 216A, p. 6085; *ZZTJ* 213, p. 6796.

¹¹⁰ There is confusion about whether the date was 732 or 733. In his study of the treaty, Tan Liren (1988, p. 132) convincingly argues that the year should be 732.

¹¹¹ For the treaty text, see *CFYG* 979, p. 11503; *QTW* 990, pp. 12962-3. For a translation, see Pan Yihong 1992a, pp. 153-4.

¹¹² *Zhouli Zhushu* 26, "Taishi," p. 953.

¹¹³ For example, the Sui calendar was issued to the Eastern Turks in the first month of 586 (*SUIS* 1, p. 23); Nanzhao in 794, after concluding a covenant with Tang, received the Tang calendar for the tenth year of Zhenyuan (794) (*Manshu Jiaozhu* 10, pp. 251-2).

cation line between their territories.¹¹⁴ In the same year, a Tibetan mission arrived at the Tang court with a letter from the *btsan-po* to Xuanzong. The letter refers to China and Tibet as both being great countries and to the peace agreement. It expresses the wish that in order to maintain peace as a long term policy, the border generals should be informed of the agreement to prevent them from provoking trouble.¹¹⁵

On the day when the stone stele was erected in 733, both sides had officials present, with Zhang Shougui, a Military Commissioner, and Li Xingyi, a general, on the Chinese side, and Mangbuzhi (Mang po-rje, = "great lord"¹¹⁶) on Tibetan side. Afterwards, the three went to Jiannan and Hexi to inform the various border prefectures that "the two countries are at peace. You must not attack each other." And they went on to the territory of Tibet to proclaim the peace.¹¹⁷ Tibet also set up its own stone stele.¹¹⁸ In 822, when a Tang envoy passed Chiling on his embassy to (or from) Tibet, he saw that the stele set up by Tibet in 733 was still there, while the one set up by the Chinese had already been destroyed.¹¹⁹

Confrontations from 737 to 753

Peace was preserved between the two states until 737,¹²⁰ when conflict broke out again. Early in 737 Cui Xiyi, Military Commissioner of

¹¹⁴ *JTS* 112, p. 3336; *XTS* 78, p. 3531; *ZZTJ* 213, p. 6800; *CFYG* 979, p. 11503.

¹¹⁵ *XTS* 216A, p. 6085; *CFYG* 979, pp. 11503-4.

¹¹⁶ Identified by Beckwith 1987, p. 114.

¹¹⁷ *JTS* 112, p. 3336; *THY* 6, p. 76; 97, p. 1733; *CFYG* 979, p. 11503. The two Tang histories differ from these sources in their accounts of these events: in 734 Xuanzong sent Li Quan, General of the Left Imperial Insignia Guard to erect the stele in Chiling. See *JTS* 8, p. 201; 196A, p. 5233. *XTS* 216A (p. 6085) says that following the erection of the stele, Zhang Shougui, Li Xingyi and Mangbuzhi went to make known the agreement. Tan Liren conjectures that, whether the stele was erected in 733 or in 734, Zhang Shougui could not have been present, since in 733, he left his post in Longyou, went to Hebei and was involved in battles with the Khitan there. He concludes that Xuanzong ordered that Zhang Shougui and Li Xingyi go to erect the stele in 733 but what in fact happened thereafter is not clear, see Tan Liren 1988, pp. 132-3.

¹¹⁸ *JTS* 196, p. 5231; *CFYG* 981, p. 11527.

¹¹⁹ *XTS* 216B, p. 6103.

¹²⁰ *CFYG* 358 (p. 4245) and 396 (p. 4699) state that in 733 the Tibetans made an incursion but were defeated by Wang Zhongsi, who was then promoted to be General of the Left Imperial Insignia Guard. But *ZZTJ* records Wang's promotion as being made in 738 after battles with Tibet under the command of Du Xiwang, which is more likely to be true. *ZZTJ* 214, p. 6835. See also *JTS* 103, p. 3198; *XTS* 133, p. 4552; *CFYG* 384, p. 4571.

Hexi, went into Tibetan territory, mounted an offensive against the Tibetans west of Qinghai and killed over 2,000.

Before the attack two events were the prelude to this clash. In 737 the Tibetans attacked Little Balur again, and its king immediately called for Tang intervention. Tang asked Tibet to stop the incursion but without success.¹²¹ This made Tang feel entitled to act on the grounds that Little Balur was a Tang subject, an attack on which was a violation of the peace treaty.¹²²

The other incident occurred not long after the peace agreement of 732, when Cui Xiyi suggested to the Tibetan border general Qilixu (Khri-gzigs) that since the two countries were at peace the tree-palisade and defense patrols should be moved away in order to not hinder people from ploughing. Despite Khri-gzigs' objection, Cui insisted. Consequently the two concluded a local covenant sealed with the sacrifice of a white dog, and removed the palisade and border guards. Soon Tibetan livestock covered the border fields.

After the Tibetan attack on Little Balur, Sun Hui, a retainer of Cui Xiyi, who was on a mission to the court, proposed to make a sudden attack on Tibet, taking advantage of its unpreparedness. Xuanzong despatched Zhao Huicong, a eunuch, to the frontiers to observe the situation. Upon his arrival in Liangzhou, Zhao Huicong forged a decree ordering an attack on the Tibetans. Cui Xiyi then had to carry out the offensive into the Tibetan land early in 737.

The fact that Zhao Huicong and Sun Hui were generously rewarded by Xuanzong after the Tang victory showed Xuanzong's approval of the attack. The attack put an end to the peace between the two countries which had been shaky from the start. It is recorded, however, that Cui Xiyi became morose because he had broken the covenant and he was removed to another post. He and Zhao Huicong both saw a bad luck omen—a white dog—which was the sacrificial animal with which Cui had made his covenant with the Tibetans. They both died soon after. Sun Hui is said to have been executed for some other unspecified crime.¹²³ The Chinese historian appears to be drawing a moral by implying that the three deserved to die.

The breaking of the treaty does not, however, seem to have been an accidental event that occurred on some officials' own initiative. Rather it

¹²¹ *JTS* 196A, p. 5233; *XTS* 216A, p. 6085; *ZZTJ* 214, pp. 6826-7.

¹²² *Qujiang Zhang Xiansheng Wenji* 11, pp. 68-9.

¹²³ *JTS* 196A, p. 5233; *XTS* 216A, p. 6085-6; *ZZTJ* 214, pp. 6826-7.

may have been intended by the court. After the Tibetans had taken control of Little Balur, Tang felt it necessary to attack the Tibetans on their eastern borders in order to prevent a possible Tibetan alliance with the Türgish.¹²⁴ The prevalent idea was that Confucian norms could be applied only to insiders, that is, to the Chinese, and not to outsiders, the non-Chinese. In Xuanzong's time Liu Kuang said that courtesy and deference were used only in communications between gentlemen and should not be used when dealing with "barbarians."¹²⁵

A Chinese general offensive against Tibet was launched in 738 by the Military Commissioners of Hexi, Longyou and Jiannan. The stele bearing the Chinese sworn treaty of 732 was destroyed.¹²⁶ From then until the end of Xuanzong's reign, the Tibetan frontier remained a principal focus of Tang concern. The continual wars brought gains and losses to both sides. In 740, Tang recaptured the Anrong Fortress (in Sichuan). It was besieged by the Tibetans later in the year and attacked again the following year, but the Tibetans were driven off.¹²⁷ In 741, when after the death of Princess Jincheng in 739 (or 740), the Tibetans sent in a request for a peace settlement, Xuanzong refused.¹²⁸

The military expedition of 747 led by Gao Xianzhi, Vice Protector-General of Anxi, into the region west of the Pamirs not only resulted in Tang taking over control of Little Balur, which had formed a marriage alliance with Tibet in 740, thus enabling Tibet to subdue the nearby states, but also reenforced Tang influence in the regions west of the Pamirs.¹²⁹ Despite the opposition of Wang Zhongsi, the Military Commissioner of Hexi and Longyou, Xuanzong insisted on recapturing Shibao, which had again been lost to Tibet in 741. After Wang was purged by Li Linfu in the power struggle at the Tang court, Xuanzong appointed Geshu Han Military Commissioner of Longyou. In 749 Geshu captured the strategic fortress, but his armies lost half their soldiers.¹³⁰ The area of Jiuqu, handed over to Tibet in 711 as we have seen, was recovered in 753.¹³¹

¹²⁴ Beckwith 1987, pp. 114-5.

¹²⁵ *XTS* 215A, p. 6025.

¹²⁶ *JTS* 196A, pp. 5233-4; *XTS* 216A, p. 6086; *ZZTJ* 214, p. 6833.

¹²⁷ *ZZTJ* 214, p. 6840; p. 6842; p. 6844.

¹²⁸ *JTS* 196A, p. 5235; *XTS* 216A, p. 6086; *ZZTJ* 214, p. 6843; Sato 1958, p. 478.

¹²⁹ Chavannes 1969, pp. 215-6; Beckwith 1987, p. 123.

¹³⁰ *JTS* 103, pp. 3199-200; *ZZTJ* 215, pp. 6878-9; p. 6896.

¹³¹ For a summary of the events in this period, see Twitchett 1979, pp. 432-3.

From Supporting Nanzhao's Unification to Aggression against Nanzhao

To deal with the Tibetan power, Tang encouraged the unification of the Nanzhao kingdom in Yunnan. From early Tang the Chinese had established *jimi* administration there, but from the 650's onward the border areas in Yunnan as well as Sichuan had been sites of contention between Tang and Tibet for the allegiance of that region's various non-Chinese peoples.¹³² The establishment of the Military Commissioner of Jiannan in 719 had the clear purpose of resisting the Tibetans in the west and pacifying the "barbarians" in the south.¹³³ Under Xuanzong, the allegiance of the various non-Chinese peoples in Yunnan was an issue often discussed in the correspondence between Tang and Tibet.¹³⁴

In 738, Xuanzong conferred the title of King of Yunnan on Puluoge of Nanzhao to encourage the existence of a buffer state between Tang and Tibet. The formation of the Nanzhao kingdom was a complex process in which both Tang and Tibet exerted influence, but it seems clear that at this time it was the positive support of China that ensured the consolidation of Nanzhao.¹³⁵ In 738 the Military Commissioner of Jiannan led an attack on the Anrong Fortress, but failed to take it. Xuanzong, however, persisted, being encouraged by an officer in Jiannan who was made Military Commissioner and finally recaptured Anrong in 740.¹³⁶

Later, this well-thought-out policy was abandoned, due mainly to the power struggle at the court. An occasion for Chinese intervention was provided when, provoked by excessive demands and abusive treatment by the Governor (*taishou*) of Yunnan Commandery, the king of Nanzhao attacked and killed the governor and seized the commandery. In 751, despite the king's apologies and offers of amends, the Military Commissioner of Jiannan, Xianyu Zhongtong, made this a pretext for a major offensive against Nanzhao, pushing the latter into an alliance with the Tibetans.

Xianyu's aggression may not have been the result of his own decision. His patron, Yang Guozhong, then the dictator at the Tang court, was eager for military success to increase the prestige of the army in Sichuan, where his power base was, and thereby strengthen his position in the

¹³² Wang Jilin 1976, pp. 125-37; Backus 1981, pp. 22-3.

¹³³ ZZTJ 212, p. 6738; 215, p. 6850.

¹³⁴ Wang Jilin 1976, pp. 166-9.

¹³⁵ In his extensive study of the Nanzhao kingdom Backus (1981, chapter 3) discusses the rise of Nanzhao and the roles of Tang-Tibetan rivalry in the process.

¹³⁶ Wang Jilin 1976, pp. 169-72.

power struggle vis-à-vis An Lushan. Xianyu suffered a severe defeat, but Yang Guozhong tried to cover it up and in the following year, having made himself the Military Commissioner of Jiannan, launched a further campaign against Nanzhao which ended in disaster. Wars continued during the next two years, in the course of which the Chinese continued to suffer great losses.¹³⁷ Nanzhao became a vassal of the Tibetans, and together they menaced China's southwestern borders for the next forty years.

While Chinese conflicts with the Turkish peoples who dominated Mongolia during Tang were a continuation of an age-old problem, and the wars with Koguryō were also conditioned by traditional attitudes inherited from earlier times, the emergence of a strong military power based in the Tibetan highlands was unprecedented and also unrepeated in later centuries. It therefore presented new problems for Chinese foreign policy. The relatively self-sufficient economic structure of the Tibetan kingdom strengthened the country's independence and reduced the effectiveness of the traditional Chinese policy of using silk and other products to purchase peace from the nomads. Another important factor was the location of Tibet to the west of China and the geographic situation which placed it in contact with other literate civilizations, especially that of India, which, in contrast particularly with Korea, gave it an alternative source for cultural influences. This was no doubt one reason why the traditional Chinese use of political investiture to exert control over non-Chinese polities was ineffective in the case of Tibet.

While Tang gave political titles many times to the rulers of other non-Chinese peoples, nomadic or sedentary, throughout the history of Tang-Tibet relations the conferment of political titles only took place twice and only at the very beginning of the relationship: once in 641 to the Tibetan Chief Minister Ludongzan and once in 649 to the Tibetan *btsan-po*. Moreover, in contrast with the nomadic peoples, the Tibetans demonstrated their interest in occupation of territory, and were thus bound to clash with the Tang empire.

The frequent military encounters between Tang and Tibet began with competition over the land of the Tuyuhun, and then, after Tibetan occupation of the Tuyuhun lands in 670, Tang had to cope with Tibetan in-

¹³⁷ Backus 1981, pp. 69-77.

cursions across China's own northwestern frontiers. Tibet and Tang also competed for control over the Western Regions, each side trying to win over the Western Turks and the oasis states. One decisive success was China's recovery of the Four Garrisons in the Western Regions in 692, thus ensuring Chinese influence in that area until the mid-eighth century. To deal with the Tibetans' ambitions on its southwestern frontiers, Tang attempted to win the allegiance of the various non-Chinese peoples in Yunnan. In 738 Xuanzong recognized the king of Nanzhao to encourage the existence of a buffer state between Tang and Tibet, but Tang's aggression towards Nanzhao eventually pushed its king into the arms of Tibet.

Between military encounters, the two sides made efforts to establish peaceful relations. One Chinese policy that had some success was the sending of Chinese princesses to marry the Tibetan kings in 641 and 710. Each marriage played an important role in maintaining some degree of peace. Sworn treaties were concluded in 706 and 732, but they meant different things to the two sides and were not very effective. While the Tibetans demanded an equal footing and reciprocity with Tang, the Chinese insisted on acceptance of their claims of superiority. Xuanzong refused to sign his name on any treaty, and from China's own point of view the Chinese sworn treaty text of 732 was rather a declaration of incorporation. Moreover, each treaty was violated first by the Chinese. The prevailing idea was that Confucian norms could be applied only to insiders and not to outsiders, the non-Chinese. The changed situation during the second half of the dynasty, when China was riven by civil war and on the defensive, is discussed in Chapter 10.