

## Chapter 8

### China, the Second Turkish Empire and the Western Turks, 679-755

Even as the Tang royal power was passing into the hands of Empress Wu and her family, as always, internal political dissension in China provided the opportunity for nomadic power to reemerge in Mongolia. In this chapter we will examine Chinese relations with the revived Eastern Turkish power, known as the second Turkish empire (682-745), as well as with the Khitan and Xi on their eastern flank, and with the Türgish, who became the leading force among the Western Turks. A new factor in the far west were the Arabs, who first made their appearance in Central Asia during this period. Other complicating factors that weakened China's ability to respond were the exhausting campaigns in Korea (Chapter 6) and the emergence of Tibet as a major power (Chapter 7).

#### The Restoration of the Second Turkish Empire

In 679, the Eastern Turks, then under Chinese sovereignty, began a movement to restore their independent power. Chieftains subject to the Grand Protectorate of Chanyu revolted and set up a descendant of the royal Ashina clan as qaghan. Almost all the Eastern Turks who had formerly submitted joined in and the *jimi fuzhou* administrative structure quickly broke down. The court under Empress Wu acted immediately by despatching troops to put down the rebellion. However, after initial successes the Chinese general became overconfident and suffered a serious defeat.

The following year, another Chinese general, Pei Xingjian, inflicted a major defeat on the Turks, who put to death their newly created qaghan and offered his head as a sign of their submission. They were not yet ready to return to their subject status, however, and in 681 they set up another scion of the royal clan, Ashina Funian as qaghan. Pei Xingjian succeeded in persuading Funian to surrender with the promise that he would not be punished. In the court, however, Chief Minister Pei Yan, who was jealous of Pei Xingjian's military merit, insisted that Funian be executed. The fact that Funian and other Turkish chiefs lost their lives as a

result of Chinese court politics,<sup>1</sup> led to even stronger anti-Chinese sentiment, and the following year saw yet more forceful military attacks on the Tang frontiers led by the new Turkish qaghan Guduolu (Qutlugh). It is generally considered that the second Turkish empire began in 682, when Qutlugh became the qaghan.

As in the Former Han dynasty, when the resettlement of the Southern Xiongnu eventually helped restore the nomadic power, the Turks who had been brought under the Tang *jimi* administration were able to recover their strength. Chinese control over such people was inherently vulnerable because it was sustained by only a small number of troops and depended mainly on the willingness or cooperation of the non-Chinese themselves. Under the *jimi* system, the Turks had kept their customs, their military organization and their own cultural identity. The period from 630 to the revival of the Turkish empire in 682 was considered by the Turks as a time of national subjugation and humiliation. The Turkish inscriptions present the perspective of the Turks on their relations with China all too clearly:

Since the lords and peoples were not in accord, and the Chinese people were wily and deceitful, since they were tricky and created a rift between younger and elder brothers, and caused the lords and peoples to slander one another, the Turkish people caused the state which they had established to go to ruin, and their kagan (= qaghan), whom they had crowned, collapse. Their sons, worthy of becoming lords, became slaves, and their daughters, worthy of becoming ladies, became servants to the Chinese people. The Turkish lords abandoned their Turkish titles. Those lords who were in China held the Chinese titles and obeyed the Chinese emperor and gave their services to him for fifty years. For the benefit of the Chinese, they went on campaigns up to (the land of) the Bükli kagan in the east, where the sun rises, and as far as the Iron Gate in the west. For the benefit of the Chinese emperor they conquered countries.<sup>2</sup>

The inscriptions also describe the ways in which the Chinese lured the Turks into acceptance of at least loose control by the Chinese: the Chinese gave the Turks gold, silver and silk in abundance so as to cause them to come close to China's borders. Once the Turks settled close in, the Chinese treated them harshly. Some Turks were deceived by being told that if

<sup>1</sup> *JTS* 84, p. 2804; *XTS* 108, p. 4088; *ZZTJ* 202, pp. 6404-5.

<sup>2</sup> "The Kül Tigin Inscription." See Tekin 1968, translation, p. 264. His translation, slightly modified, is used here.

a people lived far away, the Chinese gave them cheap goods, but if a people lived close to them, then the Chinese gave them valuable goods, and so they moved close to the Chinese. Subsequently they were killed in great numbers.<sup>3</sup>

The ineffectiveness of settlement policy was pointed out by some Tang Chinese. In his memorial in about 696, Xue Qiang, a remonstrance official, pointed out that it was for the sake of an empty name with no substance behind it that Chinese rulers had adopted the practice of letting non-Chinese settle close to China. He also opposed the practice of accepting the non-Chinese into the Tang court as hostages on the grounds that the non-Chinese thereby gained strategic geographical information and intelligence about how the Chinese frontiers were guarded. Even when non-Chinese were nominally given Chinese official titles of general, there were few among them who did not make incursions into Chinese territory. He suggested that China should refuse permission for any additional non-Chinese to come to the court and not allow those already in China to return home. His opinion, however, was not given much notice.<sup>4</sup>

Liu Kuang, an official historian in Xuanzong's time and the eldest son of the famous historian Liu Zhiji, was sharply critical of the resettlement of non-Chinese inside China. He summed up succinctly the sad dilemma the policy caused: when the "barbarians" were strong, China exhausted its manpower in attacking them. When they became submissive China suffered the expense of nourishing them. The Chinese had been put to work in this fashion by the "barbarians" for thousands of years.<sup>5</sup> Liu Kuang accurately captured the essence of both the "outer frontier" and "inner frontier" strategies of the nomads. Though the Chinese aimed to use the submitted nomads as a military force to keep peace on the borders and reinforce the legitimacy of the Son of Heaven, in actual fact the Chinese government was not strong enough to effectively control them. Once an opportunity presented itself, the nomads would again rebel. This was the state of affairs that led to the breakdown during Empress Wu's reign of the *jimi* system controlling the Turks.

<sup>3</sup> "The Kül Tigin Inscription." See Tekin 1968, translation, pp. 261-2.

<sup>4</sup> TD 200, pp. 1085-6; CFYG 544, p. 6522. Cen Zhongmian (1958, pp. 337-8) is of the opinion that Xue presented his memorial in 697.

<sup>5</sup> TD 200, pp. 1086-7; XTS 215A, pp. 6023-4.

### Empress Wu: Compromise for Peace

Until his death in 691, the Turkish Qutlugh Qaghan waged a series of battles against the Khitan and Tiele, succeeded in driving the Uighurs away from the Ötükän Mountains and in setting up his headquarters there. The Turkish inscriptions record these military campaigns and the Turkish efforts to reestablish and consolidate the second empire.<sup>6</sup> He also launched constant attacks on the Chinese frontier. In 683, so intense was his attack on Fengzhou that the court considered abolishing the prefecture in order to concentrate on the defense of Lingzhou and Xiazhou. Tang Xiujing, Adjutant (*sima*) of Fengzhou, expressed strong opposition to this in a memorial, arguing that abandoning Fengzhou would actually open up China even wider to nomadic incursions. The court agreed with him.<sup>7</sup>

In the competition between China and the Turks, the various tribes of the Tiele people followed different strategies for self-protection, some being pro-Turk, others pro-Tang, and thereby influenced the balance of power. In 686,<sup>8</sup> the Buqu and Tongra of the Tiele north of the Gobi rose in revolt against Tang. Tang despatched troops from both Hexi and Western Turks under the Protectorate of Jinshan in the Western Regions and inflicted a crushing defeat on them. The Western Turks, however, also attacked the Uighurs, thus causing chaos in the region.

The court brought those Tiele who submitted under the supervision of the Protectorate of Anbei, the seat of which was then moved to Tongcheng south of the Gobi, but as punishment for their attacks on the Uighurs it refused the request of the Western Turkish chiefs to come to the Tang court. The Tiele, as a whole, were in a weak position. Chen Zi'ang, then a low ranking clerk under the Army Supervisor (*jianjun*) of the Hexi troops, presented a memorial on behalf of the Army Supervisor urging the court to attract the Tiele people and to accept the Western Turkish chiefs' request.<sup>9</sup>

While no specific measures were taken by Empress Wu with regard to the Tiele, around 685 she appointed the son of Ashina Mishe and

<sup>6</sup> See the translations of the "Kül Tigin inscription," the "Bilga Kagan inscription" and the "Tonyukuk inscription" in Tekin 1968, pp. 261-90. See also Ma Changshou 1957, p. 66.

<sup>7</sup> *JTS* 93, p. 2978; *XTS* 111, p. 4149; *ZZTJ* 203, p. 6414.

<sup>8</sup> *ZZTJ* (203, p. 6435) states that the rebellion occurred in 685, but Cen Zhongmian's study shows it should be dated 686. See Cen 1958, p. 312.

<sup>9</sup> *Chen Boyu Wenji* 4, pp. 32-4; 8, 8, pp. 73-5; *ZZTJ* 203, p. 6435; Cen Zhongmian 1958, pp. 310-20; Xue Zongzheng 1992, pp. 458-61.

the son of Ashina Buzhen of the Western Turks to succeed to their father's titles of qaghan and Protectors-General in order to maintain some control by the Ashina clan over the scattered Western Turks. Both Mishe and Buzhen had attached themselves to Tang during Taizong's reign, and had been appointed qaghan and Protectors-general by Gaozong. The titles were later passed on to their sons.<sup>10</sup>

While Empress Wu tried to suppress the revival of the Eastern Turks, she had other preoccupations internally. Having assumed power as Empress Dowager in 684, she was faced with the immediate task of consolidating her own position in the face of a revolt against her by supporters of the Li royal house. Cheng Wuting, an excellent general in charge of Turkish military affairs, was accused of involvement with the anti-Wu group and was executed. The Turks were overjoyed.<sup>11</sup> In 688 another short-lived revolt staged by Tang princes challenged Wu's rule. Empress Wu, however, prevailed and proclaimed herself emperor of the Zhou dynasty in 690.

Her assumption of the rulership and the death of Qutlugh in 691 made possible restoration of peace between China and the Turks.<sup>12</sup> The new qaghan, Mochuo (Bäg Chor), the younger brother of Qutlugh, in 695 despatched an embassy to China to ask, in the Chinese wording, to "surrender." Empress Wu responded by conferring the title of general and duke on Bäg Chor Qaghan.<sup>13</sup> The actual relationship, however, was obviously between two essentially equal adversaries (*diguó*).<sup>14</sup>

Between 696 and 697, the Khitan, who had been brought under the *jimi* system in 648, broke away from China, provoked by ill treatment from the Chinese Area Commander of Yingzhou. With Yingzhou as their base, they launched an invasion, pressing southward to the present Beijing area and into the Hebei region.<sup>15</sup> Bäg Chor Qaghan volunteered to attack the Khitan on the condition that China send a prince to marry his daughter, and return the Turks who had formerly surrendered and had been resettled in the Hexi area. Obviously, he had his own agenda: to win back his for-

<sup>10</sup> *JTS* 194B, pp. 5188-90; *XTS* 215B, pp. 6064-6; *Ise* 1968, pp. 258-9.

<sup>11</sup> *JTS* 83, p. 2785; *XTS* 111, pp. 4147-8; *ZZTJ* 203, pp. 6432-3.

<sup>12</sup> For details concerning the uprising and battles and the date of Guduolu's death, see Cen Zhongmian 1958, pp. 289-307; 8, pp. 308-25; *TD* 198, p. 1073; *JTS* 194A, pp. 5166-8; *XTS* 215A, pp. 6042-5.

<sup>13</sup> *JTS* 194A, p. 5168; *ZZTJ* 205, p. 6503.

<sup>14</sup> Mori Masao 1967, pp. 188-9; 1978, p. 119.

<sup>15</sup> *JTS* 199B, pp. 5350-1; *XTS* 219, pp. 6168-70; *ZZTJ* 205, 206.

mer subjects.

Empress Wu had to compromise with the Turks so that China could concentrate its forces against the Khitan. She conferred the title of qaghan on Bäg Chor.<sup>16</sup> This recognized the independent power of the Turks, even though the Chinese wording defined the Turks as subjects. In 697 Empress Wu sent two envoys, Yan Zhiwei and Tian Guidao, on a mission to the Turks. It is interesting to see how the two envoys' differing attitudes towards the Turks showed the vacillation of the Chinese in their treatment of their newly revived enemy. While Yan Zhiwei, at Bäg Chor's headquarters, performed a ritual dance before Bäg Chor, which etiquette prescribed as due only to an emperor, and went so far as to kiss the tip of Bäg Chor's boot, Tian Guidao, on the other hand, still believed that the Turks should be subject. He did not kowtow to Bäg Chor Qaghan and instead only made a respectful bow. Bäg Chor was furious and imprisoned Tian. He was even going to kill him, and was only dissuaded from doing so by his ministers.<sup>17</sup>

After attacking the Khitan, Bäg Chor in 697 made further requests: 1) that he send his daughter to marry a Chinese prince; 2) that China return the surrendered Turks who had settled inside six prefectures, and also return the land under the Protectorate of Chanyu;<sup>18</sup> 3) that China provide farming tools, seed-grain and iron to the Turks. At the Chinese court a bellicose response was proposed by some, while others argued in favor of making an agreement because the Khitan were still a major force to contend with on the frontier.

Empress Wu decided to accommodate Bäg Chor's requests. The court moved several thousand households of non-Chinese back to the steppe, provided 40,000 *hu* of seed grain, 50,000 *duan* of silks, 3,000 farm

<sup>16</sup> *JTS* 194A, pp. 5168-9; *XTS* 215A, p. 6045; *ZZTJ* 205, pp. 6509-10; *CFYG* 964, p. 11341.

<sup>17</sup> *JTS* 185A, pp. 4794-5; *XTS* 197, p. 5624; *ZZTJ* 206, p. 6515.

<sup>18</sup> There is ambiguity about which six prefectures Bäg Chor demanded. According to the "Biography of Tian Guidao" (*JTS* 185A, p. 4794; *XTS* 197, p. 5624), he requested the six Hu prefectures, which, as Pulleyblank concludes, refer to the prefectures of Lu, Li, Han, Sai, Yi and Qi. See Pulleyblank 1952, p. 330, note 1, and Cen Zhongmian 1964, pp. 123-4. Another opinion is that the six refer to the prefectures of Feng, Sheng, Ling, Xia, Shuo and Dai. See *TD* 198, p. 1073; *JTS* 194A, pp. 5168-9; *XTS* 215A, p. 6045; *ZZTJ* 206, p. 6516; *THY* 94, p. 1691; Zhang Qun 1955, pp. 275-9; Hou Linbo 1976, pp. 24-7. Zhang Qun (1955, pp. 327-8) also holds that the six prefectures were under the supervision of the Protectorate of Chanyu.

tools, 40,000 *jin* of iron and agreed to conclude a marriage contract.<sup>19</sup> After this agreement was decided upon by China, Tian Guidao came back to court where he and Yan Zhiwei argued again concerning the proper policy to be pursued in the future. Tian held that the Turks would not abide by any peace agreement and proposed a build-up of the frontier defenses, whereas Yan believed that the agreement would ensure peace.<sup>20</sup>

In 697, Bāg Chor brought the Khitan into submission. He had by then firmly reestablished the second Turkish empire. He made more demands which Empress Wu had to satisfy. In 698, Bāg Chor again requested a marriage between his daughter and a Chinese prince, an arrangement which would give the Turks an equal, if not higher, position by virtue of Bāg Chor's becoming the father-in-law of a Chinese prince. Disregarding a remonstrance that no Chinese prince had ever married a "barbarian woman" before,<sup>21</sup> Empress Wu decided to send her grandnephew, Wu Yanxiu, to the Turks to receive the lady, accompanied by Yan Zhiwei.

But Bāg Chor refused to recognize Wu Yanxiu as a member of the family of the Son of Heaven. He openly showed his contempt for the Wu family and proclaimed his intention to help reestablish the Li house of the Tang dynasty. He further accused the Chinese of providing boiled seed grain, gold and silver utensils of bad quality, silk textiles which were loosely woven, and of taking away the Chinese official dress which Bāg Chor had given to his ministers. He detained Wu Yanxiu, established Yan Zhiwei as qaghan of the southern front, and launched attacks on the Chinese frontier armies and the Hebei area in the fall of 698.<sup>22</sup>

Empress Wu decided to react with force. Expeditionary armies were organized under the command of her grandnephew Wu Chonggui. The Chinese sources say that the number of the recruits was no more than a thousand in a month, but when the Empress finally made the Tang prince Li Xian Heir Apparent and supreme commander of the expedition army in place of Wu Chonggui, people enthusiastically volunteered and before

<sup>19</sup> *JTS* 194A, pp. 5168-9; *XTS* 215A, p. 6045; *ZZTJ* 206, p. 6516.

<sup>20</sup> *ZZTJ* 206, p. 6516.

<sup>21</sup> *JTS* 91, p. 2939; *XTS* 120, p. 4321; *ZZTJ* 206, p. 6530. The version in the *XTS* that no Son of Heaven ever married a "barbarian" woman is probably wrong. The Zhou king married a non-Chinese. Also, in this case it was not the emperor but a prince for whom the Turks proposed a marriage.

<sup>22</sup> *JTS* 194A, pp. 5169-70; *XTS* 215A, pp. 6045-7; *ZZTJ* 206, pp. 6530-1; *THY* 94, pp. 1691-2.

long 50,000 men had joined the army. The Turks retreated.<sup>23</sup> Whether this is an exaggeration on the part of the Chinese historians is not clear, but this is not the only instance mentioned concerning the legitimacy of Empress Wu and the problem of succession. When the Khitan invaded, their leader sent a protest to the court asking the return of the Tang prince to the position as heir.<sup>24</sup> As we have seen, the Turks also challenged the legitimacy of the Wu family. All this may eventually have contributed to Wu's resignation from the throne.

After raids on the northwest in 700, 701, and 702 Bāg Chor in 703 again asked to marry his daughter to a son of the Crown Prince. This time Empress Wu presented two princes from the Li house for the Turks to choose from. The Turks then sent Wu Yanxiu back the following year.<sup>25</sup> The marriage did not, however, materialize. It was at this time that Tang, the Western Turks and the Kirghiz, a more northerly Turkish speaking people located on the upper Yenesei river, planned to join forces for an attack on the Eastern Turks.<sup>26</sup>

One severe consequence of the Turkish breakaway from the Tang *jimi* system was that Tang could no longer use these nomads for frontier defense. Not only did the Chinese have to use more of their own forces, but they also had to reinforce the frontiers against formerly submissive nomads like the Turks. Since these nomads were now familiar with the frontier areas, their incursions could be more effective. Faced with such a situation, Tang had to change to a more defensive policy based on the strengthening of frontier defenses. Before the end of Empress Wu's reign in 705 more armies were set up on the northeastern and northern frontiers to form the basic defense line.<sup>27</sup>

### **Zhongzong: Building of the Three Shouxiang Fortresses and Alliance with the Türgish**

With the abdication in 705 of Empress Wu, the Li royal family restored the name of the Tang dynasty. In 706, after a Turkish incursion, the

<sup>23</sup> ZZTJ 206, pp. 6533-5. See also Guisso 1978, pp. 145-6.

<sup>24</sup> ZZTJ 206, p. 6526.

<sup>25</sup> XTS 215A, p. 6047; ZZTJ 207, p. 6553; p. 6556; pp. 6558-9; p. 6562; p. 6573; CFYG 979, p. 11498. According to Cen Zhongmian 1958, p. 546, the two princes were Chongfu and Chongjun; Ma Changshou 1957, p. 69.

<sup>26</sup> The Chinese sources do not mention this event. The above narrative is from the Turkish inscription. See Ma Changshou 1957, p. 69; Tekin 1968, translation, pp. 285-6.

<sup>27</sup> For the locations, names and dates of these armies, see Pulleyblank 1955, Map II.

restored Emperor Zhongzong took a firmer stand against the Turks. He broke off the marriage agreement made by Empress Wu and promised to reward anyone who could kill Bāg Chor with the high rank of General-in-Chief.<sup>28</sup>

When Zhongzong asked his ministers to present advice as to how to deal with this formidable enemy, a remonstrance official suggested as a defense policy that generals should be disciplined, armies should be drilled and put into readiness, alliances should be made with other non-Chinese against the Turks, people to be settled in frontier areas should be organized as permanent troops, and capable officials should be selected to govern the frontiers. Eventually, Tang could mobilize all its forces to crush the barbarians.<sup>29</sup>

In 708 Zhang Renyuan, Area Commander of Shuofang, proposed that Tang build three fortresses north of or close to the great loop of the Yellow River while the Eastern Turks were on campaign against the Türgish of the Western Turks in the Western Region. Chief Minister Tang Xiujing opposed this on the grounds that to build these fortresses on enemy territory would be a great waste. Zhongzong nevertheless decided to follow Zhang's suggestion. These heavily manned fortresses known as the "Fortresses for Receiving Surrender" (Shouxian cheng), stretched from Shengzhou to Fengzhou, each occupying a strategic position. They were designed to prevent the Turks from invading southward. Troops in the garrison at Shuofang were significantly reduced in number. Zhang was promoted to the status of Chief Minister, returned to the court in spring, and in autumn went to the frontier to carry out his duties there.<sup>30</sup>

Zhongzong also attempted to make an alliance with the Western Turks. From about 699, the Türgish tribe of the Western Turks, who in 658 had been organized into the area command system, became strong under their leader Wuzhile, while the royal Ashina clan declined. Wuzhile managed to bring under his control all the Western Turks in the region between the Issyk-Kul and Lake Balkash. He captured Suiye, one of the Four Garrisons, in about 703 and moved his headquarters there. The Türgish cooperated with the Tibetans as early as 704 in supporting the city

<sup>28</sup> *JTS* 194A, p. 5170; *XTS* 215A, p. 6047.

<sup>29</sup> *JTS* 194A, pp. 5170-2; *ZZTJ* 208, p. 6609.

<sup>30</sup> *JTS* 93, pp. 2982-3; 194A, p. 5172; *XTS* 111, pp. 4152-3; 215A, p. 6047; *ZZTJ* 209, pp. 6620-1. For the significance of the three fortresses, see Kang Le 1979, pp. 81-6.

states of Transoxiana against the Arabs.<sup>31</sup> In 706 Zhongzong conferred the title of commandery prince on Wuzhile and on his death Tang granted official titles to his son Suoge. His rule, however, was opposed by one of his generals, Ashina Zhongjie.

There was a conflict of opinion at the Tang court as to how to deal with the split. Guo Yuanzhen, Acting Protector-General of Anxi, proposed to support Suoge and remove Zhongjie by recruiting the latter into the Imperial Guard and moving his tribes closer to China. This was approved by the emperor, but on the advice of the Chinese Military Commissioner of the Four Garrisons (*sizhen jinglue shi*), Zhou Yiti, Zhongjie bribed the Minister of War, Zong Chuke and Chief Minister Ji Chu'na, who then put forward a proposal based on Zhou Yiti's advice to support Zhongjie against Suoge. They wanted to eliminate Suoge by using the troops of the Protectorate of Anxi. They also wanted to seek assistance from Tibet, and to establish a member of the Ashina royal clan to be the qaghan of the Western Turks.

Guo Yuanzhen strongly objected to all this on the grounds that seeking Tibetan assistance would surely lead to Tibetan control over the Western Turks and that previous experience had proved that the Ashina clan was no longer able to control the Western Turks. Zhongzong, however, agreed with Zong Chuke.

When Suoge heard of this plan, he despatched 20,000 cavalry and captured the seat of the Protectorate of Anxi in Kucha. He assumed the title of qaghan in 708. The following year, Zhongzong finally had to adopt Guo Yuanzhen's advice to make peace with Suoge and recognize him as qaghan of the Western Turks. This nominally returned the Tarim Basin to Chinese control.<sup>32</sup>

With the Türgish on the side of Tang, Zhongzong in 710 decided to launch a major attack on the Eastern Turks. The Türgish under Suoge (now bearing the Chinese name Shouzhong) sent 250,000 cavalymen to join Tang's military campaign,<sup>33</sup> but the campaign had to be stopped when Zhongzong died and a power struggle began at court in the same year. Soon, Suoge's younger brother rebelled and led the Eastern Turks against Suoge. The Eastern Turks extended their rule into the Türgish territory and

<sup>31</sup> Chavannes 1969, p. 55; p. 64; Beckwith 1987, pp. 66-7.

<sup>32</sup> *JTS* 92, p. 2972; 97, pp. 3045-8; 194B pp. 5190-1; *XTS* 109, p. 4102; 122, pp. 4363-5; 215B, pp. 6066-7; *ZZTJ* 209, pp. 6625-9.

<sup>33</sup> *TDZLJ* 130, p. 705; *QTW* 253, pp. 1131-2.

the nearby city states, which in turn led to encounters between the Eastern Turks and the Arabs. They had to retreat from the region after a defeat inflicted by the Chinese Protector-General of Beiting in 714. Bäg Chor lost his son in this expedition.<sup>34</sup>

### **Xuanzong: Bäg Chor's Final defeat, 712-716**

When Xuanzong assumed the throne in 712, the Eastern Turkish empire, under attack from the west, was in a weakened position. In 711 Bäg Chor Qaghan had asked for a marriage contract. Although Tang agreed, no marriage materialized because this was when Ruizong abdicated the throne to Xuanzong.<sup>35</sup> In 713, after Xuanzong had consolidated his power by eliminating the most important of his rivals, Princess Taiping, he again agreed to Bäg Chor Qaghan's request for a marriage.<sup>36</sup> But in 714, Bäg Chor's troops and Tang clashed in Beiting (see above) as a consequence of which in the third month of the same year Xuanzong ordered the preparation of a major campaign under the command of Chief Minister Yao Chong against the Turks.<sup>37</sup> Bäg Chor twice asked for a marriage. Xuanzong agreed to send a princess the following year. In exchange, he requested the qaghan to send a prince to join the Imperial Bodyguard.<sup>38</sup>

The decision for peace instead of war was made in the first place due to the reluctance of Yao Chong to use force.<sup>39</sup> During the early part of Xuanzong's reign, from 712 to 720, Chief Ministers Yao Chong and Song Jing, who were largely responsible for decision-making, urged caution in foreign policy. To refrain from any aggression was a policy specially laid down by Yao Chong, who had already been a capable Chief Minister under Empress Wu. In 713, when Xuanzong invited Yao Chong to be his Chief Minister, Yao is said to have insisted that he would not accept the position unless his ten-point program was also accepted by the emperor. The second point was to refrain from aggressive moves on the frontiers for thirty years. Xuanzong agreed to all ten points.<sup>40</sup>

The peace policy was complicated by frontier pressures on other

<sup>34</sup> *JTS* 103, pp. 3187-8; 194A, p. 5172; *XTS* 133, p. 4543; 215A, pp. 6047-8; *ZZTJ* 211, p. 6696; Beckwith 1987, pp. 76-80.

<sup>35</sup> *ZZTJ* 210, p. 6661; p. 6664; p. 6669; 6671.

<sup>36</sup> *XTS* 215A, pp. 6047-8; *ZZTJ* 210, p. 6686; 211, p. 6699; p. 6706.

<sup>37</sup> *QJW* 253, pp. 1132-3; Cen Zhongmian 1958, pp. 384-5.

<sup>38</sup> *ZZTJ* 211, p. 6699; p. 6706; *CFYG* 979, p. 11499.

<sup>39</sup> Xue Zongzheng 1992, p. 512.

<sup>40</sup> *ZZTJ* 210, pp. 6688-9; Twitchett 1979, p. 348.

fronts. In the northeast Tang was attempting to subdue the Khitan and Xi in Manchuria, and these two peoples had attached themselves to the second Turkish empire after 697. In 712, the Area Commander of Youzhou launched an attack on the Khitan and Xi in order to win back Yingzhou, but lost his life in the attempt.<sup>41</sup> In 714 Xue Na, Aide of the Area Command of Bingzhou, whose father was the famed General Xue Rengui, proposed a follow-up attack on the Khitan and Xi, arguing the importance of recapturing Yingzhou so as to detach them from the Turks.

Although Chief Minister Yao Chong and others opposed military action, Xuanzong sided with Xue Na. He promoted Xue to the status of Chief Minister and entrusted him with command of the expedition. This consequently made "the officials not dare to say anything" as the Chinese sources put it. But this campaign was unsuccessful too. Xue Na was stripped of all his posts as punishment, although he was soon employed in a campaign against the Tibetans and promoted to the rank of general after winning a victory.<sup>42</sup>

Later in the same year, 100,000 Tibetan troops attacked the north-western frontier. Tang had to concentrate its military forces there, and Xuanzong even declared his intention of assuming personal command of a major campaign against the Tibetans with over 100,000 troops, including 20,000 non-Chinese. Before that plan could be carried out, Chinese troops claimed major victories in battles with Tibet.<sup>43</sup>

As Bāg Chor got older, his rule became more tyrannical and he taxed his people more heavily. His request for a marriage alliance showed the weakening of his power. In 714 and 715, members of the Eastern Turkish ruling group, the Western Turks and the Tiele left him to submit to Tang. Xuanzong conferred Chinese noble and official titles on the tribal leaders, along with houses and income from tax revenue, and resettled some Turks south of the great loop of the Yellow River.<sup>44</sup> When Bāg Chor engaged in a series of battles against Western Turkish tribes, the Tang Protector-General of Beiting in 715 sent troops to support the anti-qaghan force.<sup>45</sup> In 715-716, seeing the decline of Turkish rule, both the Khitan and

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<sup>41</sup> *ZZTJ* 210, pp. 6672-3.

<sup>42</sup> *JTS* 93, pp. 2984-5; *XTS* 111, pp. 4143-4; 199B, p. 5355; *ZZTJ* 211, p. 6695.

<sup>43</sup> *JTS* 196A, p. 5228; *XTS* 216A, p. 6081-2; *ZZTJ* 211, pp. 6704-6; *CFYG* 118, p. 1407.

<sup>44</sup> Cen Zhongmian 1958, pp. 380-92.

<sup>45</sup> *XTS* 215A, pp. 6048-9; *ZZTJ* 211, p. 6710.

Xi left the Turks and went over to Tang.<sup>46</sup>

Early in 716, Xuanzong ordered a major campaign against the Turks. The edict stated that the Nine Surnames of the Tiele had despatched envoys several times to express their wish to throw off Turkish rule and to become vanguards in the attack on the Turks, and it ordered the Chinese troops to cooperate with the Nine Surnames.<sup>47</sup> Eventually, the Bayegu (Bayirqu) of the Tiele killed Bäg Chor Qaghan and sent his head to the Tang capital. Those Uighur and other Tiele tribes who had previously been under the Turks came to submit to Tang and were settled north of the Dawu Army (north of Daizhou).<sup>48</sup> In the battles against Bäg Chor, Chinese troops collaborated with the frontier peoples. A frontier general inflicted a crucial defeat on the Turks. Chief Minister Song Jing did not, however, promote him for fear that such a reward would stimulate the court to push for further expansive efforts.<sup>49</sup>

### Continuation of the Settlement Policy

Xuanzong continued the established policy of resettling the surrendered nomads along the frontier. But unlike the time of Taizong and Gaozong, when the Turks had ceased to have a state power of their own outside China, now there existed the Second Turkish empire ruled by Bilgä Qaghan (r. 716-734). Assisted by a capable adviser, Dunyugu (Tonyuquq), Bilgä strengthened his regime, which began to have success in winning back his former subjects.<sup>50</sup>

In view of this situation, Wang Jun, Administrator of the Area Command of Bingzhou (Chief Minister in 723-724), warned in a memorial in 716 that the many Turks settled in the frontier regions were bound to cause trouble since they could provide intelligence for Bilgä Qaghan and cooperate with his forces in attacking Tang. It was a bad policy, he believed, to keep large numbers of mixed Chinese and non-Chinese troops on the frontiers for defense. He suggest that the court move the nomads

<sup>46</sup> *ZZTJ* 211, p. 6720; p. 6727; Twitchett 1979, p. 367. The date of the Khitan coming over to Tang is confusing in the Chinese sources. According to Cen Zhongmian (1958, pp. 393-4), it should be placed in 715.

<sup>47</sup> *QJW* 253, p. 1133; Cen Zhongmian 1958, 395.

<sup>48</sup> For sources on this period, see Cen Zhongmian 1958, pp. 396-8. The Chinese sources give different accounts about who killed Bäg Chor. I follow Cen Zhongmian's conclusion in 1958, p. 398.

<sup>49</sup> *JTS* 147, p. 3980; *XTS* 124, p. 4394.

<sup>50</sup> *JTS* 194A, pp. 5173-4; *XTS* 215A, p. 6049; 215B, p. 6051; *ZZTJ* 211, pp. 6719-20.

farther south to Henan and Huainan. Xuanzong did not heed his advice.<sup>51</sup>

Wang Jun's warning of disaster soon proved to be well founded. In the winter of 716, two Tiele chieftains who had gone over to Tang rose in revolt. The immediate cause of their rebellion was that the Vice Protector-General of Chanyu, Zhang Zhiyun, had confiscated all their weapons when they came to submit. After complaining to the Patrolling Inspector that they needed the weapons for hunting, the Chinese returned their weapons, but soon afterwards they rebelled and captured Zhang Zhiyun. Tang fought with the tribesmen and rescued Zhang, who was then executed by the court. The tribesmen, however, were not appeased, and went over to Bilgä Qaghan.<sup>52</sup>

In his edict, Xuanzong blamed Zhang for improper management of non-Chinese affairs, and stressed that local officials must show great concern for resettled non-Chinese.<sup>53</sup> Taking the words of the edict at face value, the court seems to have believed that so long as the local government was benevolent the settlement policy could be carried out effectively. However, it was a difficult job for the local officials to control the non-Chinese who settled on the frontiers. Zhang Zhiyun's intent in taking away the weapons of the submitted nomads must have been to lessen the potential danger they might pose to the Chinese, to make them docile and induce them to take up agriculture as peaceful settlers. Obviously, such a measure would have encountered resistance from the nomads.

In 720 when the Xietie (Ädiz) and Buqu tribes who had settled near Shouxiang Fortress were about to rise in rebellion with the assistance of the Turks outside the frontiers, the Chinese learned of their intention and killed almost 800 of them. The massacre aroused great fear and suspicion in the Tongra and Bayırqu tribes, and the Commissioner-in-chief of Tianbing (Tianbing *jiedu dashi*) had to go in person to console them so as to avoid further troubles.<sup>54</sup> A year later, the Sogdian people who had settled in the former six Hu prefectures in the Ordos also rose in revolt. It took a year for Tang to suppress their rebellion. The remnants of the non-Chinese, about 50,000 of them altogether, were then moved into the interior.<sup>55</sup> Later, however, in 738 the court set up Youzhou in the former six

<sup>51</sup> *JTS* 93, pp. 2986-8; *XTS* 111, pp. 4154-5; *ZZTJ* 211, pp. 6720-1.

<sup>52</sup> *JTS* 194A, pp. 5173-4; *XTS* 215A, p. 6051; *ZZTJ* 211, pp. 6721-2.

<sup>53</sup> *QTW* 27, p. 368.

<sup>54</sup> *JTS* 93, p. 2988; 97, p. 3052; *XTS* 111, pp. 4155-6; 125, p. 4407; *ZZTJ* 212, pp. 6740-1.

<sup>55</sup> *ZZTJ* 212, p. 6745; pp. 6746-7; p. 6752.

Hu prefectures in a move to encourage non-Chinese to relocate there and move from inside China.<sup>56</sup>

### Peace with The Eastern Turks, 717-740

While Bilgä Qaghan attempted to attract the Turks who had submitted to Tang back under his control by both peaceful means and military measures,<sup>57</sup> he himself chose to make peace with China so as to obtain Chinese material goods through diplomatic means. He sent envoys to Tang in 717, and again in 718. Xuanzong responded positively to the peace proposal of 718.<sup>58</sup> But the Tang court planned a major campaign against the Eastern Turks in 719 or 720 to be joined by the Basmil, Kirghiz, Khitan, Xi and the Nine Surnames of the Tiele. There were, however, no coordinated attacks on the Turks. Only the Basmil tribe launched an actual attack, and they were defeated by Bilgä Qaghan.<sup>59</sup> After leading one raid on the frontiers, Bilgä Qaghan sued for peace again in 721.<sup>60</sup> He proposed to establish a father-son relationship with Tang and form a marriage alliance. In response, Xuanzong sent a letter to him recalling the days when Tang and the Turks had been at peace, and when both had benefited from the bilateral trade exchanging Turkish horses for Chinese silk. As for the father-son relationship, it was set up in name, but no marriage was arranged.<sup>61</sup>

Use of kinship terms to describe Chinese relations with their non-Chinese neighbors was quite common. Han and the Xiongnu were sometimes characterized as elder and younger brothers; Tang and Tibet were viewed as uncle and nephew; the relationship of father-in-law and son-in-law in marriage alliances and father-son sometimes characterized the relationship between Tang and the Turks. These ties "functioned in the international field on the basis of a tacitly accepted principle of equality,"<sup>62</sup> for

<sup>56</sup> Details see Cen Zhongmian 1958, pp. 453-6.

<sup>57</sup> Ma Changshou 1957, pp. 80-1.

<sup>58</sup> Cen Zhongmian 1958, pp. 402-4.

<sup>59</sup> The date of the edict for the campaign is different in different sources. See Cen Zhongmian 1958, pp. 404-7; Xue Zongzheng 1992, pp. 531-4. In any case, no major joint campaign was undertaken.

<sup>60</sup> Cen Zhongmian 1958, pp. 402-11.

<sup>61</sup> *JTS* 194A, p. 5175; *XTS* 215B, p. 6053; *ZZTJ* 212, p. 6744; *CFYG* 980, p. 11511; *QTW* 40, p. 189. For trade between China and the Turks, see also Mori Masao 1978, pp. 81-96; Chen Ching-lung 1981, pp. 38-44.

<sup>62</sup> Suzuki 1968, p. 186.

they did not imply that the non-Chinese were vassals, though they implied a superior-inferior familial relationship, and therefore could be used as justification for reaching an agreement with certain foreigners without upsetting China's traditional world view.

Peace was kept by the two sides until 741, except in 733, when the Turks joined the Khitan in a clash with Tang in Dushan (in modern Liaoning).<sup>63</sup> From 723 until the death of Bilgä in 734, some twenty-eight missions went to Tang from the Turks. About five hundred and nineteen titles were given to Turkish officials and tribal leaders.<sup>64</sup> The Chinese attitude is revealed in seven letters written by Zhang Jiuling on behalf of Xuanzong to the Turks between 734 and 736. These stressed a mutual commitment to the maintenance of peace and a harmonious father-son relationship. One letter in 736 suggested that if the Turks sent troops to attack the Türgish, Tang would cooperate, although such a plan was not carried out.<sup>65</sup>

A regular horse-silk trade was established and became a major factor in consolidating peaceful relations. In 727, when the Turks refused to join the Tibetans in making an incursion on a border area, and sent Tang the letter the qaghan had received from the Tibetans, as a reward, Xuanzong allowed the Turks to trade with the Chinese at West Shouxianq Fort. Every year the Chinese would pay several tens of thousands of rolls of silk to purchase horses there to be used in the armies and for breeding in the state pastures. The supply of horses was thus improved.<sup>66</sup>

But soon the horse-silk trade increased to such an extent that it became a burden to the Chinese. In 736 three letters written by Zhang Jiuling on behalf of Xuanzong were sent to the Turks discussing the matter. In these letters Zhang complained that during the previous two years the Turks had sent several times as many horses as called for by the regular quota (3,000 to 4,000) that had been adhered to under the previous qaghan and that some of the horses were old, weak, sick or too small. Zhang held that Tang did the Turks a favor in buying so many horses.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> ZZTJ 213, pp. 6801-2.

<sup>64</sup> The number is based on the account in Cen Zhongmian 1958, pp. 421-40.

<sup>65</sup> Herbert 1978, p. 12. For these letters, see *Qujiang Zhang Xiansheng Wenji* 11; QTW 286, pp. 1282-4.

<sup>66</sup> JTS 194A, p. 5177; XTS 215B, p. 6053; ZZTJ 213, p. 6779.

<sup>67</sup> *Qujiang Zhang Xiansheng Wenji* 11, pp. 66-7. For the dates of the letters, see Cen Zhongmian 1958, pp. 450-1; p. 452. Chen Ching-lung (1981, p. 42) says that in 736 the new qaghan pledged himself to the Chinese emperor as his sworn father and for the sake

There was still no marriage contract despite continuous requests from the Turks. Tang made the excuse that Bilgä had not sent an envoy of high enough rank to make the request, and had not prepared adequate betrothal gifts. Also, since Tang and the Turks had a father-son relationship, they could not enter into a father and son-in-law relationship.<sup>68</sup> In 734, Xuanzong did finally agree to a marriage because of the persistence of the Turks,<sup>69</sup> but with Bilgä's death the plan was permanently shelved.

### **The End of the Second Turkish Empire, 741-745**

Bilgä Qaghan was poisoned by one of his own officers in 734.<sup>70</sup> After his death constant internal power struggles seriously weakened the empire. The final days of the second Turkish empire were chaotic. Three Turkish tribes, the Qarluq, Basmil and Uighurs became powerful and severely challenged the rule of the Turkish Tujue clan. The Chinese for their part tried to win over these three tribes while launching their own attacks on the Turks. In 741 Xuanzong sent envoys to the Qarluq tribe with the aim of enticing them and the Basmil and Uighurs over to the Chinese side with the promise of rich rewards and official positions. The Military Commissioner of Shuofang also sent envoys to persuade them into launching further attacks in support of his own campaign.

The court bestowed official titles on the chiefs of these three tribes in 742. The Uighur chief Guli Peiluo (Qulligh Boila?<sup>71</sup>), together with the Qarluq, then eliminated the chief of the Basmil in 744, and proclaimed himself qaghan. Xuanzong immediately recognized his position by presenting him with the title of qaghan. In 745, Guli's force killed the last Turkish Baimei (Bolmīs) Qaghan. Relations between Tang and the Uighurs remained peaceful until the end of Xuanzong's reign.<sup>72</sup> Eventually, it was the Uighurs who were the winners. They founded their own

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of this relationship, the Chinese allowed the Turks to sell three to four thousand horses, "which were many times [the number] of the regular exchange." Chen does not seem to read the text correctly. It says that in the time of the late qaghan Tang bought horses in amounts not exceeding three to four thousand, but since the present qaghan came to the throne, Tang had bought as many as 14,000 to show its paternal affection for the Turks.

<sup>68</sup> *JTS* 194A, pp. 5175-6; *XTS* 215B, p. 6053; *ZZTJ* 212, p. 6761; pp. 6764-5; *CFYG* 979, p. 11501.

<sup>69</sup> *XTS* 215B, p. 6054.

<sup>70</sup> *JTS* 194A, p. 5177; *XTS* 215B, p. 6054; *ZZTJ* 214, p. 6809.

<sup>71</sup> Hamilton 1988, p. 139.

<sup>72</sup> For the sources on this period, see Cen Zhongmian 1958, pp. 456-70.

empire, known as the third Turkish empire, and became the new masters of the Mongolian steppe.

### Bringing the Khitan and Xi under Chinese Control

On the northeast front, Tang's major concerns were the Khitan and Xi in Manchuria, who turned to Tang in 715-716 (see above). Xuanzong set up *jimi* institutions for the Khitan. Tang restored Yingzhou in 717, and the Military Commissioner of Pinglu was set up in 719 and based in Yingzhou.<sup>73</sup> A third major power was Parhae farther east, whose rise as a buffer state between China and Silla is discussed in Chapter 6.

Tang struggled to keep these people under Chinese dominance. While consolidating frontier defense, Xuanzong tried to maintain peaceful relations with the Khitan through conferring official titles on their chiefs, three marriages, and intervention when an internal power struggle occurred. In 730 the Khitan again joined the Turks. Finally, in 734, by stirring up internal conflicts among the Khitan, the Chinese got the chief of the Khitan killed and brought the Khitan back into the *jimi* system. The following year, when the Turks attacked the Khitan and Xi, they were driven back.<sup>74</sup>

The relationship between Tang and the Xi followed the same pattern. Tang set up *jimi* institutions, and concluded three marriages. One of the Tang princess brides, Princess Gu'an, was a strong character. Having discovered that a Xi official was plotting against Tang she put poison in his wine. In 730, the Xi were forced by the Khitan to switch to the Turks but under the attacks of the Chinese, submitted to Tang again in 732.<sup>75</sup>

However, relations between Tang and the Khitan remained unstable. China had to station a large number of armies on the northeastern frontier under the Military Commissioner of Youzhou (Fanyang from 742). In official letters from the emperor to the Vice Military Commissioner of Youzhou, Zhang Shougui, we see that the court trusted Zhang to handle actual relations with the Khitan, and allowed him to make decisions on both defensive and aggressive moves. Although the court preferred a cautious, non-interventionist approach, the Military Commission-

<sup>73</sup> ZZTJ 211, p. 6720; p. 6727; Twitchett 1979, p. 367.

<sup>74</sup> JTS 199B, pp. 5351-4; XTS 219, pp. 6170-2; ZZTJ 213, p. 6797; 214, pp. 6807-9; pp. 6812-3.

<sup>75</sup> JTS 199B, pp. 5354-6; XTS 219, pp. 6174-5; ZZTJ 213, p. 6797; Kuang Pingzhang 1935, pp. 40-2.

ers and military officials under them did not always take the same line.<sup>76</sup> Frontier officials had a tendency to provoke conflicts for the sake of receiving rewards for military success.

In 738 two generals forged an order they attributed to Zhang Shougui to attack the Xi while Zhang was away in the capital. Zhang tried to cover up their defeat, but it was found out and Zhang was dismissed from his post.<sup>77</sup> In 745, Tang again sent one princess to the Khitan and one to the Xi so as to maintain peaceful relations, but the chiefs killed the princesses and rebelled anyway. The Chinese sources blame this on An Lushan, the Military Commissioner of Fanyang, who made provocative attacks in order to achieve a name for himself. He crushed the revolt in 746.<sup>78</sup>

Indeed, An Lushan may have intended to establish his political dominance in the area through military means. When clashes occurred in 750, the Chinese sources again accuse An Lushan of provoking the troubles. In 751, An Lushan organized a great expedition against the Khitan which, however, ended in his complete defeat. He was nearly killed. But by then he enjoyed such favor from the emperor that he was not punished. In the following year he was bent on another campaign to revenge his defeat, but it did not go well because Abusi, the general whom An asked to cooperate in the campaign, rebelled.<sup>79</sup> In 753 An Lushan forced some of Abusi's followers to surrender.

He then asked that rewards be given to his non-Chinese generals and soldiers for their accomplishments in dealing with the rebels.<sup>80</sup> In 755, he asked to replace Chinese generals with thirty-two non-Chinese generals. Xuanzong consented.<sup>81</sup> By this time, as Military Commissioner of three commands, An Lushan had accumulated solid economic and military power. He founded his power base among non-Chinese, keeping a private army of eight thousand Tongra, Xi and Khitan, and attracting ever more non-Chinese into his force.<sup>82</sup> In 755 he rose in rebellion.

<sup>76</sup> *Qjiang Zhang Xiansheng Wenji* 8, pp. 48-9.

<sup>77</sup> *ZZTJ* 214, pp. 6837-8.

<sup>78</sup> *ZZTJ* 215, p. 6864; p. 6868; Pulleyblank 1955, p. 93.

<sup>79</sup> *JTS* 199B, p. 5353; Pulleyblank 1955, pp. 98-9; p. 101.

<sup>80</sup> *ZZTJ* 216, pp. 6917-8; 217, p. 6924.

<sup>81</sup> *ZZTJ* 217, p. 6929.

<sup>82</sup> *XTS* 225A, pp. 6414-7.

### Xuanzong: Making the Türgish Allies

Early in Xuanzong's reign, the Türgish of the Western Turks were ruled by Sulu. He succeeded in drawing together as many as 200,000 Western Turks under his control. This ended the chaos among the Türgish following the defeat of Bäg Chor by the Protector-General of Beiting in 714. A very capable political leader, Sulu kept the Türgish an influential power in Central Asia until his death. On several occasions he allied with Tibet and in 734 took a Tibetan princess in marriage.<sup>83</sup> He also married a princess of the Eastern Turks.<sup>84</sup> In addition, he had relations with the Arabs to whom he was known as the "Father of Competition, because he competed with them."<sup>85</sup>

Aware of Sulu's strength, Tang had to guard against him while trying to keep up a friendly relationship. When Sulu sent an embassy to Tang in 715, the court conferred on him several official titles.<sup>86</sup> In 716, he assumed the title of qaghan.<sup>87</sup> In 717, Ashina Xian, a Tang general and grandson of Ashina Mishe, requested Xuanzong's permission to attack the Türgish. The emperor rejected this belligerent plan and decided instead to send an envoy to confer a noble title on Sulu. But before that could be done, a report arrived that the Türgish had allied themselves with the Arabs and the Tibetans, and had laid siege to Bohuan (Aksu) and Dashicheng (Uch-turfan). The allies had also attempted to attack the Four Garrisons, but they had been driven off by Ashina Xian and the Qarluq tribes under the Protectorate of Anxi.<sup>88</sup> Nevertheless, in 719, Tang confirmed Sulu's title of qaghan and three years later sent Princess Jiaohe of the Turkish Ashina clan to marry him.<sup>89</sup>

The Tang frontier generals did not adhere closely to the peace policy. In 726, a quarrel broke out between Sulu and Du Xian, the Protector-General of Anxi. When a Türgish envoy came to sell horses in Anxi, Prin-

<sup>83</sup> Beckwith 1987, p. 111.

<sup>84</sup> *JTS* 194B, p. 5192.

<sup>85</sup> Beckwith 1987, p. 85.

<sup>86</sup> *JTS* 194B, p. 5191; *ZZTJ* 211, pp. 6714-5. *XTS* 215B (p. 6067) says that the Sulu sent his first envoys to Tang in 717.

<sup>87</sup> *ZZTJ* 211, p. 6720.

<sup>88</sup> *XTS* 215B, p. 6065; *ZZTJ* 211, pp. 6727-8; Ise 1968, p. 331.

<sup>89</sup> *ZZTJ* 212, p. 6737; *QTW* 21, p. 106. *JTS* 194B (p. 5191) says that the conferring of the title qaghan was in 715. Princess Jiaohe was a daughter of the nominal Western Turkish qaghan, Ashina Huaidao, the grandson of Ashina Buzhen. See *JTS* 194B, p. 5191; *XTS* 215B, p. 6067; *ZZTJ* 212, p. 6754. Some Chinese sources refer to her as Jinhe, see Kuang Pingzhang 1935, p. 46; Cen Zhongmian 1964, p. 179.

cess Jiaohe sent a letter phrased as an instruction. Du was enraged, saying: "How can the woman of the Ashina give an instruction to me!"<sup>90</sup> He beat the envoy and detained him and the horses. Thereupon Sulu decided to retaliate. In the winter of 726-727, Sulu joined forces with the Tibetans, attacking the headquarters of the Protectorate of Anxi and plundering Chinese livestock. When Sulu heard that Du Xian had left Anxi to take up the position of Chief Minister, he withdrew and sent a tribute mission to the Tang court.<sup>91</sup>

A conflict arose between Tang and the Türgish again in 734. That year the Türgish sent an envoy to bring livestock for trading with Tang but, when he arrived at Beiting, he planned an armed attack. The Protector-General of Beiting, Liu Huan, put him to death. The Tang court, however, did not wish to have any conflict with the Türgish, so it decided to execute Liu Huan and sent his head to the Türgish in the hope of settling the matter. The effort did not have the desired result, for the Türgish soon formed an alliance with Tibet for retaliation.<sup>92</sup> In 735, the Türgish made further attacks on Beiting and Aksu. Defeated by the Chinese in the following year, the Türgish made a peace proposal, to which Tang agreed.<sup>93</sup>

As mentioned above, in the course of these encounters, the Tang court once in 736 sent a letter to the qaghan of the Eastern Turks proposing an alliance against the Türgish. The court also instructed the Military Commissioners of Hexi and Anxi to make an alliance with the Arabs to attack the Türgish.<sup>94</sup> But this alliance does not seem to have taken effect. In the course of time, the Türgish were weakened as Sulu grew old. In his youth, Sulu had held the allegiance of his tribesmen by his generosity in distributing booty but eventually overextended himself and no longer had the resources to keep up this practice. A rival faction arose and Sulu was killed in 738.<sup>95</sup> In the following year, the Chinese Military Commissioner of Jixi, Gai Jiayun, allying with Ferghana, Tashkent and Kesch, inflicted a severe defeat on Sulu's son and successor. From then on, the Türgish ceased to be a major threat on the Chinese frontiers, and maintained a

<sup>90</sup> ZZTJ 213, p. 6775. Beckwith (1987, p. 98) translates the word *xuanjiao* as "proselytize the princess' religion." But according to THY (26, p. 504), the word *jiao* is the term used by a prince and princess in formal written communications to an inferior.

<sup>91</sup> JTS 194B, p. 5191; XTS 215B, p. 6067; ZZTJ 213, pp. 6775-6; p. 6779.

<sup>92</sup> *Quejiang Zhang Xiansheng Wenji* 8, pp. 46-8; Wu Yugui 1987, pp. 106-7.

<sup>93</sup> ZZTJ 214, p. 6812; p. 6813; p. 6821.

<sup>94</sup> QTW 284, p. 1275; 285, p. 1280.

<sup>95</sup> TD 199, p. 1080; ZZTJ 214, pp. 6833-4.

tributary relationship with Tang.<sup>96</sup>

### Encounters with the Arabs

Tang's activities in the Western Regions were bound eventually to clash with another contender for dominance in the area, the Arabs.

Soon after the start of the Arabian conquests and the spread of Islam in the early seventh century, the impact of the first conquests became known to the Chinese when in 638 the last Sasanian king, under pressure from their invasion, sent a mission to the Tang court. He was killed by the Arabs in 651 while fleeing to Tokharestan. His son Pērōz took refuge in Tokharestan and sent a mission to China asking for aid, but Gaozong declined, with the excuse that it was too far away. In 661, after conquering the Western Turks, Tang set up a series of *jimi fuzhou*, among which was the Area Command of Bosi (Persia) with its seat in Sistan, and appointed Pērōz as the Area Commander. He was given the title of the king of Persia in 662, but he was unable to hold out against the advance of the Arabs. It appears that he took refuge in Chang'an after 673 and died there.<sup>97</sup> The Arabs sent their first envoys to Tang in 651 after the collapse of the Persian empire.<sup>98</sup> They continued to advance northward into Central Asia.

Tang's reaction to the Arab advance was to give at least moral support to the requests of the western states over which it had earlier sought to establish a nominal suzerainty. In 705 Tang bestowed the title of king on the ruler of Tokhara and accepted the king's younger brother into the imperial bodyguards. Thereupon the king led other states in fighting with the Arabs.<sup>99</sup> Not until 715 did the Chinese for the first time directly clashed with the Arabs when, allied with the Tibetans, the Arabs attacked Ferghana, and the Chinese troops launched a successful counterattack.<sup>100</sup>

This event drew the Chinese into Transoxiana, west of the Pamirs, where the city states, hard pressed by the Arabs, turned to Tang for aid. In 719, Bukhara, Kumedh and Samarkand, west of the Pamirs, sent envoys to Tang, hoping that Tang could use its influence on the Türgish to expel the

<sup>96</sup> *JTS* 194B, p. 5192; *XTS* 215B, pp. 6068-9; *ZZTJ* 214, p. 6833-4; p. 6838; p. 6841; p. 6843.

<sup>97</sup> For the conferring of the title of king, see *CFYG* 964, p. 11341. *CFYG* (999, p. 11718) says that in 673 and 674 King Pērōz came to pay homage at the court. According to Chavannes (1969, pp. 126-7), Pērōz was still in Chang'an in 677 and died soon after.

<sup>98</sup> Twitchett 1979, p. 280.

<sup>99</sup> Chavannes 1969, pp. 210-4.

<sup>100</sup> *ZZTJ* 211, p. 6713; Beckwith 1987, pp. 81-3.

Arabs. From 719 Xuanzong repeatedly invested the title of king on rulers of the city states in Transoxiana, both to mobilize them against the Arabs and to win them over from Tibetan influence.<sup>101</sup> In 727, Tokhara, suffering heavy taxation under Arab occupation, sent an embassy to the Tang court, asking Xuanzong to order the Türgish troops to drive away the Arabs.<sup>102</sup>

As they expanded against the city states of Sogdiana, the Türgish also had to resist the Arabs. In 724, the Türgish won a crushing victory over an Arab expedition sent against Transoxiana in the battle known to the Arab historians as the "Day of Thirst."<sup>103</sup> After 730, both Tibet and the Türgish made peace with China for some years. This was because both were preoccupied with the Arabs in Transoxiana.<sup>104</sup> With the subduing of the Türgish, China began to exert its influence in Ferghana and in the Talas basin west of the Pamirs. In 744 Xuanzong gave the hand of a princess to the king of Ferghana to further consolidate the relationship.<sup>105</sup>

To the south, in 747 Gao Xianzhi, Vice Protector-General of Anxi, took over Little Balur from its pro-Tibetan rulership, and in 750, at the request of the king of Tokhara, he launched an attack on the pro-Tibetan kingdom of Qieshi (Kashgar), further expanding Chinese influence west of the Pamirs, and drawing the Chinese into confrontation with the Arabs. With his military success, Gao Xianzhi became unrestrained and assumed a harsh attitude towards the temporarily subdued states. His high-handed policy towards Tashkent caused strong resentment among the other states in the region and they joined with the prince of Tashkent in making an alliance with the Arabs. The Qarluq also joined the Arabs.

In the famous battle of the Talas River in 751, Gao's army was wiped out by the Arabs and their allies. This marked the end of Tang involvement west of the Pamirs.<sup>106</sup>

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After half a century as subjects of Tang in the *jimi fuzhou* system, the Eastern Turks successfully restored their steppe empire under Qutlugh Qaghan in 682. Though supervised by Chinese garrisons, the Turks kept their nomadic lifestyle, their military organization and customs. Their

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<sup>101</sup> Chavannes 1969, pp. 210-4.

<sup>102</sup> CFYG 999, p. 11722; p. 11723.

<sup>103</sup> Beckwith 1987, pp. 96-7.

<sup>104</sup> Beckwith 1987, pp. 109-11.

<sup>105</sup> ZZTJ 215, p. 6862; Kuang Pingzhang 1935, p. 48.

<sup>106</sup> Chavannes 1969, pp. 214-7.

subjugation by China may even have strengthened their consciousness of their ethnic identity.

When attempts at military suppression failed, Empress Wu, preoccupied with internal problems, had to make a series of compromises with Qutlugh and Bäg Chor, who succeeded Qutlugh in 691, while trying to maintain some control over the scattered Western Turks to counterbalance the resurgent Eastern Turks. Chinese foreign policy as a whole switched from aggressive advance to the building of a strong defense system by establishment of permanent armies on the frontiers.

Difficulties in dealing with Bäg Chor played a part in forcing Wu Zetian to give up her plan to establish her own dynasty. When at last she was forced to abdicate, Zhongzong was able to take a firmer stand against the Eastern Turks by building the three Shouxiang Fortresses on the Ordos frontier and developing the alliance with the Türgish who now led the Western Turks. But internal power struggles at court still inhibited the undertaking of any major military campaign against the Eastern Turks.

Early in Xuanzong's reign plans were made for a major campaign against the Turks, but there were also advocates of a peaceful settlement, since there was danger of a Tibetan invasion and since Chinese troops were also engaged against the Khitan in the northeast. The situation turned in Tang's favor when subject tribes, alienated by the aging Bäg Chor's tyrannical rule, began to defect, and he himself was murdered in 716 and replaced by Bilgä Qaghan, who was more peaceable in his inclinations.

Between 717 and 740, Tang and the Second Turkish empire maintained a peaceful relationship. The Turks sent frequent tributary missions to the Tang court, with the pragmatic purpose of obtaining the Chinese goods that accompanied investiture with Chinese official titles. These goods could be purchased through border markets and the regular horse-silk trade. The Chinese court welcomed this peace, since it freed their forces to deal with urgent problems on other frontiers.

After three generations of strong qaghans, the Eastern Turks declined in the early 740's. Tang responded to this by supporting opposition forces headed by the Uighurs, who eliminated the last qaghan of the second Turkish empire in 745, and replaced the Turks as the masters of the steppe.

Xuanzong's policy toward the Türgish was to guard against them while trying to keep up a friendly relationship through marriage alliance and title investiture so as to counterbalance the expansion of Tibetans and Eastern Turks in the Western Region. In the late 730's, however, when the

Türgish came into conflict with Tang, Tang attempted to form an alliance against them with the Eastern Turks and the Arabs. Although no such alliance was effected, the decline of the Türgish power itself provided an opportunity for Tang to launch attacks and expand further into the Western Regions.

This in turn brought Tang into confrontation with the Arabs, whose continuing advance into Central Asia made the states in Transoxiana west of the Pamirs turn to Tang for support. Eventually, defeat at the battle of the Talas River in 751, followed soon after by the outbreak of the An Lushan rebellion, put an end to Chinese involvement west of the Pamirs.