

THE EARLY POLICY OF EMPEROR TANG DEZONG (779–805) TOWARDS INNER ASIA*

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This article deals with the political strategies of the Tang Emperor Dezong towards the Tibetan Empire and the Uighur Empire and some reasons which lay behind his preferable treatment of the Tibetans before the year 787. It shows the dilemma of Chinese statesmen after the An Lushan rebellion when they were obliged to make alliances with foreign powers from Inner Asia in order to stabilize the situation within China.

The trilateral relationship between Tang [1] Dynasty China (618–907), the Tibetan Empire (629–842, *Tubo* [2]) and the Uighur Empire (744–840, *Huihe* [3]) was born during the course of the An Lushan [4] rebellion (755–762) when

* I still remember that it was during the first or second lesson in the winter school-term of 1988 when Mr. Gálík recommended to our Chinese teacher Li Keqian to find for us, fresh students of Sinology, the appropriate Chinese names. I was given the name Ma Wenbo, i.e. that of “broad culture”. I don’t know why he chose this name, but later when I came to China, all my Chinese friends liked it very much. The character “wen” has much to do with literature and it was the idea of Mr. Gálík that I should devote myself to his most proper subject: modern or contemporary Chinese literature. We, the students of Sinology, had at an early stage the rare opportunity to participate in the symposium *Interliterary and Intraliterary Aspects of the May Fourth Movement of 1919 in China* (Smolenice, March 13–17, 1989) organized by Mr. Gálík. Although our knowledge in this field was very limited, it was a very inspiring experience to see many well-known Sinologists, including our teacher, and hear what academic Sinology looks like. However later, while in China, I focused my interest on the topic of Sino-Tibetan relations. Maybe Mr. Gálík was not very happy about it at first, but when he saw (at that time he made one of his research trips to China) that I was seriously studying the relevant sources, he later always supported me: he made (and still makes) the books from his personal library available to me, he enabled me to contact his colleagues abroad who are working in this field. This study, which I present to the interested readers now, also contains traces of Mr. Gálík’s good will. At my request, he sent me two articles, which I could not obtain in the course of writing it, during his stay in Taipei at the end of 1995.

According to my experience the most important thing in Mr. Gálík’s relation to students is not his own preference, but the whole framework of their knowledge, ethical attitude and abili-

the weakened Imperial Court turned for help to its Inner Asian neighbours.¹ The Uighurs sided militarily with the Imperial Army and helped to suppress the rebellion. From that time “nomadic people [especially Uighurs] became intricately involved in internal Chinese politics. No longer were dynasties [in this case Tang] interacting with nomad rulers simply to achieve the political objective of stabilizing the frontier; now, they cultivated nomadic support to aid them in securing and maintaining power within China.”² As a result of this development the economic aspect of Sino-Uighur relations developed – the trade in Chinese silk for Uighur horses which was a form of payment for Uighur services.³ The

ties. Frequent use of maxims in Latin or in classical Chinese is typical of Mr. Gálík (and between these two civilizations he almost always led the intellectual thread of his university lectures). A few times we saw on the blackboard the well-known saying, attributed to Laozi, written by our teacher’s hand: Zhi, bu zhi, shang. Bu zhi, zhi, bing. In D.C. Lau’s translation it sounds as follows: To know yet to think that one does not know is best. Not to know yet to think that one knows will lead to difficulty. And he proceeded to his explanation: “There were two great men of knowledge among the Ancients: Laozi and Socrates. Socrates said just before his death: ‘One thing only I know, and that is that I know nothing.’ This maxim is understandable within the mythical world Socrates was still living in. He said this when he allegedly heard that the oracle of Delphi declared that he was the wisest man among the Greeks. Laozi’s saying is much more human. It places knowledge against stupidity of half-knowledge and their different consequences. The first part is a manifestation of, let us say, the scholar’s humble attitude, the second one the expression of unfounded self-pride which shall lead, sooner or later, to the espousal and to condemnation by others having greater knowledge. Wisdom and modesty go together. The second one is the greatest adornment of the scholar or teacher. The worst are those with half-knowledge. They spend their whole life cheating others and themselves.”

Although the *Jubilar* (who will be 65 years old on 21 February 1998) never wrote about Sino-Tibetan relations, he introduced me to the field of Chinese history and historiography, he tried to point out to me and my school-fellows its peculiar specificities. The Chinese and their neighbours, their mutual stories and interactions during history also belong to intercultural communication which represents an important part of Mr. Gálík’s scholarly work. Whether the knowledge in this essay is “broad” or “narrow”, “deep” or “shallow”, I let others, including my mentor, arbitrate. I hope that he will receive it as a sign of my thanks and appreciation of his life’s work (I am also part of it, as his *famulus*).

¹ On the political, military, economic and foreign affairs implications of the An Lushan rebellion see E. G. PULLEYBLANK, *The Background of the Rebellion of An Lu-shan* (London: Oxford University Press: 1955).

² S. JAGCHID, V.J. SYMONS, *Peace, War, and Trade Along the Great Wall, Nomadic-Chinese Interaction through Two Millennia* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989), 68.

³ On the problem of the Sino-Uighur silk and horse trade see S. JAGCHID, “The ‘Uighur Horses’ of the T’ang Dynasty,” in *Gedanke und Wirkung, Festschrift zum 90. Geburtstag von Nikolaus Poppe*, ed. W. HEISSIG, K. SAGASTER (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1989), 175–88 and CH. I. BECKWITH, “The Impact of the Horse and Silk Trade on the Economies of T’ang China and the Uighur Empire: On the Importance of International Commerce in the Early Middle Ages,” *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 39 (1991): 183–98. According to T. J. BARFIELD, *The Perilous Frontier, Nomadic Empires and China*, Studies in Social Discontinuity (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989), 9, the Uighurs “were so dependent on this revenue that they even sent troops to put down internal rebellions in China to maintain a

Tibetan Empire used this period to extend its territory at the expense of China. Their Eastern conquests reached the peak in the 10th month of 763, when, for a few weeks, they captured and plundered the Chinese capital, Chang'an [5].⁴ After the An Lushan rebellion, the economically and militarily weakened Chinese Dynasty⁵ had to cultivate the support of Inner Asian empires in order to receive aid to preserve its power in China. Sino-Uighur-Tibetan relations were further complicated during the rebellion of Pugu Huai'en [19] (?–765),⁶ the Military Commissioner (*jiedu shi* [21]) of Shuofang⁷ [22] in 764–765.⁸ The Tibetans as well as the Uighurs⁹ first joined the rebels but after the death of Pugu Huai'en, the Chinese, in particular the general Guo Ziyi¹⁰ [28] (697–781), managed to

compliant dynasty in power.” However S. JAGCHID, op. cit., 176 states that “this trade agreement was more economically and militarily profitable to the T'ang side, and was more effective for the maintenance of peace”.

⁴ On the Tibetan conquest of China see for example LIU XU [6], ZHANG ZHAOYUAN [7], *Jiu Tang shu* [8], hereafter *JTS* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju [9], 1991), 5238–39; SONG Qi [10], OU YANGXIU [11], *Xin Tang shu* [12], hereafter *XTS* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju [9], 1991), 6087–88; SU JINREN [13], *Tongjian Tubo shiliao* [14], hereafter *TJ* (Lhasa: Xizang renmin chubanshe [15], 1982), 108–14; and SU JINREN [13], XIAO LIANZI [16], *Cefu yuangui Tubo shiliao jiaozheng* [17], hereafter *CFYG* (Chengdu: Sichuan renmin chubanshe [18], 1981) 170–76.

⁵ As a result of the An Lushan rebellion and the invasion of the Tibetan army that followed it, “the taxes had not been collected in a satisfying quantity for a long time; at least the taxes were not enough to keep an army of sufficient number, beside of maintaining the officers.” H. ECSEDEY, “Uigurs and Tibetans in Pei-t'ing (790–791 A.D.),” *Acta Orientalia* 17 (1964), 89.

⁶ Pugu “is a well known Turkic tribal name which appears as one of the T'ieh-le or T'e-le tribal confederation.” M. R. DROMPP, *The Writings of Li Te-yu as Sources for the History of T'ang Inner Asian Relations*, (Indiana University: Unpublished doctoral thesis, 1986), 80 (n. 20). The Tiele [20] (Tölös) tribal confederation was part of the Uighur empire. See L. W. MOSES, “T'ang Tribute Relations with the Inner Asian Barbarians,” in *Essays on T'ang Society, The Interplay of Social, Political and Economic Forces*, ed. J. C. PERRY (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1976), 75 and C. MACKERRAS, *The Uighur Empire (744–840), According to the T'ang Dynastic Histories* (Canberra: Centre of Oriental Studies, 1968), 127 (n. 11).

⁷ In the northern part of today's Autonomous Region Ningxia. Place names are identified according to TAN QIXIANG [23] et al., *Zhongguo lishi ditu ji* [24], vol. V – *Sui Tang Wudai Shiguo shiqi* [25] (Shanghai: Zhongguo ditu chubanshe [26], 1989).

⁸ On Pugu Huai'en's rebellion see for example *TJ*, 120 ff. and *XTS*, 6088–89.

⁹ Because two of the Pugu Huai'en's daughters were married to the then acting Uighur leader Mouyu [27] (the first daughter was already married to him before he became the ruler of Uighurs), his armies supported his father-in-law in the fight against the Tang Imperial Court. See C. MACKERRAS, “The Uighurs,” in *The Cambridge History of Early Inner Asia*, ed. D. SINOR (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 325; T. J. BARFIELD, op. cit., 153 and C. MACKERRAS, “Sino-Uigur Diplomatic and Trade Contacts (744 to 840),” *Central Asiatic Journal* 7.3 (1969): 217.

¹⁰ On the life of Guo Ziyi see J. EDKINS, “Kwo Tsi Yi, An Eminent Military Commander of the Tang Dynasty,” *Journal of the China Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 34 (1901–2): 1–19.

secure an alliance¹¹ with the Uighurs and to defeat the rebels and Tibetans. He designed the so-called “ally with Uighurs, restrain Tibetans” policy (*lian Hui zhi Tu* [29]).¹² Until the death of the Emperor Daizong [33] (r. 762–779), the Uighurs proved more or less loyal allies of the Tang and the Tibetans raided the northwestern frontier region of Tang Dynasty China, but because of the Sino-Uighur alliance could not conquer large parts of the Tang territory.¹³ When Daizong’s successor, Dezong [34] (r. 779–805), became the Son of Heaven in the year 779, the trilateral relationship reached a new level.

During the first half of the reign of the Emperor Dezong Sino-Tibetan relations were quite turbulent. After he ascended the throne, Dezong had his clear priorities in the Inner Asian policy of the Chinese Empire. He rejected the *lian Hui zhi Tu* political strategy and proposed the “ally with Tibetans, restrain Uighurs” (*lian Tu zhi Hui* [35])¹⁴ policy. Dezong’s standpoint was caused by his personal experience. In the 11th month of the year 762, Dezong, then heir apparent Prince of Yong [36], led a mission which met the Uighur khaghan (*kehan* [37]) Mouyu [27] (r. 759–779) who camped with his army north of Shanzhou¹⁵ [38]. At this crucial point of the Tang Dynasty, Mouyu “even started for China with his army with the intention of co-operating with the rebels”.¹⁶ The Prince of Yong’s task was to persuade the Uighur force to ally with the struggling Tang Dynasty against the rebel leader Shi Chaoyi [39] (?–762) in the course of suppressing the An Lushan rebellion. But “unlike his father [emperor Daizong] who has been quite skillful in dealing with the nomads, Li Kua [i.e. Dezong] proved obstinate in matters of form and provoked trouble”¹⁷ as he refused to salute the khaghan and then became embroiled in a controversy over performing a ceremonial dance for the Uighur leader. “In accordance with the divine authority they believed was theirs, the Uighurs khagans expected both their subjects and foreigners to show respect by an act of ritual.”¹⁸ This ceremonial dance was considered by Uighurs as a sign of reverence to the khagan. Four of Dezong’s advisers were beaten as a result of his behaviour, but finally the Uighur help was secured.¹⁹

This accident, however, remained on Dezong’s mind for a very long period and that is why later, as the Emperor of China, he favoured the policy of ap-

¹¹ See *TJ*, 132–34 and C. MACKERRAS (1968), op. cit., 43–49.

¹² See REN YUCAI [30], *Tubo yu Tang chao guanxi zhi yanjiu* [31] (Taipei: Zili chubanshe [32], 1971), 47.

¹³ See REN YUCAI, op. cit., 51.

¹⁴ See REN YUCAI, op. cit., 60.

¹⁵ About 100 km northeast of today’s Xi’an.

¹⁶ R. GROUSSET, *The Empire of the Steppes, A History of Central Asia* (New Brunswick-New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1970), 121.

¹⁷ T. J. BARFIELD, op. cit., 153.

¹⁸ C. MACKERRAS (1990), op. cit., 326.

¹⁹ On Prince of Yong’s mission to Mouyu see C. MACKERRAS (1968), op. cit., 33–36.

peasement with Tibet with the future possibility of making an alliance and attacking the Uighurs. Emperor Dezhong immediately proclaimed that his aim was to use the “imperial virtue (*de* [40]) to pacify the four directions”,²⁰ and he focused his interest mainly on the Tibetan Empire. To show his good will and grace he ordered all the Tibetan captives to be gathered (altogether about 500 persons) and sent back to their country. In the 8th month of 779 he appointed Wei Lun [41] as Chamberlain for Ceremonials (*tai chang shao qing* [42]) and dispatched him on a mission to Tibet.²¹ Wei Lun’s task was to use this opportunity and discuss with the Tibetan king Khri-sroñ lde-btsan²² (r. 754–797) the possibility of an agreement between the two sides. In spite of the suspicion on the part of the Tibetans who at first did not believe that the emperor was really ready to return their countrymen, Wei Lun reached Tibet and negotiated with Tibetan king about the establishment of peaceful relations. Khri-sroñ lde-btsan agreed with this proposal and sent with Wei Lun a Tibetan envoy. These diplomatic activities of the Emperor Dezhong met with disapproval on the part of the generals. In particular, generals stationed in the area of Shu²³ [44] protested against the way Emperor handled Tibetan captives and suggested that the “Tibetans are fierce and the captives cannot be returned” but should be “treated as slaves, according to the traditional practice”.²⁴ But the Emperor, with the long-term strategy of appeasement in mind, refused to accept their criticism and pushed through his policy. The Tibetan military operations on the Chinese border did not cease immediately, but the tendency on the Tibetan side was to ease the pressure and prepare the circumstances for signing a peace treaty. When in the 3rd month of 780 general Liu Wenxi [45] seized the power in Jingzhou²⁵ [46] and rebelled, he sent his son to Tibet with a demand for military assistance. The Tibetans decided not to harm the delicate relationship with the new Emperor Dezhong and did not intervene in this internal affair of the Tang dynasty. As a result Liu Wenxi was killed after a few weeks.²⁶ The diplomatic activities between the Chinese and Tibetan court continued and envoys from both countries were busy travelling between Chang’an and Lhasa. During this period of negotiations, an incident occurred at the end of 781, when the Chinese official Palace Vice Director (*dian zhong shao jian* [47]) Cui Hanheng [48] arrived as an envoy in Tibet.²⁷ The Chinese Imperial Court, as far as the relationship with “barbari-

²⁰ See *JTS*, 5245 and also *XTS*, 6092.

²¹ See for example *TJ*, 157.

²² His name is recorded in Chinese sources as Qilizan [43].

²³ The territory west of today’s Chengdu, capital of Sichuan province.

²⁴ On the protests of generals see *TJ*, 162. The reason for their disapproval with the new policy of Dezhong was a massive invasion in that area of Tibetans in conjunction with their Nanzhao allies made just a few months prior to that. See *JTS*, 5245 and *XTS*, 6272.

²⁵ Ca. 110 km northwest of today’s Xi’an.

²⁶ See *TJ*, 161.

²⁷ See *XTS*, 781.

ans” was concerned, always strengthened the ceremonial factor of the bilateral relationship, not only as represented by the ritual of tribute presentation but also in connection with the wording of correspondence between the Chinese Emperor and his non-Chinese – as viewed by him – “subjects”. The use of words, obviously, suggested the hierarchical or equal character of the particular relationship. Even earlier, in the years 714²⁸ and 727²⁹ the Tibetans repeatedly asked for “rites as between the enemy countries” (*di guo li* [49], i.e. an equal footing) and their words were according to Chinese historians “perverse and rude”³⁰ (*bei ao* [50]).³¹ So there was a tradition of Tibetan rulers asking for an equal footing with Chinese emperors which was further strengthened by two dynastic marriages of the Chinese princesses Wencheng³² [51] and Jincheng³³ [52] to Tibetan kings in 641 and 710 respectively. So in 781, the Tibetan king after reading the correspondence from Dezong protested to Cui Hanheng against the use of words which suggested the inferior status of Tibet in relation to Tang China – to quote Khri-sroñ lde-btsan’s words “how come you treat us with rituals for subjects (*chen li* [53]).”³⁴ The Chinese side soon realized that the time was not suitable for quarelling over matters which were superficial in the discourse over the strategic interests of Tang China and according to the request of Tibetan emperor changed “to offer as a tribute” (*gong xian* [54]) into “to present” (*jin* [55]), “to bestow” (*ci* [56]) into “to send” (*ji* [57]).³⁵ The Chinese side even accepted the Tibetan request to move the proposed border from the prefecture Lingzhou³⁶ [58] to the Helan³⁷ [59] mountains, which were more defensible for Tibetans. This problem did not stop the diplomatic activities which resulted in the signing of a peace alliance³⁸ between China and Tibet on the 15th day of the 1st month

²⁸ See *JTS*, 5229 and *TJ*, 59.

²⁹ See *TJ*, 67.

³⁰ See *XTS*, 6062.

³¹ See LIEN-SHENG YANG: “Historical Notes on the Chinese World Order,” in *The Chinese World Order. Traditional China’s Foreign Relations*, ed. J. K. FAIRBANK (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968), 12. “Politically and militarily, in several periods, China recognized neighboring peoples as equal adversaries (*ti-kuo*). Note, for example, the relations between Han and Hsiung-nu; T’ang and T’u-chüeh or later T’u-fan; Sung and Liao, Chin and Yuan.”

³² See for example *JTS*, 5221–22.

³³ See for example *JTS*, 5227.

³⁴ *XTS*, 6093; see also *CFYG*, 213.

³⁵ See *JTS*, 5246.

³⁶ In the northern part of today’s Autonomous Region Ningxia.

³⁷ On the left bank of Huanghe river, the border between today’s Autonomous Region Ningxia and Autonomous Region Inner Mongolia.

³⁸ Some officials at the Chinese court viewed this act with suspicion and did not trust the Tibetans. See for example D. TWITCHETT, “Lu Chih (754–805): Imperial Adviser and Court Official,” in *Confucian Personalities*, ed. A. F. WRIGHT, D. TWITCHETT (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1962), 95.

of 783 in Qingshui³⁹ [60]. The treaty ceremony was held three times – first on the Sino-Tibetan border and then in the capitals of both treaty partners. The treaty fixed a new boundary between the two empires.⁴⁰ The acute danger was removed from the Chinese northwestern region and this event enabled the Tibetans to secure the territories conquered mainly in the second half of the 8th century by a bilateral treaty. The treaty “confirmed Tibetan dominion over East Turkestan, Kansu, and a large part of Szechwan.”⁴¹ Emperor Dezong, who was the *spiritus agens* behind this document, had fulfilled the first aim of his Inner Asian policy – that is, the appeasement of Tibet.

The peace, however, did not last for a long time. The harmonious relations between the Chinese and Tibetan courts were stirred by political development which were beyond the control of both rulers. In the 10th month of 783 the Military Commissioner (*jiedu shi* [21]) of Jingyuan⁴² [61] Zhu Ci [62] (742–784) who was granted the rank Defender-in-chief (*taiwei* [63]) rebelled after having served to Emperor Dezong loyally. He seized control of Chang’an and proclaimed himself the new Emperor. At this crucial point of Dezong’s reign, the traditional Tang allies – the Uighurs – sided militarily with the rebels in an effort to overthrow the weakened dynasty. The Imperial Court (then at Fengtian⁴³ [64]) immediately dispatched the envoy Cui Hanheng, who played a decisive role in the negotiation of the Qingshui treaty from 783, with a request for military assistance against the rebels.⁴⁴ Tibetans were ready to provide military help to the Chinese Court, with which they had made a treaty just a few months before. The Chinese and the Tibetans had signed a separate bilateral agreement for Tibetan military assistance against the Zhu Ci rebellion. The Chinese side agreed that in the event of the recapture of Chang’an, they would cede to Tibet the territories of Lingzhou⁴⁵ [57], Jingzhou⁴⁶ [46], Anxi⁴⁷ [65] and Beiting⁴⁸ [66] (Beshbalik). Under these conditions the Tibetans agreed to provide soldiers and generals. In the second month of 784, the Tibetan statesmen shang⁴⁹ [67]

³⁹ In the eastern part of today’s Gansu province, ca. 170 km from Chang’an.

⁴⁰ See *JTS*, 5247–48. For the English text of the treaty see LI FANG-KUEI, “The Inscription of the Sino-Tibetan Treaty of 821–822,” *T’oung Pao* 44 (1956), 7–8.

⁴¹ H. HOFFMANN, “Early and Medieval Tibet,” in *The Cambridge History of Early Inner Asia*, ed. D. SINOR (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 383–84.

⁴² In the eastern part of today’s Gansu province, ca. 170 km northwest of Xi’an.

⁴³ 35 km northwest from today’s Xi’an.

⁴⁴ See *TJ*, 172.

⁴⁵ See note 36 above.

⁴⁶ See note 25 above.

⁴⁷ In the area of today’s Kuche in Autonomous Region Xinjiang.

⁴⁸ Northeast of today’s Urumqi, capital of Autonomous Region Xinjiang.

⁴⁹ Chinese transcription of Tibetan surname (Tib. *zañ*), which shows that he was related to the family of the rulers of Tibetan Empire through the matrilineal line. See WANG YAO, *Tubo jin shi lu*. (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1982), 50–51 (n. 14).

Jiezan⁵⁰ [68] met with Cui Hanheng, but refused to lead the army to China because the letter which requested Tibetan military assistance did not include the signature of the general Li Huaiguang [69].⁵¹ Li Huaiguang was against the idea of using the Tibetan army in this internal struggle. He had three arguments supporting his standpoint: in the event that the Tibetan army helped to recapture the capital, they would plunder the city; according to the imperial order, the soldiers who helped to recapture Chang'an would each be granted 100 strings of cash, but it would be difficult to get such huge amount of money to reward the Tibetans; they could not be trusted because they would not fight in the first lines but would wait aside and watch the result and then either claim our merit or breach the treaty and attack us.⁵² Li Huaiguang declined to sign the letter and later in the year 784 he also rebelled against Emperor. Lu Zhi⁵³ [70] (754–805), then the “Inner Chief Minister” (*nei xiang* [71]), who discussed this matter with Li Huaiguang did not support the idea of Tibetan engagement in this internal affair either.⁵⁴ The Tibetans were persuaded by Cui Hanheng only in the 4th month of 784 when they finally dispatched 20 thousand soldiers to China under the command of Shang Jiezan. They joined the Imperial army and together attacked the rebels. The Tibetans crushed the rebel troops at the river Wuting⁵⁵ [72] which was near Wugong⁵⁶ [73].⁵⁷ The battle proved decisive because it later enabled the Imperial army to recapture the capital Chang'an from the hands of the rebels. However, the Tibetans did not participate in the liberation of Chang'an. Although the Chinese sources admit their crucial role in the suppression of the rebellion, they were accused, that the rebels had bribed them and so they retreated. Emperor Dezong, who was the architect of the Sino-Tibetan alliance was worried about this development. He discussed this matter with Lu Zhi. Lu Zhi described the Tibetans as having been “greedy and tricky” and persuaded the Emperor, that he was lucky that the Tibetans retreated. According to Lu Zhi everybody was opposed to the idea of Tibetan military assistance to China: generals and soldiers loyal to the Emperor feared that the foreigners would deprive them of their merits (and rewards, of course), rebels were afraid that Tibetans would capture and enslave them and common people were worried about the

⁵⁰ Beckwith identifies him as *ᠵᠠᠨ* Rgyal-btsan. See CH. I. BECKWITH, “The Tibetans in the Ordos and North China, Considerations on the Role of the Tibetan Empire in World History,” in *Silver on Lapsis, Tibetan Literary Culture and History*, ed. CH. I. BECKWITH (Bloomington: The Tibet Society, 1987), 4.

⁵¹ See *TJ*, 172.

⁵² Loc. cit.

⁵³ On his career on Tang court see D. TWITCHETT, op. cit., 84–122.

⁵⁴ See *TJ*, 176.

⁵⁵ Small tributary of river Wei [74], ca. 70 km west of Xi'an.

⁵⁶ Ca. 70 km west of today's Xi'an.

⁵⁷ On this battle see *XTS*, 6094; *JTS*, 5249; *TJ*, 174–75; and CFYG, 220.

fact that Tibetan army would plunder everything.⁵⁸ Lu Zhi even warned the Emperor that he “should not feel any sentimentally attachment to the hords of dogs and sheep [i.e. Tibetans].”⁵⁹ Lu Zhi supported the idea that the Chang’an should be seized using only the Chinese army. In the 6th month of 784 the rebels escaped from Chang’an and Zhu Ci was soon killed by one of his generals. The aftermath of this rebellion embittered the Tibetan generals and marked the abrupt end of a short peaceful period in the Sino-Tibetan relationship. After the accusation of bribery, Li Bi [76], the high-ranking official later in 787 appointed Chief Minister (*zaixiang* [77]), who supported the anti-Tibetan faction, suggested to the Emperor that he should not cede the territories of Anxi and Beiting to the Tibetans because the Western region was of vital strategic importance for the Tang dynasty, as the Chinese military presence would tie a part of the Tibetan contingent on the western border of the Tibetan Empire and so would prevent the Tibetans from uniting their military force and focusing on the raids in China.⁶⁰ Emperor Dezong finally decided not to cede the territory to Tibet and repaid Tibetan military assistance in silk,⁶¹ thus ruining the period of the promising trend in Sino-Tibetan relations which started with his rise to ascendancy. The Tibetan raids on Chinese frontier territories started again.

The Tibetan statesmen did not forget the unfair treatment they received from the Chinese Court and were preparing a retaliation. They wanted to capture some of the high-ranking Chinese generals, who, they felt, were responsible for Dezong’s refusal to cede territories in 784. In the 3rd month of 787 Tibetan army led by Shang Jiezan occupied Yanzhou⁶² [78] and Xiashou⁶³ [79] and started to frequently send envoys to the Imperial Court with requests for a new peace treaty.⁶⁴ At first the Emperor did not agree with this project. Afterwards the Tibetans contacted the high Chinese general Ma Sui [80] with the proposal for an agreement. They even promised that after the treaty was signed they would return the two recently conquered prefectures (that is Yan⁶⁵ [78] and Xia⁶⁶ [79]) to China. Ma Sui trusted the Tibetans and started, together with another general Zhang Yanshang [81], to promote this idea in discussions with

⁵⁸ However, this was not a danger which was typical solely for the Tibetan army. The Uighurs also plundered Luoyang twice (in 757 and 763) when they were allies of Tang China in the fight against the rebels. See L. W. MOSES, “T’ang Tribute Relations with the Inner Asian Barbarians,” in *Essays on T’ang Society, The Interplay of Social, Political and Economic Forces*, ed. J. C. PERRY (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1976), 78–79.

⁵⁹ *Bu yi shang juan juan yu quan yang zhi qun* [75]. *TJ*, 176.

⁶⁰ See *TJ*, 177–78.

⁶¹ See *XTS*, 6094.

⁶² In the northwest corner of today’s Shaanxi province.

⁶³ In the northern part of today’s Shaanxi province.

⁶⁴ On Tibetan missions to Tang Court see for example *XTS*, 6095; and *TJ*, 189 ff.

⁶⁵ See note 62 above.

⁶⁶ See note 63 above.

Emperor.⁶⁷ However, there was a strong anti-Tibetan faction, who looked at this development with suspicion. General Li Sheng [82] argued that “one cannot trust the barbarians, there is nothing better than to attack them”.⁶⁸ Another general, Han Youxiang [83], wondered: “When the Tibetans are weak, they ask for an alliance, when they are strong, they invade, now they have penetrated deep into our territory and they ask for a treaty, they certainly want to cheat us.”⁶⁹ General Han Huang [84] also did not favour the idea of making an alliance with Tibetans and he proposed the plan to wall the four prefectures Yuan⁷⁰ [85], Shan⁷¹ [86], Tao⁷² [87] and Wei⁷³ [88], dispatch there soldiers and in this way strengthen the defence. As for the financial resources needed for such an operation, he assumed the responsibility.⁷⁴ The Emperor again declined the proposal to make a new peace treaty with the Tibetans, and wanted to accomplish Han Huang’s plan. However, Han Huang soon died, and Ma Sui, Zhang Yanshang, together with the Tibetan envoy lun⁷⁵ [89] Jiare [90] persuaded Emperor Dezong, who still considered the Uighurs to be his greatest enemies, to make an alliance with Tibetans and attack the Uighurs. The preparatory work for this treaty was marked by the suspicion from the side of a group of Chinese generals and officials who did not trust the sincerity of Tibetan intentions. The Tibetans first proposed Qingshui as the treaty site but later in 787 they wanted to change it for Tulishu [91], which was closer to Tibetan border. The Chinese generals disagreed with this dangerous place and then both parties agreed on Pingliang⁷⁶ [92] which was on a flat plain and so less dangerous. Li Sheng, who did not trust the Tibetans, wanted to make some secret preparation and encamp troops so they could be used in case of emergency, but Zhang Yanshang suspected that he wanted to prevent the conclusion of the peace treaty with Tibetans.⁷⁷ On the 24th day of the 5th month 787 the representatives of both sides met in Pingliang. The meeting resulted in the ill-fated Pingliang incident in which the Tibetans laid an ambush and attacked the Chinese. Many high-ranking Chinese officials and generals were killed or captured (most of them were later released). This accident marked the end of Dezong’s strategy of appeasement towards Tibet. The first eight years of his reign, when he tried (not always suc-

⁶⁷ See *CFYG*, 227; and *TJ*, 189–90.

⁶⁸ *TJ*, 190.

⁶⁹ *Loc. cit.*

⁷⁰ In the southern part of Autonomous Region Ningxia.

⁷¹ Ca. 120 km northwest from today’s Lanzhou in Gansu province.

⁷² In the southern part of today’s Gansu province.

⁷³ In the central part of today’s Gansu province.

⁷⁴ *Loc. cit.*

⁷⁵ Chinese transcription of the Tibetan word *blon po*, “minister”. See *Bod rgya tshig mdzod chen mo – Han zang da cidian*, (Beijing: Minzu chubanshe, 1982), 1927.

⁷⁶ In the eastern part of Gansu province. Near today’s Pingliang.

⁷⁷ See *TJ*, 193 ff.

cessfully) to achieve good terms with Tibet, in spite of the opposition from some military and official circles, were over. The Inner Asian policy had to be reshaped.

In the year 787 Li Bi [76] became the chief minister with full powers. Even earlier, he objected to the Sino-Tibetan alliance. Li Bi's so called "Grand Alliance"⁷⁸ strategy's aim was to isolate Tibet by forming an alliance with the Uighurs, Arabs (*Dashi* [93]), Nanzhao [94] kingdom and Tang China and together crush Tibetan Empire. Due to the reluctance of Dezong, who had not yet forgotten his previous experience with the Uighurs, his task was not easy. In discussion with the Emperor in the 7th month of 787 Li Bi did not dare yet to reveal to the Emperor, what was behind his words "Without using Chinese soldiers, I can cause trouble to Tibetans."⁷⁹ However, in the next month, the Uighurs sent an embassy to the Imperial Court, requested marital alliance and asked for peace.⁸⁰ At that time Li Bi made his proposal to the Emperor. Dezong had supported the idea but he objected against the participation of Uighurs in such an alliance. To Li Bi it was clear that the Uighurs played a crucial role in this project and finally he managed to persuade the Emperor. The Emperor then in 788 granted his daughter, the princess of Xian'an [95] to the new Uighur khaghan Mohe [96] (r. 779–789)⁸¹ and later Chinese officials, in particular the Military Commissioner of Jiannan⁸² [97] Wei Gao [98] (745–805) "chiselled the road to Qingxi"⁸³ [99] in order to make peace with the Man [100] hordes",⁸⁴ that is he reestablished the alliance with Nanzhao⁸⁵ in years 793–794. The Chinese statesmen managed to ease the immediate danger of Tibetan attacks and partly recovered their strategic interests on the northwestern frontier of Tang China.

Frequent Tibetan invasions into Chinese territory after the An Lushan rebellion were the subject of discussion among high-ranking officials for a longer period. For example Lu Zhi, then acting as Chief Minister, in his memorials from the 8th month of 792 and the 5th month of 793 while dealing with the problems of the requirements of frontier defence was drawing the conclusions

⁷⁸ See CH. I. BECKWITH, *The Tibetan Empire in Central Asia, A History of the Struggle for Great Power among Tibetans, Turks, Arabs, and Chinese during early Middle Ages*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), 151.

⁷⁹ *TJ*, 200.

⁸⁰ See C. MACKERRAS (1968), *op. cit.*, 67.

⁸¹ As mentioned by S. JAGCHID, V.J. SYMONS, *op. cit.*, 141, "intermarriage proposals were sometimes the first thing requested by nomadic rulers seeking to normalize relations with China".

⁸² Area in the northeastern part of Sichuan province.

⁸³ A pass in the southern part of today's Sichuan province, ca. 70 km southwest of Mount Emei.

⁸⁴ *XTS*, 6027.

⁸⁵ On relations between Nanzhao, Tibet and Tang China see CH. R. BACKUS, *The Nan-chao Kingdom and Frontier Policy in Southwest China during the Sui and T'ang Periods*, (Princeton University: Unpublished doctoral thesis, 1977), 109–61.

from the experience with Tibetan raids, which revealed some mistakes in Chinese defence organization. First of all, Lu Zhi argued, the problem was the decision making process. The Chinese frontier generals had to wait for orders from the Imperial Court, while the Tibetan generals had the competence to issue orders immediately and so they could act more quickly and flexibly. In his first memorial from the 8th month of 792, Lu Zhi saw this as the main problem of the Chinese defence policy.⁸⁶ The second memorial was devoted again to the matters of frontier policy with the aim of reducing the cost of maintaining the armies. He advocated the settlement of frontier troops with their families on their own lands and making them self-sufficient (so-called *tuntian* [101] system). Lu Zhi admired the strict discipline of the Tibetan army which was, according to him, the reason why it was so effective. Lu Zhi stated that although the whole Tibetan army was equal to the soldiers of 10 Chinese commanderies, thanks to their discipline and the autocratic system of command in the army, they were strong and dangerous. One of the main problems of the Chinese defence was, according to Lu Zhi, that the soldiers were scattered around large territories, and authority was divided among too many generals and soldiers, and so the orders were sometimes controversial and the force of the Chinese army was not used properly.⁸⁷

Relations between China, Tibet and the Uighurs in this period were based on power politics and economic interests. The different relationships between these three parties involved had had some specific features. In the Sino-Uighur relations, the economic aspect played an important role – “because of China’s dependence on their military support, the Uighurs were in position to dictate terms to the Chinese emperors, and some of their rulers exploited this advantage to the full”.⁸⁸ The Chinese statesmen favoured in the long run the “ally with Uighurs, restrain Tibetans” strategy probably because “the Turks, unlike the Tibetan Empire, were no real danger to a united China; they were never able to penetrate very far into the country, nor held any territory; moreover, they were separated from China by the Gobi.”⁸⁹ On the other hand, the political contacts between the Tibetan Empire and Tang China were characterized by the attempts of both parties to strengthen their respective strategic interests in the border territories.⁹⁰ The Chinese statesmen during this period were not interested in theoretical discussions about the character of the Sino-“barbarian” relationship, but their comments were related to the practical issues. The Tibet appeasement

⁸⁶ See *TJ*, 219–20.

⁸⁷ See *TJ* 222–24.

⁸⁸ C. MACKERRAS, *op. cit.*, 317.

⁸⁹ CH. I. BECKWITH (1987), *op. cit.*, 9.

⁹⁰ As stated by Jagchid and Symons “unlike relations between steppe nomads and the Chinese, which were initiated by nomads primarily for economic reasons, intermarriage and tributary ties between Tibet and China were maintained more for political purposes”. S. JAGCHID, V.J. SYMONS, *op. cit.*, 192.

strategy designed by Dezhong worked only for a short period. The reasons for its failure were diverse but the main problem was that the long-term strategic interests of parties involved were antagonistic. The Chinese Imperial Court did not have a lasting Inner Asian policy and their strategy was shaped by the necessity to avert the immediate danger which was coming either from inside (the internal rebellions in China) or from outside – from the Uighurs and/or the Tibetans. Chinese statesmen had only a limited choice of possibilities for diplomatic manoeuvring because they were pushed by circumstances which occurred after the An Lushan rebellion to make an alliance with one of these partners. According to the development, the Chinese court flexibly switched alliances⁹¹ and in this way annoyed its former (and future) allies.

1。唐 2。吐蕃 3。回紇 4。安祿山 5。長安 6。劉昫 7。張昭遠 8。舊唐書 9。北京中華書局 10。宋祁 11。歐陽修 12。新唐書 13。蘇晉仁 14。通鑑吐蕃史料 15。拉薩西藏人民出版社 16。蕭鍊子 17。冊府元龜吐蕃史料校証 18。成都四川民族出版社 19。僕固懷恩 20。鐵勒 21。節度使 22。朔方 23。譚其驤 24。中國歷史地圖集 25。隋唐五代十國時期 26。上海中國地圖出版社 27。牟羽 28。郭子儀 29。聯回制吐 30。任育才 31。吐蕃與唐朝關係之研究 32。臺北自立出版社 33。代宗 34。得宗 35。聯吐制回 36。雍王 37。可汗 38。陝州 39。史朝義 40。得 41。韋倫 42。太常少卿 43。乞立贊 44。蜀 45。劉文喜 46。涇州 47。殿中少監 48。崔漢衡 49。敵國禮 50。悖傲 51。文成 52。金城 53。臣禮 54。貢獻 55。進 56。賜 57。寄 58。靈州 59。賀蘭山 60。清水 61。涇原 62。朱泚 63。太尉 64。奉天 65。安西 66。北庭 67。尚 68。結贊 69。李懷光 70。陸贄 71。內相 72。武亭川 73。武功 74。渭水 75。不宜尚眷眷於犬羊之群 76。李泌 77。宰相 78。鹽州 79。夏州 80。馬燧 81。張延賞 82。李晟 83。韓游瓌 84。韓滉 85。原州 86。鄯州 87。洮州 88。渭州 89。論 90。頰熱 91。土梨樹 92。平涼 93。大食 94。南詔 95。咸安 96。莫賀 97。劍南 98。韋臬 99。青溪 100。蠻 101。屯田

⁹¹ According to some authors it shows the capacity of skilful and imaginative diplomacy of the Chinese Imperial Court. See M. NG-QUINN, "National Identity in Premodern China: Formation and Role Enactment", in *China's Quest for National Identity*, ed. S. S. KIM, L. DITTMER (Ithaca – London: Cornell University Press, 1993), 53–54.