

Governing those who live an “ignoble existence”: Frontier administration and the impact of native tribesmen along the Tang dynasty’s southwestern frontier, 618-907 A.D.

by

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## **Abstract**

As the Tang dynasty rose to power and expanded into the present-day provinces of Sichuan and Yunnan, an endemic problem of troublesome frontier officials appeared along the border prefectures. Modern scholars have largely embraced Chinese historical scholarship believing that the lawlessness and remoteness of these southwestern border regions bred immoral, corrupt, and violent officials. Such observations fail to understand the southwest as a dynamic region that exposed assigned border officials to manage areas containing hardship, war, and unreceptive aboriginal tribes. Instead, the ability to act as an “effective” official, that is to bring peace domestically and abroad, reflected less the personal characteristics of an official and rather the relationship these officials had with the local native tribes. Evidence suggests that Tang, Tibetan, and Nanzhao hegemony along the southwestern border regions fluctuated according to which state currently possessed the allegiance of the native tribesmen. As protectors and maintainers of the roads, states possessing the allegiance of the local peoples possessed a tactical advantage, resulting in ongoing attacks and raids into the border prefectures by China’s rivals. Local officials without the allegiance of the locals and encountering attacks succumbed to improper behaviors to maintain control.

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## Chapter 1 - Introduction

In A.D. 793, the Tang dynasty (618 to 907 A.D.) court official Lu Zhi (陸贄) in a long memorial to the emperor articulated the nature of China's western and southwestern frontiers. Lu proclaimed the region defiant and prone to corruption, the result of immense geographical distance from the capital Chang'an (長安) in modern-day Shaanxi. The foundations of his claim lay on the soldiers and local officials posted to prefectures in Sichuan and Yunnan who possessed low moral character. Lu stated:

... Some [levied soldiers] benefit when the ruler (王) commands them to fight and are defeated as [they] take advantage of the disruption to hustle and bustle [for their benefit] and allow the East [of China] to crumble. Some [of these soldiers] pull out and abandon cities and garrisons (鎮) shaking the hearts of people far and wide. Does not only profit exist with harm? Moreover, there are those who commit offenses and are demoted and exiled [to the frontier]. This type of bad person in addition increases the sentiments of [such]soldiers' minds so [they] desire chaos and take pleasure in it, and again [such events] occur very much in the frontier garrisons. It may be said (可謂) putting in order [the state] establishes perverse frontiers...The enemy (Tibet) each year invades, and the generals pass on [the imperial] commands to defend and mutually [the generals] reject being relied upon and are not brave enough which, for this reason, the gap [of time] grows the enemy's strength until the emperor hears and subsequently calls an army so small as to not be able to compete with the enemies. The royal court does not examine critically who is in charge in levying troops, sending the troops, or [who] might be best commanding [them]. [For the generals] there are no benefits in defensive preparations as it hinders their merit and so importance is given to increasing furnishings and allowing for an immeasurable number of abuses...<sup>1</sup>

In his statement Lu found the very nature of frontiers as a haven for unsavory characters unable to socially function under the law and order of the Chinese empire. Immoral behavior remained the inextricable result of chaos and disorder brought on by physical distance from central China and the intermixing of Han Chinese and foreign cultures. The conditions which Chinese officials were exposed to in the alien environment corrupted the hearts of ministers who acted for self-promotion and material gain. The court minister further believed the rival states of Tibet (吐蕃)

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<sup>1</sup> Sima Guang 司馬光, *Zizhi tongjian* 資治通鑒, (Beijing: Guji chubanshe, 1956), 234.7544-45 [Hereafter ZZTJ].

and Nanzhao (南詔), which throughout the dynasty routinely launched yearly invasions, only exacerbated the already widespread problem of frontier officials stirring trouble on the Tibetan border. Lu concluded his letter to the emperor, expressing the effective defense against such problematic border officials involved appointing “able and skilled” officials restrained by the “laws and canons” that could “verify their achievements.”<sup>2</sup>

Lu’s complaints on problematic frontier officials remained as only one of many discussions held within the Tang’s palace halls. As early as 717, emperor Xuanzong (玄宗) in response to violence on the southwestern border reiterated to his subordinates the main responsibility of his generals on the frontier remained “to maintain peace in the border prefectures” through “transforming the customs of the ignorant so they can become our ever-loyal subjects.”<sup>3</sup> Despite the emperor’s words, problems with border officials continued throughout the dynasty, and the imperial court grew to hold the border officials personally responsible for the ongoing violence and instability along the Tibetan border. Thus, when Lu gave his speech at the end of the eighth century, he attacked the incompetence of officials in the southwest to pacify and secure borders, one of the key responsibilities of officials posted to the frontiers.<sup>4</sup>

Chinese historians routinely portrayed problematic border officials as tyrannical and greedy individuals who shook the stability of the empire through their own inappropriate actions. However, the endemic problem of “troublesome” officials warrants deeper analysis and attention than accepting the conventional explanations produced by Chinese officials. Like Lu Zhi the Tang court interpreted the problem through a Confucian lens that deemed all political unrest as a

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<sup>2</sup> ZZTJ 234.7547.

<sup>3</sup> Wang Zhenping, *Tang China in a Multi-polar Asia* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2013), 222.

<sup>4</sup> ZZTJ 234.7546.



personal failure of Chinese officials to act humanely. However, ethical flaws in character cannot fully explain the appearance of so many problematic officials located in one geographical area of the Tang empire. Further, the Tang never effectively implemented any counter measures that effectively brought errant governors back into line or solved the problem entirely. Instead Tibet featured as the main antagonist that drew out and encouraged the insubordinate behavior of border officials. Therefore, when ministers voiced potential solutions on how to end disobedient and immoral behavior on the borders, such proposals usually involved strategies on how to cease Tang-Tibetan conflict. Often such proposals advocated diplomatic agreements or stronger border defenses and garrisons to dissuade foreign aggressors. Lu Zhi's concerns within his memorial therefore reiterated the conventional Chinese notions that depravity naturally emanated at the edges of the Tang empire, albeit still structuring his argument around the impact of Tibetan aggression.

Modern scholars of Tang history have acknowledged the troublesome southwestern border officials and sought, much in the same manner as the Tang historians, to identify the problem as a result of the period's geopolitics. As the first few Tang emperors sought to secure the dynasty's control over China, other states in Asia similarly began to consolidate power and expand their territory. It is during this period that many various polities emerged in East Asia and began competing for hegemony and territory on the peripheries of China. As states rivaled the Tang dynasty, diplomacy increased as a pragmatic method for dealing with aggressive states such as Tibet and the southern kingdom of Nanzhao. The importance of diplomacy has inspired many scholars to justify problematic officials on the southwestern borders as a reflection of the inadequacies and faults of the Chinese bureaucratic system to adapt to increased exchanges with external polities. Thus even Wang Zhenping, who has painstakingly examined methods of Tang

diplomacy with both Tibet and Nanzhao, places the root cause of the problem on border officials invested with extensive diplomatic powers that allowed them to inflame and manipulate border situations to gain prestige.<sup>5</sup> The same is true with Beckwith's and Backus' works that also examine Tang diplomacy but from the history of Tibet and Nanzhao respectively; both arrive at similar conclusions, blaming an absence of Tang centralized control for allowing officials to act in their own interests.<sup>6</sup> Yet these conclusions derive from two assumptions. First, that chaotic conditions in the southwestern prefectures enabled local officials to expose their latent "greedy, tyrannical, or arrogant" natures. Indeed, Imperial China often employed the south and southwest to exile and demote troublesome officials, as Lu Zhi indicated. Yet, one cannot embrace the idea that all troublesome officials posted to the frontier prefectures of the southwest originated from demotions or exile. Many accounts of local governors in the Jiannan (劍南) circuit, which bordered Tibet and Nanzhao, reveal that many officials came from well-known families and proficiently fulfilled their duties.<sup>7</sup> There remains a number of officials who clearly engaged in corruption and maladministration that brought unrest to their districts.

The second assumption is that ambitious Tang officials for no other reason than their egoism sought to amass immense personal power at the expense of the state. Indeed, some officials did actively seek to grow their power, such as the military-governor Liu Pi (劉闢) who desired to administer all three circuits within Jiannan, yet problematic officials came from a

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<sup>5</sup> Wang Zhenping, *Tang China in a Multi-polar Asia*, 217-219.

<sup>6</sup> Referenced here is Charles Backus, *The Nan-chao Kingdom and China's Southwestern Frontier* (Cambridge [Eng.]: Cambridge University Press, 1981); and Christopher Beckwith, *The Tibetan Empire in Central Asia: A History of the Struggle for Great Power Among Tibetans, Turks, Arabs, and Chinese during the Early Middle Ages* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1987).

<sup>7</sup> In many cases such officials effectively governed and rotated around the provinces of Jiannan either retiring, gaining promotion, or dying while in office. No indication is given of the officials receiving their appointments as punishment or exile; also no indication is given of poor job performance. These accounts can be found within Yu Xianhao 郁賢皓, *Tang Cishi Kao Quan Bian* 唐刺史考全編 (Nanjing: Anhui Daxue Chuban She, 2000).

variety of hierarchical ranks and backgrounds. Believing that the loosely-controlled frontiers enabled a large number of Tang frontier officials to embrace their own pre-existing internal desires for power generalizes the causes for aberrant officials. For these reasons, there is a need for greater examination of the southwestern borders and regional officials outside of Tang foreign relations.

In addition, examining only the diplomatic interactions between China, Tibet, and Nanzhao presses all historical events within the southwestern prefectures to become dichotomized between Chinese and non-Chinese. Thus, southern Sichuan and Yunnan appear as an integrally unified Tang province combating repeated foreign incursions and attacks on Chinese sovereignty. In short, the history becomes Tang versus the foreign countries or likewise Han Chinese versus foreigners. Such a portrayal comes across in Wang Xiaofu's assessment of Arab, Tang, and Tibetan interests in the Silk Road city-states of the Tarim Basin. The southwest prefectures acted as a solid defensible position to recruit troops and gather supplies for the many campaigns conducted in the western regions.<sup>8</sup> However much evidence suggests that the southwest always remained slightly disordered. Indeed, the border prefectures separating China from Tibet and Nanzhao became a battleground to appropriate territory inhabited by diverse aboriginal peoples caught amid the larger regional politics. Consequently, Tang administration of the border areas and the local native tribesmen often remained tenuous, and at times fleeting. For example, different Qiang (羌) tribes of the region crossed the border separating China and Tibet on many occasions over the course of the dynasty. Plus, the highland Lao (獠) tribes that inhabited Yunnan according to the records of the *Tongdian* (通典 *Comprehensive Statutes*) had a

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<sup>8</sup> Wang Xiaofu 王小甫, *Tang Tubo Dashi Zhengzhi Guanxi Shi* 唐吐蕃大食政治關係史 (Beijing: Beijing Daxue Chubanshe, 1992).

reputation of migrating and disappearing without any advanced notice to local officials.<sup>9</sup> By focusing solely on diplomacy these tribal groups become only Tang subjects who frequently appear as exploited victims of the despotic frontier governor. Yet these tribal groups possessed extensive knowledge on the region's geography and conducted critical tasks such as maintaining roads and defensive structures in addition to providing invaluable military service during military campaigns. One should not overlook the importance of these local tribes.

The natives that lived in southern and southwestern China have endured as secondary figures in historical accounts of Chinese expansion. Published works that lie outside Tang geopolitics have relegated the aboriginal peoples to either slaves of northern Han-Chinese or simply as unwelcoming bystanders observing Han-Chinese expansion into their ancestral homes. Attention has particularly gone to examining the diaspora of Han Chinese southward following the collapse of the Han dynasty in the third century.<sup>10</sup> Edward Schafer's work *The Vermillion Bird* perhaps best bridges both political and cultural aspects of Tang expansion into the far southern regions of modern-day Guangdong and northern Vietnam (at the time under Tang control). Yet the structure of Edward Schafer's work remains more a compendium of informative material on the Tang's distant southern provinces than an examination of Tang administration in the region. Only brief biographies of individual administrators and distraught exiled aristocrats fill the pages discussing administration in the south.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Du You 杜佑, *Tong dian* 通典 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1988), 197.5051 [Hereafter TD].

<sup>10</sup> A general migration of elite families started after the Han dynasty collapsed a period of instability ensued. When the Jin 晉 dynasty fell to the encroachment of nomadic tribes in 420 A.D., the trend increased as many aristocrats fearing execution by the nomadic tribesman fled and began migrating south. A great diaspora occurred over the next four centuries bringing Han-Chinese increasingly south expanding beyond the Yangtze river valley. Here they claimed land and established villages all the while attempting to reassert their aristocratic status and control over the lower-classes. For more see Charles Holcombe, "Southern Integration: The Sui-Tang (581–907) Reach South." *Historian* 66, no. 4 (2004): 768.

<sup>11</sup> Edward Schafer, *Vermillion Bird: T'ang Images of the South* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), 34-36, 42-44

In the remote reaches of the empire, local officials mediated imperial directives against the concerns of the local denizens and basic job responsibilities. Roadways and grain stores took considerable effort to maintain in the high mountains of Yunnan and Sichuan. Floods damaged fields and communication routes, while droughts posed starvation and death. Further violence inflicted by foreign soldiers or local bandits could deplete populations or require the levying of armies that took men away from tending farms. Amid these responsibilities frontier officials also occasionally acted as Tang diplomats entertaining or meeting with foreign leaders or establishing settlements and conferring titles to foreign tribesmen who submitted to the Tang state. To what degree these exigencies of border officials impacted Tang governance by local officials requires an analysis that expands to incorporate geographical, demographical, and political factors.

What emerges when these influences are examined all together is the impact of local native populations on the larger geopolitical rivalry that occurred between the Tang and Tibet, and later in the ninth century between China and the Nanzhao kingdom. Specifically, border pacification and Tang expansion occurred whenever local governors achieved the support of the local natives who inhabited border prefectures possessing major roads to Tibet in the west and Nanzhao to the south. During periods of Tang weakness or when local officials lost the confidence of the local tribes, such officials remained isolated and endured yearly border raids that brought devastation to the land and the people. As an added injury, the locals often shifted allegiance to the Tang's enemies. The so-called "troublesome" border officials appeared most often during these periods of dynastic weakness when important roadways became open to foreign armies in the southwest. In contrast, during periods when the Tang displayed or exercised great power, the local officials benefitted from securing the aid of local tribes that held valuable

knowledge of the landscape and could act as soldiers or labor to adequately control the roads and ward off enemies.

### ***The Significance of the Tang Southwest***

Three factors emphasize the need to study the southwest areas of China as its own entity separate from other frontier borders during the Tang dynasty. First, the western borders of Sichuan and Yunnan remained ill-defined and transitory as cities, fortresses, and villages in the border areas could find themselves controlled by both Tang and Tibetan forces within a matter of months. In addition, raiding and invasions could only have subjected the people and land of these areas to intense devastation over time. Moreover, ongoing warfare plagued small tribes who frequently sought relocation across borders for protection or to escape conscription by either Tibet or the Tang. In short, the constant conflict caused incredible hardship to the local peoples who endured regular raids that caused destruction to crops as well as families.

Second, analyzing the border regions of the Tang southwestern frontier further enables a deeper ethnological study of early medieval China's embryonic conceptions of "ethnic" identity.<sup>12</sup> Known collectively during the Sui-Tang era as Man (蠻), the southwestern aboriginals quickly found themselves incapable of integrating into Han-Chinese or Tibetan society and existed as bystanders of a larger game of Tibetan and Tang geopolitics. Such observations have not been explored by Chen Sanping or Marc Abramson, who have both argued in their own respective works for the permeation of central Asian culture into Tang society. Focus on the

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<sup>12</sup> Although anachronistic to say "ethnicity" here, I employ the term in much the same way as Abramson who argues the acceptability of the term because no other word exists to better articulate how the early Han-Chinese viewed their own identity as compared to foreigners. For a more complete understanding see Marc Samuel Abramson, *Ethnic Identity in Tang China*, Encounters with Asia (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008).

integration of nomadic steppe culture into northern Chinese elite clans has marginalized the experiences of southern natives who also impacted Tang society beyond the capital region. Analyzing and researching the interactions between native tribes and local Tang officials in the distant frontiers can further our understanding of how both southern tribal culture and Han-Chinese culture coexisted as China grew increasingly more cosmopolitan throughout the dynasty.

Third, since the time of the Han (206 B.C.-220 A.D.), emperors dispatched officials to the areas of modern-day Sichuan and Yunnan to secure the trade routes that connected China to India. When the Han state crumbled in the third century, China became divided between northern and southern dynasties. During this period, the Han Chinese continued to expand southward penetrating and residing within the lower Yangtze River Valley. In the later sixth century the Sui dynasty (581-618) succeeded once again in reuniting the Chinese heartland under one ruler and establishing an administrative center in Sichuan near modern-day Chengdu, although shortly afterward emperor Sui Wendi (隋文帝 r. 581-604) abandoned the prefecture until his successor Sui Yangdi (隋煬帝 r.604-617) once again restored administrative control over the region.<sup>13</sup> An intense transformation of the south and southwest occurred under the Tang who seized power less than forty years later. Under emperor Taizong (太宗 r. 626-649) the Tang expanded its borders into Sichuan and Yunnan by employing local chieftains as governors.

Quickly the Tang realized the strategic importance of the region as well as the difficulty of administering distant lands with an unfamiliar environment. For the Tang transplanting the Chinese bureaucratic system to the southwest proved an unprecedented challenge. Traditionally

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<sup>13</sup> TD 176.4626.

the northwestern steppe lands of Mongolia and Eastern Turkestan had always demarcated an unofficial boundary separating nomadic “barbarian” foreigner peoples from the Han-Chinese lands of the Yellow River valley. Here the geographic differences of the steppe – dry and grassy – that supported nomadic herding rather than the agricultural production, practiced in China created a natural boundary dividing the civilized Han Chinese from the uncultured “barbarian.” The Han launched a series of military campaigns into the Xiongnu’s (匈奴) territory, but even Emperor Wudi observed no benefit from expanding into these remote spaces. Wudi claimed, “it is not worthwhile to expand our territory by seizing their land, and it is impossible to increase strength by subduing their people.”<sup>14</sup> Yet, the mountainous and temperate climates of Sichuan and Yunnan supported agriculture and many of the native tribes practiced farming methods in some capacity. Further, when the Jin dynasty collapsed in the early fifth century, Han Chinese aristocrats fled south from the invading Xianbei tribes and began constructing large farming estates south of the Yangtze river. These migrations, as Fitzgerald, Xu, and Holcombe have articulated, slowly began the process of assimilating southern native peoples into Han Chinese culture through the diffusion of the Chinese language.<sup>15</sup> However, migrating elites feeling the loss of an aristocratic heritage took efforts to reassert their political status in the regions through establishing large estates and renting land and housing to the locals and commoners who inhabited the area. The rise of the Sui and the Tang revealed the potential for exiled aristocrats to revive the long-lost status of their family clans. Thus, when Tang armies came to conquer and

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<sup>14</sup> Hu Shaohua, "Revisiting Chinese Pacifism," *Asian Affairs, an American Review* 32, no. 4 (2006): 265.

<sup>15</sup> Charles Holcombe, "Southern Integration: The Sui-Tang (581–907) Reach South," *Historian* 66, no. 4 (2004): 752, 764; C.P Fitzgerald, *The Southern Expansion of the Chinese People* (New York: Praeger, 1972), xvii; Zhuoyun Xu, *China: A New Cultural History*, Masters of Chinese Studies (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), 194.



establish authority south of the Yangtze River, the southern elites willingly participated in the transference of power.<sup>16</sup>

Despite the efforts of Chinese officials, the southwest remained a frontier defined by steep mountains carved by rivers and populated by local tribesman with no former interaction with Imperial China. Unlike the Koreans to the northeast who had adopted elements of Chinese culture, many tribes of the southwest remained largely ignorant of the Chinese customs because of isolation. Traditionally Confucianism dictated how Chinese governments interacted with these foreign or “barbarian” peoples. Confucian philosophy emphasized that when virtuous and righteous governance was conducted by the Han Chinese, foreign peoples in awe of Han Chinese culture would naturally come to submit themselves as vassals to the state and adopt Chinese customs. Yet few native groups, besides the Mengshe (蒙舍) clan in the Erhai (洱海) region of Yunnan, ever actively sought to fully immerse their own tribe in Chinese bureaucracy and education.<sup>17</sup> Yet the example of the Cuan remained an exception, as most aboriginal groups in the southwest desired to retain many of their own customs.

Besides the intermixing and interactions of various ethnic groups in the southwest, the region deserves individualized attention as the epicenter of Tang, Tibetan, and Nanzhao conflict. As sedentary societies, Tibet and Nanzhao sought to control the region for territorial gain rather than raiding for wealth and recognition like the nomadic tribes of the northwest. As an expansionist and militaristic state, the Tang emerged battling and interacting with a powerful

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<sup>16</sup> Charles Holcombe, "Southern Integration," 771.

<sup>17</sup> The Mengshe 蒙舍 tribe, one of six Cuan 爨 tribes in Yunnan, pursued a close relationship with the Tang desiring Chinese garments and education. The relationship between China and the Mengshe enabled the tribe to gain power and subjugate the other five tribes in the area. Once the Mengshe achieved hegemony in the area around Kunming 昆明, the Tang presented the leader with the title of “King of Yunnan” 雲南王 later in the ninth century receiving the name Nanzhao 南詔. See ZZTJ 214.6835.

enemy that possessed unfamiliar tendencies and goals. Diplomatic agreements remained tentative and raiding consistent. The local Tang prefectural governor (cishi 刺史) endured the brunt of the violence and coped with the regional instability, balancing both civil and military affairs to repel foreign attackers and deal with the corresponding destruction. Although other areas in the south possessed “troublesome” officials—specifically in the Annan (安南) province—the Chinese had over centuries found the south to represent a hostile, dangerous, and repulsive place. As early as the Qin dynasty (221-206 B.C.), expansion into the Nanling (南嶺) mountains provided the dynasty a remote area to exile troublesome officials and political opponents.<sup>18</sup> Such practices continued throughout the Tang, and some officials found themselves exiled as far as the island of Hainan in the South China Sea or the southern edges of Yunnan on the Burmese border. Besides political exile, the foreign landscape and demographics of the south garnered a reputation as an abhorrent place for many Han Chinese. Once posted to a remote border region, an official’s personal perceptions could greatly impact how he dealt with local problems or treated the local inhabitants.

As the origination point of problematic officials, native foreign peoples, and the crux of political conflict the distinctiveness of Tang’s southwestern prefectures provides an insulated and unique probe into Tang frontier officials. Jiannan remained a place where cultures, perceptions, and politics collided. By remaining distinctive against the Chinese heartland and yet insulated by the geographical terrain, the region can act as an interesting case study blending politics and ethnology.

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<sup>18</sup> For detailed accounts of angst held by Han-Chinese towards the southern provinces see Edward Schafer, *Vermillion Bird*, 34-36.

## *The Organization and Structure*

The chapters that follow are structured to provide a complete picture of how the various levels of Tang administration dealt with the southwest. Following the Introduction, chapter two begins by defining the behavioral characteristics that the early Chinese believed represented virtuous official behavior. In many ways these traits remained in place throughout the Tang with only minor alterations. Acting solely to further the aims of the emperor, officials were expected to conduct themselves appropriately and promulgate righteousness across the empire. Centering on the perspectives held by the emperors and the inner court, the second half of the chapter then explores how the problem of border officials grew, transformed, and altered over the course of the dynasty. Here the unscrupulous behavior of Tibet and Nanzhao dominated discussions and appeared as the corrosive element that encouraged border officials to succumb to immoral behaviors.

Chapter three looks to provide a general overview of the Tang's southwestern administrative division, called the Jiannan circuit (劍南道). Here the geography of the region, distinct from the Chinese heartland, played a critical role in determining how local officials governed their respective prefectures. The role of the roads, mountain passes, and waterways of southern Sichuan and Yunnan reveals the difficulty and importance of transferring people, goods, and written communications. The roles of various types of frontier officials and their corresponding role in administering the prefectures along the southwestern border are discussed. However, the main focus remains on the local governor or "prefect" who over the course of the dynasty became increasingly inundated with tasks and responsibilities including initially repelling the yearly raids of Tibet and Nanzhao. The chapter ends by examining the impact of local tribes on the larger politics between China and the rival states of Tibet and Nanzhao.

Chapters four and five chronologically follow the events occurring within the border prefectures of Jiannan throughout the dynasty. Here the relationship between regional hegemony and the loyalty of local tribes cycled as native peoples changed loyalties when one regional power appeared more dominant than the other. The loss of local support often also indicated a period of retraction for the Tang dynasty and increased border violence and harassment. Also emphasized is the role of local roads that permitted the Tang, Tibet, and Nanzhao to cross the political borders and traverse the mountains that define western Sichuan and Yunnan.

As a final note, the following work examines the history of Tang governance in southern Sichuan and Yunnan and the impact of the local aboriginals on historical events. Although exploring the Jiannan circuit in detail, emphasis is given to the Tang prefectures, called *zhou* (州), that existed on the western borders of Tibet and northern borders of Nanzhao. This preference also extends further to those prefectures that possessed the crucial roads or pathways that joined the Tang to Tibet and Nanzhao, as these are where the “troublesome” officials often appeared. To aid the reader, the appendixes provided contain maps articulating the locations of specific prefectures and major roadways that connected Tibet and Nanzhao with the Tang empire as of 742 A.D. Although the borders and prefectures changed over the course of the dynasty many times, the map should help give some context to the locations of events and geographic areas.

## Chapter 2 - The Troublesome Tang Official on the Southwest Frontier

### *The Role of the Official in Tang China*

In imperial China the emperor functioned as the *axis mundi* of the spiritual and earthly realms. By receiving a heavenly mandate to rule, a Chinese sovereign became the center of the universe tasked with perpetuating the natural order to ensure equilibrium throughout the cosmos. Any person, ruler or commoner, that threatened to upset the cosmic processes brought chaos and disaster to the Chinese state. As the head of state, the Chinese ruler served as the moral guide for his subjects modeling virtue and seeking to protect the country against evil. The Chinese bureaucratic system instilled law and etiquette and enabled the ruler to observe the actions of the common people and ensure his subjects acted harmoniously. The *Liji* (禮記 *Book of Rites*) states about the relationship between sage-ruler and common people:

When a ruler issues his notices and gives forth his orders, and the people are pleased, we have what we may be called the condition of harmony. When supervisors and inferiors love one another, we have the condition of benevolence. When the people get what they desire without searching for it, we have the conditions of confidence. When all things in operations of heaven and earth that might be injurious are removed, we have the condition of righteousness. Rightness and confidence, harmony and benevolence are the instruments of the presiding chieftain and the king. If anyone wishes to govern the people and does not employ these instruments, he will not be successful.<sup>19</sup>

The successful preservation of a ruler and his dynasty thus required fulfilling the needs of his subjects and gaining the people's respect.

The early Chinese believed that virtuous government extended outward from the emperor and reached the people through the employment of officials. Officials existed as intermediaries,

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<sup>19</sup> Dai Sheng 戴聖, *Liji* 禮記, *Jingjie zhuan* 經解傳, 4, Adapted from the translation of James Legge in Dai Sheng 戴聖, *Liji* 禮記 (Beijing: Intercultural Press, 2013), 237.

expected to forward the virtuous law and propriety of the ruler upon their Chinese subjects. Actions that diverged from the imperial laws and statutes threatened to sever access of the people to moral guidance. Conversely, if an official rigidly obeyed the sovereign and implemented his commands then the government could prevent the common people from acting wickedly, thus preventing disruptions to the heavenly cycles. The *Huainanzi* (a guide to the practice and theory of government in early China) outlines the roles of the ruler, officials, and people as follows:

In ancient times,

A system of responsible officials was established so as to restrain the people and thus prevent them from doing just as they pleased.

The position of the ruler was set up to control officials so that they could not carry out [policy] on their own.

Laws, records, propriety, and righteousness were used to restrain the ruler so that he could not exercise absolute authority.<sup>20</sup>

The emperor therefore endured as the central figure demarcating wrong and right to all people under his authority; good officials just broadcasted the ruler's verdict. It is such that the *Liji* indicates further: "It is only the son of Heaven that receives his appointment from Heaven; officials receive their appointments from the ruler. Therefore, if the ruler's orders conform [to the rule of Heaven], his orders to his ministers also conform to it."<sup>21</sup>

Along with establishing moral rules, it was believed that proper government channeled the goodness of the ruler outward to all corners of the world and, in concept, to all people. "Virtue" or *de* (德) represented the moral uprightness of a human person who acted wisely, upheld the religious rites, and showed compassion for others.<sup>22</sup> Sitting atop the hierarchy of

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<sup>20</sup> Liu An 劉安, -122 BC. *Huainanzi* 淮南子. N.p.: Project Gutenberg, n.d. Web. 27 July 2018., 9.23.

<sup>21</sup> Dai Sheng 戴聖, *Liji* 禮記, 43. Adapted from the translation of James Legge in Dai Sheng 戴聖, *Liji* 禮記 (Beijing: Intercultural Press, 2013), 272.

<sup>22</sup> For more information on *de* (德) and the nine qualities (就德) see Wang Zhenping, *Tang China in a Multi-Polar Asia* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press), 256-57.

government and acting as mediator of heaven and earth, the ruler sought to model virtuous conduct and enact laws that cultivated morality across the state. As representatives and enforcers of the emperor's moral rightness, the officials by extension should mirror the emperor's behaviors and strictly follow the established laws. Officials conducting themselves benevolently as the emperor desired could nurture goodness and peace all over the world.

Officials therefore were not merely enforcers of laws as much as proselytizers of virtue to those who came into contact with them. The Chinese believed that outsiders exposed to Chinese culture and ritual would become enamored and actively seek subjugating themselves under the moral authority of the Chinese state. Acculturation could have a far more enduring effect than threat of physical force. Emperor Taizong made this point in 636, stating: "Although I have conquered the world by military action, I should, in the end, pacify this world by civil virtue."<sup>23</sup> Taizong's sentiments carried on to later Tang emperors who likewise believed that China's culture could bring peace upon China's traditional border enemies. In 710, the emperor Zhongzong (中宗 r. 684, 705-710) after ascending the throne for a second time voiced:

When sages spread civilization, they take the welfare of the people at heart. Likewise, those rulers who govern with kindness, extend their ideas to the border areas of the eight directions without accounting for any foreigners, so that their kindness and virtue reflect close and faraway places. From this, everything can be in harmony. Accordingly, from this order, the glorious Zhou dynasty made the calendar, with which they could act kindly to barbarians in faraway places. And the powerful Han [dynasty], completing a chance, could establish agreements of peace with the barbarian tribes. Thinking about these things, it is a general way to administer the country with a long plan. I, the sovereign, received the heavenly order from the spirit of heaven, and am anxious to follow our ancestors, and anxious to raise such excellent deeds as before.<sup>24</sup>

Zhongzong believed the foundation of his rule, much like his predecessors, involved spreading kindheartedness and ritual to the distant borders, thus pacifying the hostility on the frontiers.

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<sup>23</sup> Liu Xu 劉昫, *Jiu Tangshu* 舊唐書 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1975), 28.1045 [Hereafter JTS].

<sup>24</sup> JTS 196.5227.

Tang officials, left out of the emperor's speech, were by their very nature the vehicle through which Chinese culture and "kindness" could be transported to the frontiers and beyond. Officials dispatched to remote places who befriended the locals and engaged in productive efforts to implant Chinese bureaucracy could achieve parts of the emperor's vision. However, not all officials appointed to the frontiers brought a message of peace and harmony. Indeed, some Tang officials brought violence, tyranny, and dishonesty.

### ***The "Good" and "Bad" Official***

Just as the emperor's right to rule was bound within his moral behavior, his officials too became, as extensions of the ruler's power, evaluated on their scruples. Any action undertaken by an official lay open to critique from his higher-ranked superiors. Further, the decentralized nature of the imperial system often forced local officials to act first and inform the capital afterward. Without strict protocols on proper job performance, the reputations of officials rested on the present circumstances, personalities, and political biases. Therefore, compiling a set list of criteria deemed as "good" or "bad" characteristics of behavior for a Chinese official becomes incredibly difficult. However, some rudimentary qualities of "good" officials can be drawn from the sources.

The *Shiji* (史記 *Records of the Grand Historian*) possesses a pair of biographical chapters describing the positive and negative merits of various officials in early China. In the preface for the chapter on "upright" (循吏列傳) officials, the author Sima Qian (司馬遷) reiterated the infallibility of Chinese officials who obeyed the emperor's commands and acted honorably, stating: "Yet men of truly sound moral conduct will never go wrong no matter what public position they are appointed to. Those who fulfil their duties of their office and behave in a



reasonable way are also carrying out the work of government.”<sup>25</sup> Such statements reiterate the role of the official as the remote proxy of the emperor, sent to enforce fairness and cultivate righteousness. However, the author also indicates a second point, that “officials who upheld the law and carried out their responsibilities in a reasonable fashion did not boast of their accomplishment nor brag of their ability. Though they won no praise from the common people, neither did they commit any glaring errors.”<sup>26</sup> Officials existed to enact proper law and instruction, not act to gain an identity as a hero or villain of the people. Any notoriety or political power gained by an official who publicly sought recognition for his actions threatened to disrupt the relationship between common people and ruler. Therefore, a proper official effected change by observing the people and reporting to the sovereign how best to help his subjects.

One of the most telling examples of an upright officials in the *Shiji* is Sunshu Ao (孫叔敖), who around the turn of the seventh century B.C. functioned as the Prime Minister of the state of Chu (楚 ca. 600 B.C.). Sunshu received immortalization for his actions that advocated the desires of the ruler as well as fought on behalf of the people; all the while acquiring no remarkableness of any kind. During Sunshu’s time as Prime Minister, the King of Chu desired to increase the height of carriages, as the common carriages used at that time were too low and harmed the horses. When the King of Chu sought to issue an order raising the height of carriages, Sunshu cautioned the ruler against issuing orders too frequently as constant changes in laws might confuse the people. Instead Sunshu proposed that if the ruler desired “the people use higher carriages” then he should “instruct the officials to have the thresholds of the community gates made higher.” Sunshu’s plan achieved success as the people raised the height of their own

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<sup>25</sup> Sima Qian, *Records of the Grand Historian*, trans. by Burton Watson (Hong Kong & New York: Columbia University Press, 1961), 373.

<sup>26</sup> Sima Qian, *Records of the Grand Historian*, trans. by Burton Watson, 373.

carriages to pass through the new higher thresholds. Sima Qian articulated the brilliance of Sunshu's actions, indicating: "In this way, without instructing the people, Sunshu Ao led them to change their ways. Those near to him observed his ways and imitated them; those far away in surrounding states heard of them and took his ways for their model."<sup>27</sup> Sunshu had performed a meritorious deed through implementing the will of the sovereign without bringing attention to himself.

The personal morality of officials found within the *Shiji*'s chapter on "harsh" (酷吏列傳) officials are far less defined than their "upright" counterparts. In many cases these officials found themselves as loyal and respectable bureaucrats who fell victim to their own "virtuous" actions when their merits went against the politics of the inner court. For example, the Han military-commander of the capital Zhi Du (鄧都)<sup>28</sup> had gained a reputation as a man of "great daring and valor" that adhered to the "letters of the law" removing lawless officials wherever he was posted. Zhi Du ultimately found the heir apparent, Liu Rong (劉榮), guilty of crimes and ordered him to commit suicide as punishment. Angered by his actions, the Empress Dowager Xiaowen (孝文皇后), mother of Liu Rong, brought charges against Zhi. The emperor, still finding Zhi a loyal official, sought to pardon him, but the empress ultimately convinced the emperor to order his execution.<sup>29</sup>

Perhaps a more complicated account can be found in the official named Zhang Tang (張湯) whose career within the Han imperial court often blurred the lines of "virtuous" and "moral"

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<sup>27</sup> Sima Qian, *Records of the Grand Historian*, trans. by Burton Watson, 374-75.

<sup>28</sup> Zhi Du was appointed governor of Ji'nan 濟南 and later promoted to military commander of the capital under Emperor Jing 景 of the Han dynasty for his righteous conduct. Sima Qian 司馬遷. *Shiji* 史記 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1982), 122.3153-54. [Hereafter SJ]; Sima Qian, *Records of the Grand Historian*, trans. by Burton Watson, 380-382.

<sup>29</sup> SJ 122.3153-54; Sima Qian, *Records of the Grand Historian*, trans. by Burton Watson, 380-382.

behavior. Zhang received his first appointment as the aide to the local Prefect of Chang'an but continued to receive promotions until he had risen to the rank of imperial secretary. The foundation of Zhang's success came from the official's ability to discover the desires of the emperor and then manipulate situations to achieve that outcome. The strategy enabled Zhang to bring about the downfall of other court rivals and brought himself notoriety and prestige. In some cases, Zhang's actions helped the state and common people, as the imperial secretary implemented tax and coinage reform and correspondingly increased the punishments on officials employing the new tax-laws to "snatch [land] for illegal gain."<sup>30</sup> However, on other occasions Zhang's actions caused internal rivalries, conflicts, and violence as he often blamed other officials for his own wrongdoings. When Zhang blamed a rival minister for failing to protect an imperial grave from robbers and received merit for his actions, the minister and his clique then brought charges against Zhang for illegal money dealing that led to his execution in 116 B.C. In the end, it remained Zhang's personality built around deception that eventually defined his legacy as a "harsh" official.<sup>31</sup>

For the Tang, especially during the latter half of the dynasty, court politics and rivalries could often impact the reputations and outcomes of an official's career. Perhaps the most notable feud during the dynasty involved Yang Guozhong (楊國忠) and An Lushan (安祿山) who both sought to oust the other from power. When Yang convinced emperor Xuanzong that An Lushan had amassed a large army and sought to bring down the empire, An Lushan, without any options, led a rebellion in 755 that seized both Tang capitals and crippled the dynasty.<sup>32</sup> After the event, the Tang became highly skeptical of any official that accumulated power on the frontiers. The

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<sup>30</sup> *SJ* 122.3154-55.

<sup>31</sup> *SJ* 122.3154-55.

<sup>32</sup> *JTS* 106.3342.

official Li Yang (李嶼) in the years following the rebellion received a demotion to the local Prefect of Shuzhou (蜀州), as the newly enthroned emperor Li Heng (李亨) – later emperor Suzong (肅宗) – feared the minister had too much power at court.<sup>33</sup> Officials on the frontier became considerable targets for negative attacks by political adversaries who played on the fears left by the An Lushan rebellion to harm or destroy their reputations.

Yet some officials inextricably fell into the immoral category through violence and oppression. The Tang official Zhang Qiantuo (張虔陀), appointed area-commander (都督) of Yaozhou (姚州) in 748, quickly “sowed discord” among all the native tribesman under his administration. In addition, the area-commander proceeded to conduct illicit relationships with family members connected to the Nanzhao ruler Geluofeng (葛邏鳳). When Geluofeng attended a banquet with his family held by Zhang, the Tang area-commander further ordered his followers to voice rude remarks towards the visiting Nanzhao ruler. Naturally such offenses angered Geluofeng, who then organized and dispatched native Man rebels who attacked Yaozhou (姚州) and killed Zhang along with his followers in 750.<sup>34</sup> Other than bringing the death of Zhang, the event had widespread consequences as the rebel Man tribesman after ousting Zhang seized the prefecture. The loss of territory and Zhang’s death prompted the military-governor of western Jiannan, Xianyu Zhongtong (鮮于仲通), to launch a punitive expedition against Nanzhao that ended in defeat. Offended and attacked by the Tang, Geluofeng lost his confidence in the

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<sup>33</sup> JTS 112.3342; ZZTJ 221.7077.

<sup>34</sup> The *Man Shu* indicates that the illicit relationship took place between Zhang Qiantuo and the wife of the local native leader Bo Chong 波衝 who was related to Geluofeng, See Fan Cho. *The Man Shu (Book of Southern Barbarians)* trans. by Gordon H. Luce. Department of Far Eastern Studies. Ithaca NY: Cornell University, 1961, chapter 3, 24; Sima Guang 司馬光, *Zizhi tongjian 資治通鑑*, (Beijing: Guji chubanshe, 1956), 216.6901 [Hereafter ZZTJ].

Chinese and transferred his allegiance to Tibet, becoming an ally of China's rival for the next fifty years.<sup>35</sup> Zhang's hostile attitude towards all non-Han peoples in the southwest caused considerable hardship and failed to convey the kindness and advantages of Chinese culture and society. Chinese historians therefore had no problem articulating Zhang's enduring legacy as a poor official, citing his personal flaws as evidence of his "bad" conduct. For the authors of the *Jiu Tangshu* (舊唐書 *Old History of the Tang*) ascribed Zhang Qiantuo as a "narrow-minded and short-tempered" official who "rarely strategized, was argumentative, and [prone to] swindling."<sup>36</sup>

However, the Tang historians also sought to praise border officials that conducted themselves benevolently by articulating these officials' beneficial qualities. Such officials again acted for the good of the state through proselytizing Han-Chinese culture and gaining the loyalty of foreign peoples. Accordingly, Dang Renhong (黨仁弘), appointed military-governor of Rongzhou (戎州) at the very beginning of the dynasty, achieved recognition for ending slavery customs of the Lao (獠) tribes.<sup>37</sup> Likewise, during the Sui and into the early Tang dynasty, the official Wei Renshou (韋仁壽) maintained the post of military-governor in Guizhou (嵩州) and sought to assimilate the natives of Yunnan's Erhe (洱海) region through establishing imperial administrative divisions. The *Zizhi tongjian* states:

Renshou's nature was magnanimous and he had knowledge and experience. After receiving his orders, he led 500 soldiers to the western Erhe region, with a circumference of several thousand *li*. The chieftains of the Man and Yi all saw the way the wind was blowing and submitted, coming

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<sup>35</sup> The diplomatic and military efforts of Wei Gao 韋皋 around the turn of the ninth century would permit Nanzhao to return the country's allegiance back to the Tang. See ZZTJ 234.7547; ZZTJ 235.7561.

<sup>36</sup> JTS 197.5280-81; XTS 5.147; XTS 222a.6271; ZZTJ 216.6901-02; THY 99.1763; *Wen Tangquan* 全唐文, chapter 999 *Zheng Hui* 鄭回 stone tablet inscription taken from Yu Xianhao 郁賢皓, *Tang Cishi Kao Quan Bian* 唐刺史考全編 (Nanjing: Anhui daxue chubanshe, 2000), 3127.

<sup>37</sup> *Cefu yuangui* 元龜, chapter 689, as quoted within Yu Xianhao 郁賢皓, *Tang Cishi Kao Quan Bian* 唐刺史考全編 (Nanjing: Anhui daxue chubanshe, 2000), 3117.

to see Renshou. Renshou then established seven prefectures and fifteen counties, each with its chieftain as prefect or county magistrate.<sup>38</sup>

Through his actions, Wei Renshou received the love and respect of the local tribesman. When the emperor sent orders to relocate the military-governor to Nanning (南寧) the local people begged Wei to remain in Yunnan. At which point Wei responded: “I received an imperial edict ordering [me to] patrol the area to ensure peace. I do not dare stay without authorization.” Consequently, the natives amassed to see Wei out of the city and agreed to start delivering tribute to the capital.<sup>39</sup> Because of the actions of both officials, Dang and Wei received laudatory historical records for bringing Chinese law and order to foreigners in the southwestern frontier.

From the Zhou to the Tang, the Confucian ideals of a “good” official had retained their fundamental tenets in theory: loyalty, no notoriety, and ability to report the needs of the people. However, reliance on personal qualities over rules and statutes enabled politics to mold exactly what that definition curtailed. As time continued, Chinese historians preserved the dynasty’s history and made an ultimate decision to label each official as either “good and righteous” or “bad and evil.” Court politics and feuds could always manipulate outside perceptions of an official’s conduct. Proficient officials often adeptly manipulated their position politically to promote their actions as beneficial for the people and the Chinese state, even when the reality was the opposite. Whether on purpose or as an act, an administrator profited from appearing humble and receiving high esteem from the subjects he oversaw; receiving actual esteem from them remained a bonus. Insubordinate behavior or perversion of the laws and regulations broke the chain of virtue from emperor to subject and deemed the official a threat to the perpetuity of the state. All these tenets of proper officialdom came to be tested as the Tang dynasty

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<sup>38</sup> ZZTJ 191.5991.

<sup>39</sup> ZZTJ 191.5991.

encountered a foreign power immune to the traditional foreign policy of subjugating the foreigner through righteous governance. As Tibet emerged and instigated unrest and rebellion, the Tang court observing from afar could only have interpreted the disorder as a breakdown of moral governance on the southwestern frontier.

### ***The Local People and Tang Governance***

In theory, Chinese subjects living under a virtuous emperor could only live harmoniously if laws and statutes prevented immorality and wickedness from appearing amongst the common people. Rebellions, a common occurrence of Chinese dynasties, defied these parameters. When revolts did appear, blame was placed on officials or rebels whose personalities or ambitions deviated from the expected role of officials who acted as unremarkable intermediaries to the people. If an official had effectively imparted virtue to the people through the enforcement of laws, then the local subjects could never become unsettled and desire to rise against the state. The principle extended to the various tribes of the southwest, as those settled within Tang boundaries became registered households and under the administration of the local magistrates or governors. For whatever unhappiness abounded amongst tribes in the southwest, the Tang throughout the dynasty continued to observe chaos and rebellion through a finite lens that believed maladministration of officials, not outside factors, had driven the locals away. For as Taizong blatantly expressed, “If you have not mistreated them [local peoples], why should they have left us one after another?”<sup>40</sup>

The Chinese further believed that when native tribes did abandon ties to the imperial country, wicked foreign powers had either coerced or manipulated the situation. Indeed, often

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<sup>40</sup> Wang Zhenping, *Tang China in a Multi-polar Asia* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2013), 221.

Tang and foreign armies utilized large numbers of tribal peoples as soldiers. One Tibetan army in 776, possessed 20,000 warriors drawn from Man (蠻), Tuyuhun (吐谷渾), and Qiang (羌) tribal groups.<sup>41</sup> The Tang viewed such enlistment of native peoples as evil, oppressive, and malicious. One Tang minister believed the practice represented a diabolical ploy to force the allegiance of the locals to Tibet, indicating that the “traitorous factions (tribal groups) fear Tibet’s superiority, and in order to not die, these traitorous factions all send men [to Tibet] as hostages.”<sup>42</sup> A celebratory declaration of victory (*lubu* 露布) over the Man of Yaozhou (姚州) issued in the 750s, further blamed the Tibetans for the actions of the local tribesman, as the statement read: “...subdue (伏) accordingly the Southern Man (南蠻) [who bring] chaos to virtue and rely on places of difficult access to drag out an ignoble existence (偷生). When Tibet raises military operations, [the Man] supply them with rebels.”<sup>43</sup>

Despite such harsh views towards Tibet, the Chinese likewise often employed the services of the locals in war when circumstances required. For instance, the Dongman (東蠻) became crucial allies for Tang governors in the southwest from the late eighth century through the mid-ninth century. In 788, faced with invasion and charged with defending the prefecture, Guizhou’s (雋州) local Prefect integrated Dongman of all ages into his military ranks before leading his army to attack the enemy.<sup>44</sup> The tribe then reappeared in the early 790s as messengers delivering correspondences between Wei Gao and the Nanzhao ruler Yimouxun (異

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<sup>41</sup> JTS 197.5245.

<sup>42</sup> ZZTJ 230.7429.

<sup>43</sup> *Wen Tangquan* 全唐文, 377 楊譚傳, *Bingbu qin jiannan jiedu po xishan zei lubu* 兵部奏劍南節度破西山賊露布 as quoted within Yu Xianhao 郁賢皓, *Tang Cishi Kao Quan Bian* 唐刺史考全編 (Nanjing: Anhui daxue chubanshe, 2000), 3144.

<sup>44</sup> Wang Pu 王溥, *Tang hui yao* 唐會要 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1955), 97.1736 [Hereafter THY].



牟尋), which resulted in Nanzhao turning against Tibet and returning as an ally to China.<sup>45</sup>

However, Wei Gao furthermore organized a tribal contingent of his army that in 801 marched into Tibetan territory and seized several Tibetan cities west of Yaozhou (姚州).<sup>46</sup> The support of the Dongman did not carry into the late ninth-century as the tribe became extorted by the local Tang official of Guizhou (雋州), Yu Shizhen (喻士珍), who seized gold from the tribe for his own wealth. Angered by the actions of the local governor, the Dongman then opened the gates for an invading Nanzhao army who seized the city in 865.<sup>47</sup>

From what can be drawn from Chinese sources, loyalty of the native southwestern peoples derived more from tribal affiliations than political or cultural leanings. When in 842 the Tibetan general Lun Kongre (論恐熱) approached Tang forces that comprised Supi (蘇毗), Tuyuhun, and Yangtong (羊同) soldiers the Tibetan general appealed to the natives, declaring his army had come to alleviate the hardships caused by troublesome governors, stating: “Traitorous ministers cause chaos to the state, and Heaven has sent me to come and punish them. How could people like you assist the traitors?”<sup>48</sup> Afterward Lun Kongre crossed a river and approached the tribal soldiers who then abandoned the Tang and joined Lun’s army, helping defeat a local Tang force and then ransacking the local prefecture. Tribal affiliation could also extend beyond prefectural boundaries. Under the supervision of military-governor Du Yuanying (杜元穎), Chinese soldiers plundered local native groups in 829. Word spread across the Man tribes of the southwest and into Nanzhao, where a local general, Cui Dian (崔鄴), led an army to

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<sup>45</sup> JTS 140.3823.

<sup>46</sup> JTS 140.3834.

<sup>47</sup> Ouyang Xiu 歐陽修 and Song Qi 宋祁, *Xin Tangshu* 新唐書 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1975), 222b.6284 [Hereafter XTS]; ZZTJ 250.8111.

<sup>48</sup> ZZTJ 246.7970.

punish Du for victimizing the local Man tribes. When Cui entered Tang territory, the local Man tribes supported the foreign army that attacked the prefectures of Guizhou (雋州), Rongzhou (戎州), Qiongzhou (邛州), and Yizhou (益州), where the foreign general sieged Chengdu.<sup>49</sup>

Constant instability and lack of loyalty shown by tribes only played into the conventional Han-Chinese perspectives towards foreign “barbarians” or cultural outsiders. As moderate agriculturalists and sedentary people, the peoples of the southwest, collectively known as the Man, could appear when needed as assimilable peoples that could adopt Chinese cultural practices and languages. Conversely, as foreigners outside the Chinese heartland with dissimilar customs and often flexible loyalties, the image of the tribesman could also appear too hostile and too exotic to appreciate Chinese customs. Court officials particularly employed these two different images of the natives, either portraying the locals positively or negatively, when such identities benefitted their opinions at court. Such a duality placed the locals in a precarious position where the tribes could never be accepted into the Han-Chinese world, but never truly fell into the category of “enemy” when not associated with Tibet or Nanzhao. A memorial submitted by Yuan Zhen (元振) in 709 to the emperor underlined the position of the southern aboriginal who remained precariously stuck between the two dominant empires:

...In former years (往年) Tibet did not receive kindness and favor from China, yet they desired to demand the ten peoples (十姓) and four counties inhabited by them...Furthermore, their regions are inhabited by Man (蠻) as well as Brahmin (婆羅門) [from India] and other places where the people do not wear the robes. Just as [the Man and Brahmin] make use of Tang armies to suppress the Tibetans, [these people] also do not know in what manner, words and speech can be used to repel them!<sup>50</sup>

Although it is not clear whether Yuan Zhen really believed that literacy and diplomatic skill could ward off Tibetan advances, his comments highlight the difficult position of local chieftains

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<sup>49</sup> ZZTJ 244.7864, 7867, 7868, 7869.

<sup>50</sup> ZZTJ 207.6626.

seeking to remain unaffiliated with either large power. In most cases tribes picked whatever aggressor meant survival and the required military power to repel the attacks or demands of the other aggressive state. In most cases tribes picked the side that ensured survival and fair treatment. When Wei Gao (韋皋) managed to retake Guizhou (雋州), Weizhou (維州), and Yaozhou (姚州) through various campaigns between 794 to 803, each expansion of the Tang territory into Tibet also came with the surrendering of many tribal clans.<sup>51</sup>

### ***The Tibetan Menace and “Troublesome” Southwestern Border Official***

During the seventh century, Tibet’s initial attacks on the border had sparked a debate over the preparedness of border officials to combat hostile Tibetan forces. Concern arose after Tibet launched an immense invasion of Gansu and Jiannan in 677. One Tibetan army marched along the northern roads, seizing Fuzhou (扶州) and capturing the local governor Du Xiaosheng (杜孝昇), before turning south and attacking parts of Songzhou (松州). A southern contingent of Tibetan soldiers also crossed the borders along the southern roads and attacked Guizhou (雋州) in the southwest.<sup>52</sup> To complicate the situation, both attacks occurred when local Qiang tribes had rose in revolt within the prefecture of Xizhou (悉州) to the west of Chengdu, creating considerable damage and instability along the entire Tibetan border.<sup>53</sup> In response to Tibet’s unannounced attacks, Emperor Gaozong (高宗 r. 649-83) ordered all officials of the capital to

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<sup>51</sup> In 794, Tang forces seized Weizhou 維州 and a Qiang tribe of more than 20,000 households submitted to the Tang. See ZZTJ 234.7551. Wei Gao in 800 took Lizhou 黎州 and Guizhou 雋州, bringing local chieftains Yingying 嬰嬰 and Ma Dingde 馬定德 along with 87 lesser chiefs and their people to surrender to China. See JTS 197b.5260. In 803, Wei Gao captured Yaozhou 姚州 and Kunming 昆明, the show of force caused 7,000 Moxie Man 磨些蠻 tribesman to abandon the Tibetans and join Wei Gao’s army. See JTS 140.3834.

<sup>52</sup> ZZTJ 202.6383.

<sup>53</sup> See introduction for Xizhou 悉州 in Yu Xianhao 郁賢皓, *Tang Cishi Kao Quan Bian* 唐刺史考全編 (Nanjing: Anhui daxue chubanshe, 2000), 3143.

formulate strategies to deal with the increasingly aggressive Tibetan state. When opinions were voiced, and no consensus reached, the official Wei Yuanzhong (魏元忠) articulated an insufficient system of positive reinforcement existed on the borders that had created mundane officials who acted only to avoid punishment. Wei articulated:

As for reward and punishment, these are the urgent affairs of the army and the state. If any merit were to go unrewarded, or any crime to go unpunished, even Yao and Shun would not be able to achieve order. The discussants all say, ‘In the recent punitive expeditions, there is an empty structure of rewards without real substance.’ For these reasons as far as we know local officials (小子之使) are unaware of the Great Rituals, only cherishing ordinary deeds and fearing the empty storehouses. [They] do not know soldiers or how to employ or command them. How much harm would come of this! Common people even though unassuming (微) may be deceived. Outstanding (懸) [service] again the court does not commend and establishes no rewards instead choosing to punish them in the hopes [the officials] render meritorious service...In the past officials early on punished Xue Rengui (薛仁貴) and other officials and these officials increasingly all at first became more daring and then the state benefitted later on!...<sup>54</sup>

Wei blamed the Tibetan incursion on inept and unfocused officials on the borders. Although referring to the current Tibetan crisis, Wei’s comments paralleled discussions that had occurred earlier under emperor Taizong, when court official Ma Zhou (馬周) expressed to the emperor that “the court pays attention to only metropolitan officials. It is not serious about [selecting] county magistrates and prefects.”<sup>55</sup> As late as 704, the official Lu Huaishen (盧懷慎) again brought the issue before emperor Ruizong (睿宗 r. 684-90, 710-712) and expressed his concerns that inept border officials caused the loss of local native groups who then in turn caused unrest and violence:

Non-Chinese and Chinese live next to each other in frontier regions. Relying on the natural barriers and the great distance [from the capital], they are often easily agitated and very difficult to pacify. We should depend on upright and law-abiding officials to govern those people. If they fail to perform their duties; if they are incapable of doing their jobs, and if they persecute their people and exploit the non-Chinese, minor incidents of people fleeing their homes will occur.

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<sup>54</sup> ZZTJ 202.6387.

<sup>55</sup> JTS 74.2618; ZZTJ 195.6133; THY 68.1197.

[Maladministration] could also lead to major affairs as people becoming bandits and thieves. We cannot afford having mediocre [local officials].<sup>56</sup>

The Tang observed problems accruing on the border as a byproduct of unskilled and unsupported officials, a problem remedied by the careful selection of competent and virtuous officials.

Such consensus existed until the reign of emperor Xuanzong (玄宗 r. 712-756) when talk on the ill-fit and unqualified officials on the border transformed into discussions involving immoral and malicious officials. No longer attributing them to a problem of distance and ineptitude, the court began identifying corrupted and wicked officials as the cause for ongoing border trouble. The court official Huangfu Weiming (皇甫惟明) made this point in 730 when he argued: “border incidents permit them (border officials) to take advantage [of the situation] to embezzle official goods, to exaggerate their [military] merit and achievements, and to acquire for themselves official titles.”<sup>57</sup> Nearly fifty years later in 783, amid a rebellion by the military-commander Zhu Ci (朱泚), another official expressed that two types of ministers had come to exist within the empire and on the borders. The first type remained “those who obey the beneficial influence of the sovereign” and consequently “have no option but for their hearts to become idle.” The other type of official being “those that disobey and get stuck invading the borders but have no option but to [remain] insubordinate.”<sup>58</sup> Clearly frontier officials had become, in the eyes of the imperial court, ineffective in defending the state.

For the rest of the dynasty, the reputation of border officials as self-aggrandizing troublemakers persisted. However, as the Tang continued to slowly decline, the reputation of border officials continued to grow as the imperial center’s power grew weaker. In 784, the

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<sup>56</sup> JTS 98.3067.

<sup>57</sup> ZZTJ 213.6791.

<sup>58</sup> ZZTJ 230.7429.

military-commander Zhu Ci (朱泚) waged a civil war from Chang'an against the Tang. The affair prompted emperor Dezong to take action and issue a series of edicts articulating his status as China's highest authority, emphasizing he alone made all foreign policy decisions:

A virtuous monarch chooses the strategies, although it may not necessarily be appropriate. Those who violate orders then lessen the sovereign's strength, consequently orders [by officials] to advance then harm military affairs as raiding unrestrained obstructs relations [foreign] relationships, although accordingly [their] actions become meritorious achievements.<sup>59</sup>

Despite the efforts of Dezong, the dynasty continued to lose control of those officials on the frontiers. The situation became more complicated as Tibet and Nanzhao continued to attack the southwestern borders, requiring the Tang to rely increasingly on larger border armies and garrisons controlled by military-governors. Peace treaties established between the Tang and the foreign states of Tibet and Nanzhao occurred throughout the first half of the dynasty, yet border raids occurred by all powers and Tang governors continued to be found at fault. As late in the dynasty as 866, emperor Yizong (懿宗 r. 859-873) felt the need to issue an edict prohibiting all armies located in the south and southwest from crossing the borders to attack Nanzhao. The ruler's orders thus indicating that he believed that frontier governors, to some degree, continued to undermine border peace.<sup>60</sup> Yizong's fears about frontier generals were short-lived, as less than a decade later internal weakness across the empire enabled the rebel Huang Chao (黄巢) to lead a revolt that seized both Tang capitals, initiating the final collapse of the dynasty that took place when the last Tang emperor was killed in 907.

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<sup>59</sup> ZZTJ 230.7429-30.

<sup>60</sup> ZZTJ 250.8116.

## *The Extent of Blame on Southwest Governors and Conclusions*

By the mid-eighth century, areas of Sichuan and Yunnan had become synonymous with border trouble. As argued above, Chinese customs and the benevolence within Chinese bureaucracy according to the Tang philosophy should have created peace and enticed foreign peoples to submit willingly and become a part of the Chinese empire. To the elite of the Tang government, conflict along the borders and especially revolts of the local people, prevalent throughout the dynasty, could only indicate unvirtuous and independent actions committed by the local official. In traditional Chinese ideology, the inability of frontier officials to bring virtue to the local peoples resulted from character flaws that eventually turned the officials against the state. Indeed, the southwest possessed a series of officials that struggled to hold the allegiance of the locals or pacify the borders through military defense or diplomacy. Furthermore, many of these officials, much like Yu Shizhen, Zhang Qiantuo, and Du Yuanying, have had their character vilified in the historical sources. In many cases, the actions of these officials caused considerable damage and division along the southwestern borders. Yet does the reoccurring greediness and maladministration by such officials on the border indeed reflect a constant transformation of frontier officials into corrupt individuals bent on subverting the imperial throne for wealth and powerful armies? Or perhaps more likely, did troublesome officials appear from a series of consistent external pressures and fluctuating domestic conditions that forced the local officials to adopt unconventional administrative practices, good or bad, to maintain effective control? A number of reasons, many already discussed above, indicate the latter option.

First, the role of Chinese history as it developed throughout imperial China ultimately fell within a larger tradition of Chinese historiography meant to provide guidance for future Chinese rulers. Chinese historians, especially from the Tang period onward, thus held the important task

of imparting morality to the historical figures and events appearing within their works. The actions of the virtuous led to happiness and prosperity; the actions of the wicked led to tragedy and disaster. Such a trend continued to exist during the Tang dynasty. Denis Twitchett effectively has shown the considerable biases contained within the Tang dynastic histories. Within his analysis Twitchett revealed the demonization of emperor Dezong (德宗 r. 775-805) as well as the intentional defamation of effective financial reforms instituted by Xuanzong's (玄宗) official Yuwen Rong (宇文融).<sup>61</sup> In both cases, court feuding and need to place blame superseded an accurate portrayal of these two historical figures and their beneficial actions for the Tang. In both cases, the figure's reputation was tainted by the attribution of unfavorable personality traits. When analyzing the records of ineffective officials, one must take into consideration these potential biases.

Second, the Tang continued to rely on diplomacy to pacify the borders, although very rarely did these peace treaties ever create lasting or effective peace. In 640 the Tang had initiated a peace treaty with Tibet that had married the princess Wencheng (文成公主) to the Tibetan ruler and brought decades of peace.<sup>62</sup> The success of the marriage alliance remained in the minds of the Tang court who continued to believe that diplomacy could end hostility between the two powers. Yet from 677 onward, both China and the Tibet engaged in almost non-stop war along the borders up through the mid-ninth century.

Further, during the latter half of the dynasty, even the Tang began to increasingly comment on the duplicitous nature of the Tibetans and Nanzhao. In 731, the proofreader of the

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<sup>61</sup> Denis Crispin Twitchett, *The Writing of Official History under the T'ang*, Cambridge Studies in Chinese History, Literature, and Institutions (Cambridge [England]; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

<sup>62</sup> JTS 196a.5221; ZZTJ 195.6139-40.



library Yu Xiulie (于休烈) concluded that friendly diplomatic relations with Tibet would most likely be used to gather information on China that could be exploited during the western empire's next invasion of Chinese borders. Indicating that Tibet inevitably would come to attack China in the future, Yu stated: "As to the present situation involving Tibet, the state's mortal enemy, if we presently support their state through providing these books, sending them knowledge of our military tactics and stratagems, the more trouble will arise from [the Tibetans] deceiving our military forces and is not for the China's benefit."<sup>63</sup> Likewise, Emperor Dezong (德宗 r. 779-805) in 797, when angered by constant violence on the border, refused to receive a Tibetan envoy and forced the officials to return to Tibet. The emperor justified the decision by citing Tibet's "wolf-like nature" that routinely had "shown ungratefulness and willingness to end the treaty agreements."<sup>64</sup> Then in 819, emperor Xianzong (宪宗 r. 805-820) issued a statement indicating that Tibetan diplomacy and military action occurred together, despite previously formalized peace treaties:

We (朕) are neighbored by many countries, and we intend to promote and broaden our sincerity. Since the Tibetans (西戎) agreed upon a peaceful relationship, it has been many years. However, during that period, though there were some mistakes (attacks) occasionally, we overlooked them. If we have a manifold victory, should they still not think of it? In this regard, those who contributed to us with their repeating interpretations have been on the roads constantly. Thus, they apologized for our grace and showed their propriety, and there was no case that they did not fulfil. The other day, the Tibetan envoys, holding the dispatches, came again to our capital. And they stated their sincerity to maintain peaceful relations in obedience to the orders of their ruler. We received them in the pavilion and entertained them with a good inn and food, and offered them a written statement as well as special presents, and instructed them with a simple written explanation. However, soon they were talking about returning. When they [the envoys] reached the outskirts [of the capital], we heard a swarm of ants invaded our border and carried out slaughter and confusion in the Hequ (訶曲) area. Thus, they are against benevolence, and it is the violation of the treaty. This means that there is no justification, we had an official discussion in the court, and all the officials asked us to exterminate them, but we grieve deeply that our virtue has not been sufficient. How can [we] consider the customs of foreigners that they themselves do not reject? Though the Tibetan state lost their faith, what has it to do with these envoys? Let us

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<sup>63</sup> ZZTJ 213.6794.

<sup>64</sup> JTS 197.5258.

release them and let us show our grand attitude to make them think of us. If we are faithful, then it will make them remember us...<sup>65</sup>

Indeed, both Tibet and the Tang violated peace treaties established between the two empires. The Tang violated the peace treaties made early on in the dynasty through the middle of the eighth century. Likewise, the Tibetans decidedly violated many of the peace negotiations that occurred after 755.<sup>66</sup>

Secondly, the Tang never fully grasped the true feelings of the local people who never developed undying loyalties to the Tang; even when administered by an effective and kind official. Tribal affiliations and self-preservation drove the existence of local aboriginal groups who often changed allegiances when supporting the enemy appeared the better option. Thus, those Tang officials who abused the local tribesman jeopardized the security of the border by driving those tribal groups into the service of rival foreign powers. Zhang Qiantuo in 749 surely failed to realize the potential consequences of his actions when he antagonized the local people he believed inferior. Not only did Zhang drive away a geopolitical ally of the Tang, but he further brought about the rebellion of the locals and cost the imperial court the entire prefecture of Yaozhou (姚州). Only perhaps Wei Gao, who encouraged local groups, like the Dongman, to participate in border affairs and foreign policy, managed to hold the loyalty of these groups. Furthermore, tribal affiliation continued to trump political loyalties, and in many cases, local

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<sup>65</sup> JTS 196.5262.

<sup>66</sup> In 677 Tibetans broke the initial treaty made in 634 when an army invaded Tuyuhun lands, then raided Chinese border lands. Tibet violated a treaty in 716 when an army invaded Songzhou 松州, see ZZTJ 212.6716; Then in 727, the Tang broke a treaty made in the previous year and invaded Weizhou 維州. Peace was reestablished in 730s, yet Tibet and Tang broke the treaty when both states fought for control of the western regions. Meanwhile from 678 through the 820s, a series of Tibetan-Tang alliances were formed while frequent border raiding and other attacks occurred. For a complete account of the diplomatic relations between Tibet and the Tang see Hans Bielenstein, *Diplomacy and Trade in the Chinese World, 589-1276* (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 230-245.

tribes decided to support one regional power over another in solidarity for injustices committed upon fellow local or distant tribal clans.

Finally, whether Tang officials cultivated harmony or hostility with the local peoples or even foreign states, the fact remains the southwest never witnessed any significant periods of prolonged peace. As Appendix B shows, the average number of years between violent conflicts, domestic or international, remained slightly more than five years.<sup>67</sup> In addition, that figure excludes the prolonged periods of yearly border raids by Tibet and Nanzhao during various periods of the dynasty. In many cases, each conflict could last one year to several years and many of the border raids were conducted during the Chinese harvest months.<sup>68</sup> Yaozhou (姚州) and Guizhou (嵩州), both prefectures that possessed roadways connecting Tibet or Nanzhao to Jiannan, had strong reputations for troublemaking officials and experienced significant attacks by foreign armies and internal rebellions.<sup>69</sup> Both prefectures also came to be the locales of “troublemaking” officials like Li Zhigu, Zhang Qiantuo, and Yuan Shizhen. For the Tang elite, such prefectures had fallen into trouble because of the officials posted to these remote prefectures, whose innate natures inflamed violence with foreign powers and oppressed the local people. Yet to what extent constant violence, destruction, and instability on the southwestern borders influenced such improper governance has yet to be examined.

As the following chapter will show, the daily responsibilities of officials in the southwest experienced daily responsibilities that far exceeded registering households and collecting taxes.

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<sup>67</sup> Fifty-six conflicts occurred during different years, out of two hundred and eighty-nine years of the dynasty. See Appendix B for specific details. The results are the overall average of recorded conflicts that occurred in the Jiannan administrative circuit as recorded in the JTS, ZZTJ, TD, and THY.

<sup>68</sup> ZZTJ 250.8111.

<sup>69</sup> Backus, Charles. *The Nan-chao Kingdom and China's Southwestern Frontier* (Cambridge University Press, 1981), 34-35.

War, climate, foreign policy, and geography all intersected with the official's underlying responsibility of bringing virtue to the common people. The locals, acting mostly for their own benefit, further complicated the already arduous task of administering the remote frontier. If at times China appeared to hold commensurate power to Tibet or Nanzhao, the locals definitively tipped the scales in the direction of the Tang, or likewise in the direction of China's rivals.

### Chapter 3 - The Jiannan Circuit (劍南道)

The Tang possessed many names for the southwestern frontier. Historically the Chinese had employed the term Shu (蜀) to refer to the area around the Sichuan Basin. *Xichuan* (西川), or “Western Rivers,” represented a more general term indicating areas west of modern-day Guangxi autonomous region – then called Jingnan province (荆南) – that included both Yunnan and southern Sichuan. The political name of “Jiannan” (劍南) referenced the region’s larger bureaucratic divisions or circuits (*dao* 道) that managed all smaller prefectures and tribal settlements found in the southwest. Although borders fluctuated throughout the centuries, Jiannan extended as far west as the Tibetan Plateau. In the south, the circuit reached the edges of the Hengduan mountain range that naturally separates Yunnan from Tibet and Burma. The Qinling Mountains sat on the northern edge of the province and obstructed access into the Sichuan Basin from the direct north. Located close to the center of the Sichuan Basin is the city of Chengdu (成都), which functioned as western Jiannan’s capital city and existed within the prefecture of Yizhou (益州). Although subordinate to Chengdu, the city of Kunming (昆明) in Yunnan remained the regional center for southern Jiannan and was located within the province’s most southwestern prefecture of Yaozhou (姚州) on the western bank of modern-day Lake Dian (滇池). Overall Jiannan occupied an expansive territory that reached as much as 160,000 square miles, roughly equivalent in size to the country of Romania.

Although Jiannan existed under Chinese sovereignty, the western and southern borders continually fluctuated as Tibet, Nanzhao, and China vied for control of the region. By 742, at the height of the dynasty, the Chinese had divided Jiannan into more than forty prefectures (*zhou* 州)

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<sup>70</sup> For a list of prefectures and locations within Jiannan see Appendix A for a political map.

<sup>71</sup> The Tang established Weizhou at the beginning of Taizong's reign (c. 627) as a Qiang 羌 bridle settlement of Mizhou 縻州. Then in 742, Xuanzong transformed the settlement into a prefecture, although at this point half of the prefecture was under Tibetan control following the Anrongcheng incident of 740. Wei Gao 韋皋 reclaimed the lost portion during his offensives at the turn of the ninth century but lost the portion again decades later. A local Tibetan deputy sought to defect to the Tang in 831, however the prefecture was returned to the Tibetans by the Tang as a sign of good faith. The Tang finally achieved control over the prefecture during the reign of Yizong 懿宗 when a local chieftain defected back to the Tang. *Quan Tangwen* 全唐文, chapter 435 Li Zhiyuan 李至遠, quote taken from Yu Xianhao 郁賢皓, *Tang Cishi Kao Quan Bian* 唐刺史考全編 (Nanjing: Anhui daxue chubanshe, 2000), 3112; Passage taken from the *Jiu Tangshu* 舊唐書, *Dili zhisi* 地理志四 as quoted in Yu Xianhao 郁賢皓, *Tang Cishi Kao Quan Bian* 唐刺史考全編 (Nanjing: Anhui daxue chubanshe, 2000), 3115; For information on Wei Gao see Sima Guang 司馬光, *Zizhi tongjian* 資治通鑑 [henceforth ZZTJ], (Beijing: Guji chubanshe, 1956) 236, 7597-98; ZZTJ, 244, p. 7878.; Liu Xu 劉昫, *Jiu Tangshu* 舊唐書 [henceforth JTS] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1975), 140, 3834; Wang Pu 王溥, *Tang hui yao* 唐會要 [henceforth THY], (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1955), 97, 1735; also for a general overview see introduction to chapter on Weizhou found in Yu Xianhao 郁賢皓, *Tang Cishi Kao Quan Bian* 唐刺史考全編 (Nanjing: Anhui daxue chubanshe, 2000), 3115.

<sup>72</sup> In the aftermath of the An Lushan rebellion, the Tibetans and Nanzhao kingdom seized much of the Xichuan 西川 circuit, forcing the Tang to consolidate the remaining prefectures on the southwestern border into the Eastern Jiannan 東川 circuit. See ZZTJ 223.7159.

懿宗 r. 859-873) to divide Jiannan and establish a new administrative circuit named Dingbian (定邊 *the fixed border circuit*), with its capital at Guizhou (雋州). The new border circuit lasted less than four years, as the circuit proved ineffective and frontier generals, angered by Li Shiwang's corrupt and inept actions, sabotaged the army and hindered the soldiers' effectiveness, even going so far as to invite Nanzhao to raid Tang prefectures.<sup>73</sup>

### ***Imperial Presences in the Southwest***

Chinese expansion into the southwest began during the latter part of the Warring States period (475-221 B.C.) when the competing states of Chu (楚) and Qin (秦) began vying for influence with the local native Shu tribes. Once the Qin had successfully united northern China under the authority of the first emperor Qinshi Huangdi (秦始皇帝), the emperor began constructing two major roads into Sichuan in an effort to slowly expand hegemony into the peripheral areas. Under the Han dynasty (漢 202 B.C.-9 A.D.; 25 -220 A.D.) the system of roads flourished as Sichuan increasingly grew to become an agricultural hub for the dynasty's most southwestern province of Yizhou (益州).<sup>74</sup> Rich in resources, Sichuan became a reliable source for grain and other resources and became a desired territory for the Han as well as later dynasties. Subsequently, around 130 B.C., the Han emperor dispatched an official from Sichuan named Tang Meng (唐蒙) who instigated a massive restoration of the highways and other infrastructure. Tang then convinced the Han emperor to bestow titles upon the local aboriginal

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<sup>73</sup> ZZTJ 251.8120; ZZTJ 251.8150.

<sup>74</sup> John J. Herman, "The Kingdoms of Nanzhong: China's Southwest Border Region Prior to the Eighth Century." *T'oung Pao* 95, no. 4/5 (2009): 252-53.

chieftains, so the dynasty could appoint these chieftains as local governors. Yet these imperial titles existed only on paper, as prominent appointed chiefs continued to rule independently and paid only lip-service to the imperial court. As the Han never successfully held physical control over much of the remote areas of Sichuan, the system of indirect rule through local elites provided the dynasty enough clout to claim dominion over all of Sichuan.<sup>75</sup>

Loose control over Sichuan and parts of Yunnan continued through the Western and Eastern Jin dynasties (晉 265-420 A.D.) and later during the period known as the Northern and Southern dynasties (429-589 A.D.). During these centuries the Jin, Northern Wei (北魏 386-534) and Northern Zhou (北周 557-581) dynasties continued to follow the precedent of the Han, issuing rank and titles to prominent native elites in the southwest. The bestowal of titles ensured that local tribes would refrain from open hostility with the allied Chinese state while simultaneously providing the allied dynasty political recognition.

Such practices changed under the Sui dynasty (隋 581-618), whose emperors began dispatching ministers into the remote parts of the southwest under orders to directly administer the territory. The Sui continued the practice of bestowing titles upon local chieftains who accepted the new dynastic ranks and appointments believing the Sui, like the dynasties before, would leave the tribes alone to handle their own affairs. One such predominant Yunnanese tribe called the Cuan (爨) accepted the ranks and titles believing the imperial appointments, bestowed by earlier dynasties, came with minimal Chinese oversight. Quickly the Cuan realized the Sui desired to directly administer the area's tribes as local Sui officials sought more and more to control tribal business under imperial authority. When Cuan Wan (爨翫), the leader of the Cuan

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<sup>75</sup> John J. Herman, "The Kingdoms of Nanzhong: China's Southwest Border Region Prior to the Eighth Century," 256.



tribes, realized the presence of the Sui had diminished his authority, he ordered all Chinese officials within his dominion killed. Angered by the chieftain's actions, the Sui responded with two military offensives that ended in defeat of the Yunnanese tribes and the execution of tribal leader Cuan Wan. As an added punishment, the Sui army gathered Cuan's family members and dispatched them to the capital as trophy prisoners.<sup>76</sup> The Sui then continued to exercise control over northern Yunnan until a series of failed military offensives in Korea by emperor Sui Yangdi (隋煬帝 r. 604-618) brought hardship upon the people and created cracks in the foundations of the empire. Discontent grew until Li Yuan (李淵) launched a successful rebellion that brought the short-lived Sui dynasty to an untimely end. Seizing Chang'an, Li Yuan<sup>77</sup> ruled through a Sui puppet emperor before declaring his own dynasty in 618.

Once the Tang had successfully taken power, Li Yuan looked to extending his control to the southwest. To gain a foothold in the remote and foreign areas, the new emperor and his successor Taizong (太宗 r. 626-649) reinstated the practices of their predecessors and began conferring titles upon prominent chieftains in Sichuan and surrounding areas. In Yunnan, Li Yuan appointed Cuan Wan's son Cuan Hongda (爨宏達) as the tribe's chieftain, seeking to implant a local chieftain into the area the emperor could manipulate for his own purposes. In southern Yunnan, the Tang befriended and employed members of the Duan clan (段). The Duan had originally submitted as vassals to the Tibetans, who consequently removed the family from power and handed regional control to a rival clan. The humiliating offense drove the Duan clan to appear before the Tang, who accepted the tribe and appointed the chieftain Duan Ping (段憑)

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<sup>76</sup> John J. Herman, "The Kingdoms of Nanzhong: China's Southwest Border Region Prior to the Eighth Century," 270-73; ZZTJ 191.5900.

<sup>77</sup> Li Yuan after his death received the posthumous temple name of emperor Gaozu 高祖 and ruled over the Tang empire from 618-626.

as Yunnan's local governor.<sup>78</sup> Meanwhile, in the frontier prefectures of Songzhou (松州), Fengzhou (奉州), Dangzhou (當州) and Xizhou (悉州) in Sichuan, the Tang appointed the prominent Dong (董) family to serve as local officials of various levels and ranks. The head Dong chieftain, Dong Henapeng (董和那蓬), received appointment as Songzhou's area commander and received accolades from the Chinese emperor for strengthening the defenses of local garrisons in the prefecture. For this meritorious deed, the Tang emperor agreed to create the prefecture of Dangzhou (當州) and awarded the position of prefect (*cishi* 刺史) to the chieftain's son.<sup>79</sup> Such practices gave the Tang a convenient method to govern foreign people in the secluded, distant lands of the southwest, and the Tang invoked the practice throughout the dynasty. As late as 881, the elders of local tribes in Shuzhou (蜀州) received official Tang appointments as a reward for their loyalty during the Nanzhao siege of Chengdu in 779. The Tang believed awarding the local tribes with official appointments possessed many advantages including having "barbarians" handle "barbarian official business," especially in the aftermath of the turmoil.<sup>80</sup>

Despite the pragmatism of enlisting powerful chieftains to act as Tang governors, the method struggled to ensure the loyalty of many tribal groups. Many of the tribes like the Cuan had witnessed the consequences of direct imperial Chinese control under the Sui.<sup>81</sup> As a result many natives remained apprehensive of Tang bureaucracy and, despite the reception of titles,

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<sup>78</sup> *Xing zuan* 姓纂, chapter 9 *Yunnan duanmin* 雲南段民 as quoted in Yu Xianhao 郁賢皓, *Tang Cishi Kao Quan Bian* 唐刺史考全編 (Nanjing: Anhui daxue chubanshe, 2000), 3120.

<sup>79</sup> *Jiu Tangshu* 舊唐書, *Dili zhishi* 地理志四, quote taken from Yu Xianhao 郁賢皓, *Tang Cishi Kao Quan Bian* 唐刺史考全編 (Nanjing: Anhui daxue chubanshe, 2000), 3142.

<sup>80</sup> *Ji zhangren shanwen* 祭丈人山文, as quoted within Yu Xianhao 郁賢皓, *Tang Cishi Kao Quan Bian* 唐刺史考全編 (Nanjing: Anhui daxue chubanshe, 2000), 2989.

<sup>81</sup> ZZTJ 191.5900.

never held an undying fealty toward the Tang. Although at times the Tang continued to utilize chieftains as local officials, by the latter half of the dynasty the Chinese had come to rely predominantly on imperial officials rather than native elites.

### *Jiedushi, the Dudu, and the Cishi*

In the beginning of the dynasty the Tang employed both civil and military governors. The latter area-commanders, called “*dudu*” (都督), oversaw the defense of a set of adjacent prefectures. While Li Yuan and his sons fought to centralize power, the new Tang state had resorted to administering the southwest through military generals (總管), a strategy employed by the earlier Northern Zhou.<sup>82</sup> Yet once the Tang established firm control over the traditional Chinese heartland, the dynasty abolished the border generals in favor of appointing area commanders (*dudu*) who oversaw a number of defensive garrisons within adjacent prefectures. These garrisons employed local soldiers and were established along the frontier in strategically important areas, including the border prefectures of Weizhou (維州), Songzhou (松州), Guizhou (巋州), Yazhou (雅州), Yaozhou (姚州), Rongzhou (戎州), and Xizhou (悉州). Situated in strategically placed garrisons, the area commanders were responsible for quelling rebellions and or responding to external threats. In some cases, these area commanders were appointed for specific tasks. For instance, emperor Ruizong (睿宗 r. 684-690, 710-712) appointed Li Meng (李夢) to act as Yaozhou’s (姚州) area commander in the year 713, for the sole purpose of suppressing a rebellion that had occurred within the prefecture and the neighboring prefecture of

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<sup>82</sup> These officials could also be called “area commanders” and possessed similar responsibilities to the later *dudu*. David A. Graff, “The Military under the T’ang,” in Anthony De Blasi (ed.), *The Cambridge History of China*, vol. 4 (forthcoming).

Guizhou (雋州).<sup>83</sup> However, an area commander could receive appointment for meritorious service or for possessing knowledge of the local area. Thus, when the Tang general Jia Qijun (賈奇俊) managed to reclaim Yaozhou (姚州) in 758, the imperial court rewarded the general by appointing him the prefecture's area commander for his efforts.<sup>84</sup>

Nonetheless, the actual role of the area commander dissipated with time. Beginning under the rule of Empress Wu (武 r. 690-705), garrisons of local soldiers drawn from labor taxes gave way to professional frontier armies. With the disappearance of regional levied armies, the title of area commander transformed into a mere honorary title bestowed upon meritorious government officials. Thus the official Cui Yuan (崔圓), who later became a military-governor for Jiannan, received from the emperor the title of “Shu Commandery's Great Area-Commander (蜀郡大都督)” while functioning as an assistant official (司馬) for Jiannan's military-governor and Prime Minister (宰相) Yang Guozhong (楊國忠).<sup>85</sup> Further, as functioning military governors waned, the need for better border defense grew with the rise of Tibet and Nanzhao that brought violence to the borders and remained menacing nuisances throughout most of the dynasty. The absence of knowledgeable military figures on the southwestern frontiers placed increased pressure on the civil governors who in the latter half of the dynasty absorbed the responsibility of border defense.

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<sup>83</sup> *Xin Tangshu* 新唐書, *Wu Baoan zhuan* 五保安傳 as quoted in Yu Xianhao 郁賢皓, *Tang Cishi Kao Quan Bian* 唐刺史考全編 (Nanjing: Anhui daxue chubanshe, 2000), 3121.

<sup>84</sup> The Tang had lost the prefecture in 750 when rebel Man had killed the local prefect. Quotation taken from a Nanzhao stela in Dehua county 南詔德化碑. See *Quan Tangwen* 全唐文, chapter 999, *Zheng Hui* 鄭回, the quotation drawn from Yu Xianhao 郁賢皓, *Tang Cishi Kao Quan Bian* 唐刺史考全編 (Nanjing: Anhui daxue chubanshe, 2000), 3122.

<sup>85</sup> In 741, emperor Xuanzong changed all prefectures (*zhou* 州) back into commanderies (*jun* 郡). The formal name change was temporary, as the An Lushan Rebellion that followed the name change came to label the commanderies 郡 inauspicious and the administrative divisions once more were called prefectures 州. JTS 108.3279.

The day to day affairs of prefectures therefore fell to the prefect or local governor (*cishi* 刺使) whose main responsibility remained tax collection and enforcing they dynasty's laws and statutes. Conducting these two tasks in the remote wilderness of the southwest could often prove challenging. Although much arable land is found within the Sichuan Basin, a lack of farmable land can be found in the mountainous areas of Sichuan and Yunnan. Tribal groups also relocated frequently causing headaches to prefects charged with maintaining accurate household registers. To complicate the process further, many tribal groups received exemptions from taxes as rewards for becoming vassals of the Tang or likewise paid land taxes in goods other than grain.<sup>86</sup> Even the subjects of Yizhou (益州), the capital prefecture of Jiannan, paid all of their imperial taxes in silk.<sup>87</sup> Such difficulties only complicated the efforts of the prefects to accumulate adequate grain stores for military campaigns and emergency relief. In 749, when the dynasty was at its strongest, Jiannan possessed only half a *shi* (石)<sup>88</sup> of grain per person, as compared to the granaries around the northern capitals that reserved as much as 3 *shi* of grain per individual.<sup>89</sup> For these reasons the Tang encouraged and glorified local prefects who managed to reclaim wilderness and open farmland. Additional praise also extended to the officials like Wei Renshou (韋仁壽) who managed, in remote areas of Yunnan, to produce surpluses of grain.<sup>90</sup> However, a consistent pattern of insufficient grain reserves hindered the ability of the Tang to adequately pay and feed locally recruited soldiers, causing the Tang to reform the system in the 780s.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> Denis Twitchett, *Financial Administration under the T'ang Dynasty*. University of Cambridge Oriental Publications; No. 8. (Cambridge [Eng.]: University Press, 1963), 27, 31-33.

<sup>87</sup> Denis Twitchett, *Financial Administration under the T'ang Dynasty*, 29.

<sup>88</sup> One *shi* 石 was equal to 60 liters.

<sup>89</sup> See Table 3 within Twitchett. *Financial Administration under the T'ang Dynasty*, 193.

<sup>90</sup> ZZTJ 191.5900.

<sup>91</sup> The taxes originally were claimed from the local people and went towards paying soldiers as well as his family household while on campaign. See ZZTJ 228.7246.

Left largely on the fringes of the empire, local governors found themselves involved in affairs derived from the harsh environment and yearly raids of Tibet. As a result, governors became civil administrators as well as military commanders who employed force to maintain control over the local peoples and repel the attacks of invaders. Although orders to remake or bolster defenses occasionally came from the emperor or prominent officials, responsibility for maintaining or rebuilding defensive fortifications fell squarely upon the local official. Unhindered by large Chinese armies, yearly raiders from Tibet forced governors to serve as the first line of defense against enemies. Imperial campaigns took time to organize and strategize, leaving local governors to handle and counter foreign threats unaided for considerable periods of time. Although the Tang routinely formed large armies to defeat largescale invasions that penetrated beyond the border, the Tang also relied heavily on local forces under the control of local governors. Often imperial orders called upon the local governors to merge their small armies before marching the soldiers across Jiannan to relieve a besieged or occupied prefecture. When in 620 the Tanguts (黨項) seized Songzhou (松州), the Tang dispatched orders to the prefects Jiang Xihe (蔣喜合) and Dou Gui (竇軌) to merge their armies to retake the lost border prefecture.<sup>92</sup> In a slightly more unique instance, the provincial governor Wei Gao ordered local official Su Gui (蘇隗) to lead three tribes (部落) to kill the governor of Guizhou (嵩州), Ju Mengchong (苴夢衝), who had secretly confided in Tibet.<sup>93</sup> Such action indicated the

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<sup>92</sup> Jiang Xige was prefect of Fuzhou 扶州 and Dou Gui 竇軌 was governor of Yizhou 益州 see Yu Xianhao 郁賢皓, *Tang Cishi Kao Quan Bian* 唐刺史考全編 (Nanjing: Anhui daxue chubanshe, 2000), 3136.

<sup>93</sup> In the *Zizhi tongjian* Su Wei's personal name written as Wei 崑, see ZZTJ 233.7525; Fan Chou, *Man Shu: Book of the Southern Barbarians*, translated by Gordon H. Luce, (Ithaca [NY], Cornell University Press, 1961), 12; Yu Xianhao 郁賢皓, *Tang Cishi Kao Quan Bian* 唐刺史考全編 (Nanjing: Anhui daxue chubanshe, 2000), 3127.

importance of local prefects and their prefectural armies as a component of the Tang's defensive strategy.

Local prefects encountered many other problems beyond leading troops to the defense of the state. The harsh environment of Jiannan often caused problems that required the local administrator's attention. In some cases, the environment required local governments to organize laborers to increase farmland and irrigation. One local governor in Meizhou (眉州) received accolades for his efforts to expand agricultural production within the prefecture. Under his supervision Meizhou supposedly reclaimed and irrigated 15,000 *qing* (頃)<sup>94</sup> of farmland that accompanied the construction of a dam and river crossing<sup>95</sup> In other cases, the environment worked against the Tang officials. When flooding occurred in Rongzhou (戎州) during the year 841, a large number of fallen trees collected upstream and obstructed the flow of a local river. The Prefect Zhao Shizong (趙士宗) thus had to organize and dispatch a contingent of local soldiers to clear away the wood debris and restore the river's flow.<sup>96</sup> Prefects could also find themselves embroiled in local affairs of the people. One official with the surname Jing (經) took it upon himself to standardize the local horse laws within three different prefectures he was appointed to during his career as a Jiannan prefect.<sup>97</sup> Such tasks only added to the responsibilities

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<sup>94</sup> Equivalent to 247,100 acres. One *qing* 頃 is equal 16.474 acres.

<sup>95</sup> *Shiguo chunqiu* 十國春秋, *Benzhuan* 本傳. Quote taken from Yu Xianhao 郁賢皓, *Tang Cishi Kao Quan Bian* 唐刺史考全編 (Nanjing: Anhui daxue chubanshe, 2000), 2997.

<sup>96</sup> *Xiyang zazu* 西陽雜俎, *Xuji sanzhuàn* 續集三傳, quote taken from Yu Xianhao 郁賢皓, *Tang Cishi Kao Quan Bian* 唐刺史考全編 (Nanjing: Anhui daxue chubanshe, 2000), 3118.

<sup>97</sup> *Qian Tang zhi* 千唐誌, *Tang gu tianxiongjun jiedu jiujun du zhi ma shi yinqing guanglu dafu jianjiao guozhi jijiu jian dian zhongshi yushi Qinghe Zhang fu jun(liang) muzhiming bing xu* 唐故天雄軍節度九軍都知馬使銀青光錄大夫檢校國子祭酒兼殿中侍御史清河張府君(諒)墓誌銘并序, inscription taken from Yu Xianhao 郁賢皓, *Tang Cishi Kao Quan Bian* 唐刺史考全編 (Nanjing: Anhui daxue chubanshe, 2000), 3102.

required of local governors on the borders; further, such tasks most likely required a great deal of time and energy.

The decentralized nature of Tang bureaucracy further demanded that local officials act as diplomatic intermediaries between non-Han peoples and the imperial court. Tang protocol dictated that border officials receive foreign envoys that crossed the boundary and entered Jiannan. After receiving and entertaining the foreign envoys, a local governor then dispatched a letter to the imperial court indicating the purpose of the foreigner's visit and a recommendation for their continuation to the capital. The same courtesy extended to dealing with local tribes who inhabited the areas along the southwestern borders. As liaisons to the tribal groups within Tang territory, responsibility fell upon the local officials to facilitate communication with the local non-Chinese population. Of course, allowing local officials to act as figureheads of foreign policy could have negative aspects, especially in the southern provinces where the region had gained a reputation for errant officials. One such instance came in 772, when the Chinese emperor received a letter from the island city-state of Sanfoqi (Sumatra Indonesia 三佛齊) that articulated the foreign ruler's anger towards Tang southern border officials who had exhibited "humiliating behavior" towards his tributary mission to China.<sup>98</sup>

Despite such repercussions from poor border officials, the Tang relied on local governors to manage both domestic and foreign affairs that occurred within each official's administrative district. According to the *Tongdian*, the job description of prefects involved both a domestic and foreign component, indicating a governor should "console the various non-Han groups under his command," yet also "pacify the [external] foreigners."<sup>99</sup> Similarly an edict from 685 articulated

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<sup>98</sup> Wang Zhenping, *Tang China in a Multi-polar Asia* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2013), 221.

<sup>99</sup> TD 32.186.



similar expectations when governors dealt with local natives; the edict stated: “Tribal groups in various prefectures should take instructions from the relevant prefecture authorities. If their chieftains have accordingly urgent matters to report, prefecture authorities should record and memorialize the imperial court. They should not allow [foreigners or tribes to enter] without imperial court permission.”<sup>100</sup> The reduction of all matters involving aboriginal peoples to the local governors indicated the inability of the Chinese to view foreign and domestic matters regarding tribal peoples as conceptually different. Wang Zhenping has articulated such a notion, arguing that any foreign tribes engaged in rebellion no longer existed as subjects under the government of the state and therefore appeared no different in the eyes of the Chinese.<sup>101</sup> Thus, the handling of tribal affairs fit within the larger Chinese sinocentric tradition that viewed frontier groups as potential converts to imperial Chinese culture and government. Yet as the local governors possessed immense power in dealing with non-Chinese peoples, the successes or failures of the local prefects greatly impacted the peace and stability of the borders.

However, perhaps the greatest challenge facing a prefect on the borders involved their continual inclusion in the ongoing affairs of the state with Tibet to the west and later the state of Nanzhao to the south. As discussed earlier, the role of the *dudu*, or regional area commander, in charge of key border garrisons slowly disappeared over the course of the dynasty, leaving the *cishi* the vanguard in repelling Tibet and Nanzhao’s yearly border raids. Although at various times military governors, area commanders who oversaw the defense of entire provinces, like

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<sup>100</sup> JTS 83.2775.

<sup>101</sup> Wang Zhenping, *Tang China in a Multi-Polar Asia*, 215.

Wei Gao (韋皋),<sup>102</sup> Li Deyu (李德裕),<sup>103</sup> and Lu Dan (盧耽)<sup>104</sup> initiated campaigns to repair defensive structures and retrain troops, defenses often remained neglected and troops became undisciplined or elderly. Regardless of the defensive preparedness of the border prefectures, the task of repelling foreign attackers usually fell upon the shoulders of the local prefect. In many cases, prefects received commands to recruit troops locally and lead the army to attack foreign armies or relieve besieged neighboring prefectures. One example is Jiao Shu (焦淑), the local governor of Weizhou (維州), who in 727 A.D. received orders from the emperor to gather an army to attack Tibet as well as a Tang defector by the name of Dong Dunyi (董敦義). Jiao complied with the request and led an army of more than 1,000 soldiers composed of Chinese and Qiang (羌) troops in an attack that routed enemy troops camping on the border.<sup>105</sup> However, the provincial military governor or imperial court most commonly requested that local prefects gather forces to defend against attacks by Tibet and Nanzhao. Although the number of forces under the control of these local officials remained small, the Tang recognized the efficiency of placing local officials in control of armies composed of local forces.

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<sup>102</sup> Wei Gao functioned as provincial military governor of Jiannan from 787 to 806. During his time in office he successfully retrained the military and rebuilt fortresses on the border regions. His actions led to a series of successful invasions of Tibet that reclaimed Yaozhou 姚州, Guizhou 嶺州, and Weizhou 維州 that had been lost decades before during the An Lushan rebellion. See JTS 140.3832-33; ZZTJ 233.7519.

<sup>103</sup> Li Deyu received appointment as the military-governor of western Jiannan in 830. Believing that the appropriate defensive strategy of the Tang involved large frontier armies capable of mobilizing and moving quickly, Li received permission from the emperor to conduct a large restoration of the army and garrisons in Jiannan. See ZZTJ 243.7872

<sup>104</sup> Lu Dan as *jiedushi* of Jiannan from 870-873 enlisted local prefects to strengthen, retrain, and rearm the various army garrisons across the province to create stronger defenses against Man armies that over the previous decades had gotten near, or besieged Chengdu. Despite Lu's efforts, the Man again besieged Chengdu two years later in 875. See ZZTJ 252.8153-54.

<sup>105</sup> Cen Zhongmian 岑仲勉, *Jinshi luncong* 金石論叢, *Li fan xin faxian sui huizhou tongdao ji ba* 理番新發現隋會州通道記跋, record taken from Yu Xianhao 郁賢皓, *Tang Cishi Kao Quan Bian* 唐刺史考全編 (Nanjing: Anhui daxue chubanshe, 2000), 3116.

In 719, the Tang appointed the first military-governor or *jiedushi* (節度使) who oversaw all civil and military affairs within Jiannan. In most cases the effectiveness of a provincial military governor relied on his personal work ethic and personality. Officials that acted proactively and pragmatically towards foreign threats usually achieved greater success than those provincial governors who limited their focus to imperial politics occurring at the capital. The most idealized provincial governor in Tang sources remains Wei Gao (韋皋), who held the appointment at the turn of the ninth century. Wei's individual efforts to strengthen the southwest and regain Nanzhao's trust largely reflected his personal drive to stop Tibetan dominance in the region as well as his efforts to engage with the local tribes.<sup>106</sup> A less successful military-governor was Du Yuanying (杜元穎), who during his short term as *jiedushi* neglected his soldiers and allowed an army of Man tribesmen to siege Chengdu in 829.<sup>107</sup>

Since it was an important defensive border, the imperial court took great care in choosing the officials appointed as military-governors in charge of western Jiannan. Often those picked came from the highest ranks of the imperial court. Notable court figures such as Li Huan (李暉), Du Yuanying, and Yang Guozhong all at times received the important appointment overseeing the southwest and frontier borders. On average, military-governors in Jiannan held the appointment for three to five years. Yet the Tang valued effective and competent provincial

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<sup>106</sup> Nanzhao turned away from the Tang in 748 because of an ineffective and rude official by the name of Zhang Qiantuo. Ongoing pressures by Tibet to provide tribute and warriors to Tibetan armies by the late 780s had soured Nanzhao's loyalty to the Tibetans. Wei Gao secretly communicated with letters through local tribesman and enticed Nanzhao to return and once again become an ally of the Tang while conducting a series of attacks on Tibetan territory that allowed China to reclaim Guizhou(嶺州) and Weizhou(維州) for close to twenty years. ZZTJ 216.6901, 7479, 7489, 7512; JTS 106.3243, JTS 140.3822-25.

<sup>107</sup> Li Deyu 李德裕 expressed that Du Yuanying had rallied and taken locals natives and peoples of all ages from nearby markets and employed the people in his army to defend against Tibet. Du managed to retake Guizhou 嶺州 and Rongzhou 戎州 before being defeated beneath the walls of Qiongzhou 邛州. ZZTJ 244.7864; for information on the condition of Du's troops see ZZTJ 243.7872.

governors, and therefore respected officials could hold the appointment for decades or even life. Under Wei Gao, Jiannan saw a period of strength and safety, and for that reason he maintained his appointment for nineteen years until his death in 806.<sup>108</sup>

Jiannan remained an administrative circuit far from the capital and geographically different from the Chinese heartland of the Yellow River valley. Local prefects assigned to the far outposts were left to create peace and prosperity in what could only appear as an alien world filled with non-Han communities, a troublesome border, and an unpredictable hostile environment. Provincial-military governors varied in quality, but often tended to organize and charge local prefects with providing the initial resistance against foreign attacks or internal rebellions. Amid ongoing crises involving enemy raids and invasions, the local prefect further struggled to conduct their job responsibilities as locals migrated and received special tax exemptions from the emperor and imperial court.

### ***Geography and Roads on the Southwestern Border***

For Tang border officials, the greatest challenge they faced involved the harsh environment which varied considerably across the province. In Sichuan, high mountains surround a natural basin situated in the middle of the province. The eastern Tibetan plateau makes the western edge of Sichuan, while the Daba mountains line the territory on the northeast. The high mountains create a variety of climates and annual temperature that differ from subarctic in the highest altitudes to humid subtropical areas in the southeastern areas. The Yangtze river and its many tributaries such as the Min River (闽江) originate in the region and therefore carve numerous river valleys across the basin. Yunnan possesses equally diverse climates and changes

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<sup>108</sup> Wei Gao operated as Jiannan's provincial military governor from 787 to his death in 806.

in elevation. The eastern half of Yunnan is a limestone plateau cut by unnavigable rivers that run north to south and make travelling extremely difficult. The north possesses high mountains of uncultivable land, whereas in the south the elevation declines substantially and hosts a humid subtropical climate. Conversely, the western half of the province is mountainous with cold temperatures at the peaks that contrast with warm subtropical conditions within the low canyons.

Such terrain proved a difficult obstacle for the Tang and defined how people and goods moved throughout the region. The prefectures of Guizhou (雋州), Yazhou (雅州), Lizhou (黎州), Songzhou (松州), and Weizhou (維州) all possessed crucial land routes that connected Jiannan to Tibet in the west and India in the south. In addition, China, Tibet, and Nanzhao all utilized the roads to launch attacks across the borders. Weizhou (維州) and Guizhou (雋州) particularly acted as a launching point for several invasions by Chinese, Tibetan, and Nanzhao armies. Northern Weizhou (維州) possessed a road that connected Tibet to both Chengdu and Maozhou (茂州).<sup>109</sup> The Tang believed that the road possessed strategic value and built a fortress within the prefecture at Anrongcheng (安戎城) in 678. However, a Tibetan army seized the stronghold shortly after completion in 680, dividing the territory of the prefecture between both empires.<sup>110</sup> In southern Sichuan, both Tibet and Nanzhao utilized the pathways in Guizhou to launch repeated raids and invasions into Jiannan. Nanzhao particularly came to rely on the prefecture's roads to cross into Tang territory before heading northward to attack Sichuan's prefectures. The military-governor Li Shiwang expressed such an opinion when he petitioned the emperor for the creation of a new administrative circuit on the Tibetan border. Of particular concern for Li was

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<sup>109</sup> ZZTJ 252, 8172; For a complete description of the road system that passed through Weizhou see the description within Charles Backus. *The Nan-chao Kingdom and China's Southwestern Frontier* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 26-28.

<sup>110</sup> JTS 196a.5224; ZZTJ 202.6396, 6396; ZZTJ 203.6412.

Nanzhao's presence within the prefecture of Guizhou (嵩州), which he believed permitted Nanzhao forces easy access into Tang territory. Li stated accordingly: "Guizhou (嵩州) is the hub (控扼) of Nanzhao and serves as their major crossroad [into China] as Chengdu's paths are far and difficult to control."<sup>111</sup>

Furthermore, these border prefectures possessed a Tang highway that connected Yunnan, in the south, to Chengdu in the north. Capable of transporting large numbers of soldiers, this road became a crucial route for Chinese, Tibetan, and Nanzhao armies seeking to traverse Jiannan's mountainous terrains quickly. The military-governor Wei Gao employed the highway to quickly march troops from the south northward through the prefectures of Guizhou (嵩州), Lizhou (黎州), Yazhou (雅州), and Qiongzhou (邛州) to conduct his successful large-scale invasion of Tibet in 803.<sup>112</sup> Nanzhao crossed into Jiannan from Guizhou (嵩州) on two occasions in the 870s, and followed the road northward to successfully besiege Chengdu on both occasions.<sup>113</sup>

As geography and roads impacted the movements of soldiers across Jiannan, the Tang spent a considerable amount of effort studying the landscape. Local soldiers often received orders to chart and explore the surrounding areas to ensure that the Tang possessed the most current information on paths and local landmarks. Such information provided armies with valuable information that could tip the scales in their favor when strategizing for forthcoming battles. Even emperor Xuanzong admitted that victory in Jiannan could only come about through knowledge of the terrain. On the eve of a battle with the Tibetans in 728, the ruler accurately

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<sup>111</sup> ZZTJ 250.8120.

<sup>112</sup> JTS 140.3834.

<sup>113</sup> ZZTJ 251.8150, 8172; THY 99.1766.

predicted the victory of his own troops, indicating the Tang could not lose as he himself had tirelessly studied the region's "strong and weak strategical points."<sup>114</sup>

Naturally the Tang also promoted frontier officials to court positions and valued these official's knowledge and familiarity with the region. On one occasion in 682, the emperor summoned Wang Fangyi (王方翼), then the Protectorate General of Anxi (安西都護), to the capital to consult on proposed foreign policies regarding Tibet.<sup>115</sup> The court minister Li Deyu (李德裕), who served as Chancellor for emperors Wenzong (文宗 r. 827-40), Wuzong (武宗 r. 840-846), and briefly Xuanzong (宣宗 r. 846-59), also received his high appointment at court only after serving as military-governor over western Jiannan. Such examples indicate the Tang clearly understood the value of official's with first-hand knowledge and experience regarding southwestern affairs and bringing such experience to the Tang court.

Local officials further struggled to understand, navigate, or control the local paths within their administrative districts. Often these paths were created by the local tribesmen who maintained and altered the roads through the countryside as needed. For non-native peoples, including governors or soldiers, the paths presented a potentially deadly hazard. Shuzhou (蜀州) for instance at the end of the seventh century dispatched 500 men each year to reinforce the garrisons of Yaozhou (姚州) in southern Yunnan. The local prefect of Shuzhou wrote about the impracticality of this routine transference of troops to the south, indicating "the paths are difficult to access and remote, and those [soldiers] who die or get lost are many."<sup>116</sup> The enigmatic nature of the local paths also appeared in a report dispatched to the capital by the

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<sup>114</sup> JTS 197.5230.

<sup>115</sup> ZZTJ 203.6409.

<sup>116</sup> *Zizhi tongjian* 資治通鑑, *Shengli yuannian* 聖曆元年, entry quoted within Yu Xianhao 郁賢皓, *Tang Cishi Kao Quan Bian* 唐刺史考全編 (Nanjing: Anhui Daxue Chubanshe, 2000), 2983.

military-governor Li Deyu (李德裕) in 831. In the report, Li expressed the impossibility of patrolling and controlling the roads that extended south from the *Qingxiguan* (清溪關) pass,<sup>117</sup> indicating that “at the edges of *Qingxi* exist three great roads, themselves dividing into narrow paths, countless in numbers, and all [belonging] to the Eastern Man (東蠻), and when at times needed [the Tang soldiers] make them clear the paths so as to make them (the paths) accessible.”<sup>118</sup>

Local officials or army commanders that gained the trust of the native populations could therefore benefit greatly. Not only could a local prefect employ the natives under his governance to labor on civil affairs, but the local governor also gained valuable soldiers and guides when attacked by foreign armies. In 829, the military-governor Du Yuanying (杜元穎) successfully reclaimed the prefectures of Guizhou (雋州) and Rongzhou (戎州) only though employing a local native guide who led his troops to surprise the enemy. On one occasion in the ninth century, local tribesmen of the *Lianglin Man* (兩林蠻) intercepted an invading Nanzhao army that threatened three cities in Guizhou (雋州), whose city walls were under construction.<sup>119</sup> Acting alone, the local natives managed to defeat the foreign army, enabling the Tang to finish building the cities’ walls.

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<sup>117</sup> The *Qingxiguan* was a strategically defensive mountain pass along the Tang highway that connected Kunming to Chengdu. Located south of the Dadu River 大渡河 in Lizhou 黎州, the Tang employed the mountain pass on several occasions to defeat Tibet and Nanzhao. For more information see Yan Gengwang 嚴耕望, and Zhong Yang Yan Jiu Yuan. *Tang Dai Jiao Tong Tu Kao* 唐代交通圖考. V.4 (Nan-Kang: Academia Sinica, 1986), 1191, 1241, 1258.

<sup>118</sup> ZZTJ 249.7872.

<sup>119</sup> JTS 140.3833; ZZTJ 233.7519.



Conversely, losing the support of the local natives could likewise bring significant losses and harm to the Tibetan border. Such fears appeared in a speech by the minister Chen Ziang (陳子昂) who expressed the potential dangers of losing local peoples to foreign states like Tibet:

Tibet covets Shu's riches and has long desired to plunder them. It is only that they are blocked by mountains and rivers and cannot get through; the configuration is such that they are not able to move. If the [Tang] state now creates chaos among the border Qiang and opens the narrow paths, causing them [the Tibetans?] to receive the fugitive tribes and use them as local guides to attack the border, this is to borrow the bandit troops to open a road for the enemy and leave to them the whole of Sichuan.<sup>120</sup>

Despite Chen's fears, the Tibetans and Nanzhao both employed local tribesman successfully when attacking inside the borders of Jiannan. Tibet employed guides to seize the Anrong fortress within Weizhou (維州) in 680.<sup>121</sup> Later a local Man chieftain by the name of Bangming (傍名) volunteered to guide a Tibetan army along the footpaths of Guizhou (嵩州) and Yaozhou (姚州) in order to kill the oppressive Tang official Li Zhigu (李知古) who had extorted and inflicted violence on the local population. Here the Tibetan and Man army succeeded because the paths of Yaozhou and Guizhou had become accessible to them. However, following the Tibetan attack these same paths became "impassable" to the Tang and hindered the state's efforts to regain influence in the region.<sup>122</sup> When later a Nanzhao army under Cuo Dian (嗟顛) attacked Tang territory in 829, local Man tribesman volunteered to guide the army allowing Nanzhao to quickly seize the prefectures of Guizhou (嵩州) and Rongzhou (戎州).<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> ZZTJ 204.6455.

<sup>121</sup> ZZTJ 202.6396.

<sup>122</sup> ZZTJ 210, 6661.

<sup>123</sup> ZZTJ 224.7864.

## *Conclusions*

The topography of Jiannan impacted all aspects of Chinese administration. Roads provided access, made it possible to transport troops and food stuffs, and connected the government to the locals inhabiting the high mountains and steep valleys. Those individuals that wandered off the known roads or followed unknown paths often became lost in the treacherous environment. Paths and roads played critical roles in allowing government officials to conduct official business and fulfill responsibilities. The restriction and control of vital passages and highways therefore ensured safety, security, and prosperity. As the creators and maintainers of paths, the local people acted as the linchpin of the road systems and valuable assets to the Tang empire. Immense effort on behalf of the Tang went into solidifying alliances with local tribes and mapping the complex and dangerous terrain. These relationships became crucial as the breakdown of a relationship between local prefects and local tribes meant the loss of access to roads and provided the enemy potential guides that could secure them a tactical advantage in battle.

Although several levels of administration existed, the disappearance of the military-governor or *dudu* placed responsibility of maintaining peace with foreign entities and native tribesmen upon the prefect. Left to deal with the myriad of problems caused by the geography and closeness to the border with Tibet, local governors fought an ongoing uphill battle to accumulate surplus grain and protect the harvests from yearly border raiders. Ongoing border conflict further placed local governors as the front of repelling foreign armies and dealing with the repercussions brought about by the violence, death, and devastation. In spite of all these factors, border officials were expected to carry out their tasks efficiently and effectively across the southwest.

## **Chapter 4 - Winning Over the Natives: Tang Governance in Jiannan, c. 618-763 A.D.**

The violence and chaos that befell West Jiannan (*xichuan* 西川) over the three hundred years of Tang rule arose from both domestic and international trouble. The most serious external threat to Chinese sovereignty remained Tibet, whose militaristic state and ambition to expand into China's west and southwest remained a constant problem. Filled with ample resources, Sichuan further provided Tibetan commanders and their armies an ongoing motivation to plunder accessible border regions for profit. Against such a backdrop, the local people of Jiannan played a significant role in dictating power dynamics between both geopolitical powers. Often able to relocate when needed, native groups of the southwest vacillated in their loyalties giving either China, Tibet, or later Nanzhao a tactical advantage. Possessing knowledge of the terrain and the pathways constructed by local peoples, in combination with the support of locals often enabled one of the region's empires to dominate the others.

Although it is an oversimplification, scholars usually divide the Tang dynasty into two periods: a pre-755 period and a post-755 period. Although the year of 755 lies almost at the midpoint of the dynasty, it is important as it marks the date of the An Lushan Rebellion. The rebellion of An Lushan that lasted to 763 brought the dynasty to the brink of collapse and empowered frontier governors to increase their autonomy. Although the dynasty persisted for another 150 years, emperors after the rebellion never succeeded in reestablishing the same level of control as rulers prior to the revolt. Moments of dynastic strength in the latter part of the dynasty, under Dezong's or Xianzong's reigns, represent only brief moments of strength amid a slow dynastic decline.

The history of Jiannan should not fall within such a historical trope. For Sichuan endured throughout the dynasty as a place of security and strength when the rest of the empire appeared threatened. Two emperors over the course of the dynasty fled to the Sichuan Plain in order to escape domestic strife occurring in the regions around the capitals.<sup>124</sup> Likewise, Sichuan's security and remoteness ensured a safe source of revenue during times of distress. Thus, when Suzong usurped his father's throne in the aftermath of the rebellion, the new emperor, now formulating a strategy to counter the rebel An Lushan, heavily taxed Sichuan to obtain the revenue and grain to quell the rebellion.<sup>125</sup>

Therefore, what follows is a proposal that Jiannan possessed its own historical record of high and low points, invasions and victories, and prosperity and depravity. At the core of the historical record is the local natives, who as pawns in the larger struggle between the Tang and Tibet, greatly influenced the events occurring on the border. Of key importance were the prefectures of Songzhou (松州), Yaozhou (雅州), Lizhou (黎州), Guizhou (嶓州), and Weizhou (維州), which possessed the main roads that connected Jiannan to the Tibetan and Nanzhao empires. Possession of territory within these prefectures and the support of the local tribes were the biggest indicators of peace and prosperity. Because local tribes switched loyalties consistently during the dynasty as need arose, China's hegemony and control of the borders cycled between periods of weakness and strength that corresponded with patterns of tribal relocations. When the Tang possessed the support of native groups within the border prefectures, the frontiers became defensible and domestic peace abounded. In some cases, periods of

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<sup>124</sup> Xuanzong 玄宗 and Xizong 僖宗 both fled to Chengdu to escape rebellions overtaking the capital. For information on Xuanzong's flight to Chengdu see ZZTJ 218.6992; Emperor Xizong fled to Chengdu after the rebel Huang Chao 黃巢 seized the capital in 880, see ZZTJ 254.8245.

<sup>125</sup> Ouyang Xiu 歐陽修 and Song Qi 宋祁. *Xin Tangshu* 新唐書 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1975), 51.1357. [hereafter XTS].

pacification and safety were only a few brief years; at the other extreme a period of strength like that which followed Wei Gao's (韋皋) appointment could last decades. In addition, outside influences played a large role in determining which of the geopolitical powers in the region managed to occupy the border prefectures from the others. Collapses of Tibetan leadership, Tang internal rebellions, failures of foreign policy, and poor Jiannan governors all influenced the events in the southwest and helped dictate who possessed what territory. When the Tang could not obtain the border prefectures, especially Guizhou (嵩州) and Weizhou (維州), the Chinese experienced periods of extreme raiding and invasions.

This chapter examines the events and effectiveness of Tang governance in western Jiannan up to the An Lushan rebellion in the middle of the eighth century. Unlike the era that follows the influential revolt, these years focus on the spread of Tang influence into the region and winning the loyalty of local tribes. The rise and expansion of Tibet played a critical role as many southern tribes, especially the Qiang (羌), tended to possess customs more similar to Tibetan culture than Chinese. Because of this, often when the Tang achieved influence in the region, the local natives never fully closed off relationships with Tibet. The partitioning of the chapter into chronological sections is done to help the reader; however, they do not specifically denote periods of Tang strength or weakness. In some cases, these sections do indicate a general period of peace or hostility, yet more often the section defines transitions of power from strong to weak, or weak to strong.

### ***Establishing Control: The Early Tang through 676***

The Tang inherited the southwest from the preceding Sui dynasty (隋), who sought to bring the imperial bureaucracy to the remote wildernesses of Sichuan and Yunnan. When Li

Yuan (李淵) deposed the last Sui emperor in 618 and declared his own Tang (唐) dynasty, the new emperor quickly resorted to direct military control of the southwest while he focused on centralizing his power in northern China. Pragmatically, the emperor took to assigning a general to oversee a government-command (*zongguanfu* 總管府) established at Chengdu, subsequently forming the prefecture of Yizhou (益州). From Chengdu the governor-general oversaw seventeen prefectures in the surrounding area of Sichuan.<sup>126</sup> Such a manner of administration dissolved in 636 as the Tang transitioned from military generals to civil governors under Taizong (太宗 r. 626-649). To handle military affairs, the emperor appointed area commanders (*dudu* 都督) who oversaw small armies enlisted from the local residents. Once the Tang firmly held control of the Chinese heartland, emperor Gaozu as well as his successors turned to the southwest and began a mission to impose Chinese hegemony there.

During these early years, the Chinese had mixed success when confronting or interacting with the local tribes among the Sichuan Basin and Kunming Basin. In 627, the Tang made the decision to abandon Weizhou's (維州) territory, only to reestablish the prefecture a year later, but the territory was deemed a bridle prefecture by the name of Mizhou (縻州) and governed from the neighboring prefecture of Maozhou (茂州).<sup>127</sup> The Tang regained direct control of the territory in 650, when 5,000 locals from the area came before emperor Gaozong (高宗 r. 649-683) and requested that Weizhou be established with a local chieftain An Feihan (安肅汗) as the

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<sup>126</sup> The generals could also be considered area-commanders with similar responsibilities as those area commanders created under Taizong in 636. For more information on these officials see Chapter 2 (page 49). Liu Xu 劉昫, *Jiu Tangshu* 舊唐書 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1975), 391.528; 41.1663-1664 [hereafter JTS].

<sup>127</sup> Yu Xianhao 郁賢皓, *Tang Cishi Kao Quan Bian* 唐刺史考全編 (Nanjing: Anhui daxue chubanshe, 2000), 3115.

prefect (*cishi* 刺史).<sup>128</sup> Peace did not come easily to Weizhou, as fifteen years later in 665, the Tang relocated many discontented Qiang tribal households to Meizhou (眉州) to the south of Chengdu.<sup>129</sup>

Problems also troubled the Tang in Yaozhou (姚州) in the far southwest. These local tribes, except for the Mengshe (discussed in chapter 4), routinely disliked Chinese interference and authority. Efforts to penetrate the area were considerable. In 648, Liu Boying (劉伯英), the local governor of Xizhou (悉州), convinced the emperor to allocate a massive force to defeat the Man tribesmen in southern Sichuan and the Erhai (洱海) region of Yunnan. Sent down into the far south, a devastating victory by Li caused the surviving Man tribesman to surrender. Ninety thousand Man households thereupon came under Chinese control. The Man then were settled in organized villages, and the Tang employed the victory to establish an area command over Yunnan which symbolized Tang power over the frontier wilderness.<sup>130</sup> Despite the victory, Yunnan would endure as a nucleus of improper behavior, conflict, and violence, and the Tang would abandon the territory in the mid-seventh century only to resurrect the prefecture in 688. Repeated violence on the Tang's behalf persisted as the Chinese employed armies to enforce subjugation of the locals in the 670s. A local tribe, the Mengshe (蒙舍) who later founded the Nanzhao state, benefitted from China's attacks – particularly in 672, when Chinese forces

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<sup>128</sup> *Quan Tangwen* 全唐文, chapter 435 Li Zhiyuan 李至遠, “*Tang weizhou cishi anhou (fuguo) shendaobei* 唐維州刺史安侯(附國)神道碑” inscription quoted in Yu Xianhao 郁賢皓, *Tang Cishi Kao Quan Bian* 唐刺史考全編 (Nanjing: Anhui daxue chubanshe, 2000), 3115.

<sup>129</sup> Yu Xianhao 郁賢皓, *Tang Cishi Kao Quan Bian* 唐刺史考全編 (Nanjing: Anhui daxue chubanshe, 2000), 3115.

<sup>130</sup> Sima Guang 司馬光, *Zizhi tongjian* 資治通鑑 (Beijing: Guji chubanshe, 1956), 199.6255-56 [hereafter ZZTJ]; Du You 杜佑, *Tong dian* 通典 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1988), 187.1003; Wang, Zhenping, *Tang China in Multi-Polar Asia: A History of Diplomacy and War* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2013), 100.

brought fourteen tribal groups to surrender, which included five other rival neighboring tribes, allowing the Mengshe to become the dominant group in the area.<sup>131</sup>

During these early encounters, Chinese officials appear to have occasionally acted against the will of the imperial court. A foreign environment inhabited by culturally dissimilar peoples most likely challenged even the best Chinese officials, who may have adopted unconventional methods of administration in order to appease both the official's superiors and local populace. Those that did violate the will of the imperial court often found themselves in jeopardy, such as the area commander of Maozhou (茂州), who for abusing his power and violating imperial orders received demotion to Jinzhou (晉州) in 639.<sup>132</sup> In some cases violations incurred harsher penalties such as Wang Zhiyuan (王志遠), the governor-general of Guizhou (雋州), who from the remote frontier prefecture was executed by order of the emperor for his crimes against the state in 640.<sup>133</sup> The appearances of these officials in the historical sources during the early years of the Tang indicate that problematic officials existed in the southwest throughout the entire dynasty, even before China and Tibet began engaging in armed conflicts against each other. Further, these officials also demonstrate that the transplantation of Chinese bureaucracy into Sichuan and Yunnan proved, on many occasions, a difficult task for the Tang.

Making administration perhaps even more difficult was the appearance of the Tibetan state in 634. In that year, an envoy sent from the Tibetan ruler came before emperor Taizong and presented tribute, establishing a friendly diplomatic rapport between the two states.<sup>134</sup> The

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<sup>131</sup> JTS 91.2941; ZZTJ 202.6368.

<sup>132</sup> *Jiu Tangshu* 舊唐書 *Benzhuan* 本傳 as quoted in Yu Xianhao 郁賢皓, *Tang Cishi Kao Quan Bian* 唐刺史考全編 (Nanjing: Anhui daxue chubanshe, 2000), 3109.

<sup>133</sup> Wang's crimes are not mentioned in detail in the account, only that his crimes cost the minister his life. See *Jiu Tangshu* 舊唐書 *Taizong jixia* 太宗記下 as quoted in Yu Xianhao 郁賢皓, *Tang Cishi Kao Quan Bian* 唐刺史考全編 (Nanjing: Anhui daxue chubanshe, 2000), 3123.

<sup>134</sup> JTS 196a.5221.



relationship did not last, as the Tibetans desired to achieve a marriage alliance, a privilege that the Tuyuhun (吐谷渾) people of the Qinghai region had received in the previous years. Desiring to have the same status as the Tuyuhun, Tibet repeatedly presented marriage proposals. When Taizong continued to dismiss the Tibetans' requests, the Tibetan ruler led soldiers to attack Songzhou (松州) in 638.<sup>135</sup>

Despite Tibet's early aggressions, the Tang did not peacefully bring all of the local people to accept Tang hegemony and authority. The Tang originally appointed local elites to act as governors on behalf of the Tang. Tensions appear to have built up throughout Jiannan and rebellions broke out in 648 and 649. During the first round of attacks, the Tang had to march troops from Maozhou (茂州) to suppress native armies that had appeared in Qiong (邛州), Ya (雅州), and Meizhou (眉州). The Tang ended the revolt and appointed the general who had ended the uprising, Zhang Shigui (張士貴), as the governor-general of Yazhou (雅州) who employed martial law to maintain order within the prefecture.<sup>136</sup> The use of martial law suggests persisting animosity towards the Tang, who desired after the rebellions to absorb the prefecture directly. The following year, an uprising of Lao (獠) tribes spread among Songzhou (松州), Guizhou (嶺州), and Meizhou (眉州) and forced the Chinese to organize a twelve-prefecture army in order to defeat the rebels outside of Songzhou (松州).<sup>137</sup> Of particular interest is the extent of these

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<sup>135</sup> JTS 196a.5221

<sup>136</sup> *Cefu yangui* 冊府元龜, chapter 985, "Datang dajiangjun jingzhou budu guo gong Zhang gong muzhiming bingxu 大唐大將軍荊州部督國公張公墓志銘并序" as quoted in Yu Xianhao 郁賢皓, *Tang Cishi Kao Quan Bian* 唐刺史考全編 (Nanjing: Anhui daxue chubanshe, 2000), 3109.

<sup>137</sup> *Xin Tangshu* 新唐書 *Taizong zhuan* 太宗傳 as quoted in Yu Xianhao 郁賢皓, *Tang Cishi Kao Quan Bian* 唐刺史考全編, (Nanjing: Anhui daxue chubanshe, 2000), 3109; *Xin Tangshu* 新唐書 *Nanman xia zhuan* 南蠻下傳 as quoted in Yu Xianhao 郁賢皓, *Tang Cishi Kao Quan Bian* 唐刺史考全編 (Nanjing: Anhui daxue chubanshe, 2000), 3124.

revolts that showcase the interconnectedness and loyalty of native tribal groups. Uprisings like that of the Lao took place over a large expanse of land.

By 652, the Tang had successfully brought many of the larger clans in Sichuan and Yunnan under dynastic control. The show of imperial power and continued Chinese expansion now created a “bandwagon” effect on the local people. Tribes appeared on the borders and agreed to become tributary vassals or subjects of imperial China. Both in 654 and 671, the Tang took measures to place Qiang tribesmen in loose-rein settlements.<sup>138</sup> In Yaozhou (姚州), the Tang succeeded in subjugating more Man tribes who resided west of the Erhai (洱海) river in 673.<sup>139</sup> The Tibetans apparently disapproved of local groups allying with the Tang. In 659, when an A-zha tribe sought to settle in Tang territory, the Tibetans launched a punitive attack on the tribe, killing its chieftain.<sup>140</sup>

From the time the Tang seized power through the early 670s, they sought to expand into the southwest by incorporating the local tribes into a growing empire. Although ultimately the Chinese achieved continued expansion, achieving increased territory did not come without considerable difficulty. In some cases, the expansion came through appointing local tribesmen who peacefully accepted positions of power in exchange for becoming vassals of the Chinese imperial machine. Yet often the expansion came at the cost of violence, conflict, and great difficulty. By 676, through either peaceful or hostile means the Chinese had absorbed much of what was to become the Jiannan circuit (劍南道), the Tang’s furthest province in the southwest.

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<sup>138</sup> ZZTJ 199.6283; Dong Nan 董弄 settled tribes in Weizhou 維州 in 671, see *Jiu Tangshu* 舊唐書 *Dili zhisi* 地理志四 as quoted in Yu Xianhao 郁賢皓, *Tang Cishi Kao Quan Bian* 唐刺史考全編 (Nanjing: Anhui daxue chubanshe, 2000), 3115.

<sup>139</sup> ZZTJ 199.6287.

<sup>140</sup> Helmut Hoffman, “Early and Medieval Tibet,” *Cambridge History of Early Inner China*. Ed. Denis Sinor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987; reprint Taipei: SMC Publishing Inc., 1990), 380.

Despite declaring these areas part of the greater Tang Empire, much of the southwest remained unincorporated and often governed by local chieftains, not Chinese officials.

### ***The Fall of Anrong City and Tibet's Attack on Chinese Hegemony: 676-692***

Formed in 628, the prefecture of Weizhou (維州) sat at the crossroads of the region's major highway that followed the modern-day Hei Shui River and connected the Sichuan Basin to Tibet and Qinghai. The road possessed two critical routes that penetrated Jiannan from the northwest. One ran by the prefectural capital Weizhoucheng (維州城), to the northwest of Chengdu, while another entered further north to the east of the Min River (岷江). As a strategic access point, the Tang believed the prefecture held the key to securing the borders to the northwest of Chengdu. As Weizhou defended the southern route of the highway, the Tang in 678 enlisted a large force of local soldiers from the garrison at Maozhou (茂州) to construct a defensible fortress at the city of Anrongcheng (安戎城) which overlooked the major road and a local river. The Chinese believed the fortification could sever Tibet's access by guarding the local Man tribal roads and as a result secure the borders. Tibet by 676 had become a nascent power in Asia and had grown to incorporate the Yangtong (羊同), Tuyuhun (吐谷渾), and Tangut (党項) tribes of the Qinghai region.<sup>141</sup> These conquests had brought the Tibetan border to adjoin Tang territory. The construction of the defensive structure therefore acted as an initial strategy of the Tang to defend the borders against the new threat in the west.

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<sup>141</sup> JTS 196a.5221.

Shortly after the completion of the Anrong fortress, the Tibetans seized it along with half of the prefecture. In the prior years, Tibet had begun sending raiders into Jiannan as well as the Gansu corridor in the far west. One raid three years earlier had even penetrated deep into the border prefecture of Songzhou (松州) to the north, capturing the local city's governor Du Xiaosheng (杜孝昇).<sup>142</sup> Yet in 680, the Tibetans dispatched another army into Weizhou seeking to seize the stronghold. The Tibetans employed a local tribesman as a guide who helped their army navigate the area, enabling them to take the fortress. Supposedly the Tibetans decided to occupy Weizhou as well as take Anrong in order to persuade the local Erhe Man (洱海蠻) tribes in Yunnan to submit. In addition, the attack had enabled the Tibetans to seize the remaining unincorporated land to the west of the Tang border.<sup>143</sup>

Although the Tang lost only part of the territory around the headwaters of the Dadu (大渡河) river, the effect of the loss spread across Jiannan's local tribal groups. The defeat of the Tang had provided local tribes, now feeling surrounded on either side by the two powerful states, a reason to join the Tibetans. News of Tibet's victory extended beyond the prefecture and numerous tribes all along the border approached Tibet and opted to live under the authority of the foreign state. Tibet must have been overjoyed at their victory, as seizing the fortress did indeed bring the allegiance of the Erhe Man in Yaozhou (藥州) – the tribes who had originally inspired Tibet's attack.<sup>144</sup> The realignment of local native groups continued as late as 689, as in this year a prominent Man chieftain by the name of Bangshixi (傍時昔), who then acted as a

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<sup>142</sup> ZZTJ 202.6383.

<sup>143</sup> ZZTJ 202.6396, 6396; ZZTJ 203.6412.

<sup>144</sup> Charles Backus, *The Nan-chao Kingdom and China's Southwestern Frontier*, 28.

local official for the Tang, led his troops and twenty-five tribal groups (部) away to the west and submitted to Tibet.<sup>145</sup>

The situation started to change in 688, but not before the Tang suffered more defeats in the southwest. At this time, Wu Zetian (武則天), an imperial consort, was ruling China through her son emperor Ruizong. Wu decided to open the Shantong (山通) mountain passage in Yazhou (雅州) on the Tang-Tibetan border west of Chengdu. When Tang soldiers arrived and proceeded to make the passage traversable, Qiang tribesman surprised and attacked the Chinese forces. Minister and poet Chen Ziang (陳子昂) placed the fault for the attack on the border governors, stating they “are the reason for Western Sichuan’s misfortune.” The event then sparked Chen to reevaluate the current strategy employed by the Tang to befriend the locals on the frontiers. For Chen, Chinese efforts in the region for the past century had involved the recruiting of locals and employing these tribesmen to make Jiannan’s “narrow passages” passable, act as guides, and help the Tang “eliminate misleading paths.” These strategies, in the eyes of the minister, had brought only hardship and failure, as tribes disliked forced labor and taxes. Therefore, Chen proposed a new solution to ending the trouble occurring in the southwest. Instead of employing the locals to create resources and sever Tibet’s access to Yunnan, the Tang would cease levying taxes and corvée labor on the natives and ensure that no famine would come to the border regions. In short, Chen Ziang observed pacifying the locals equated to greater success than intense military defense that strained the local population.<sup>146</sup>

Despite Chen Ziang’s warnings, the following years saw the Tang embarked on offensives in the hopes of attacking Tibetan territory directly. In 689, Wu called for an attack on

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<sup>145</sup> ZZTJ 204.6457.

<sup>146</sup> ZZTJ 204.6455.

Tibet and dispatched the grand governor of Anxi (安西) Wei Daijia 韋待價 ahead of a large army. However, Daijia proved unfit to lead and the army became bogged down, and the soldiers starved before ever reaching Tibet. Wu called for another attack the following year, yet this army also failed to reach Tibet. Unable to organize an effective force capable of venturing into the rough landscape of the Tibetan Plateau, Wu Zetian turned her attention back to the northwest.<sup>147</sup>

Meanwhile, in Yunnan, the reestablished prefecture of Yaozhou (姚州) continued to encounter difficulty and turmoil. Local officials continued to cause great concern for the dynasty as violence and maladministration persisted. Charles Backus perhaps best describes the situation occurring in the far southwest, stating: “Both Chinese and non-Chinese alike were guilty of killing and highway robbery, and seemed beyond control.”<sup>148</sup> In the capital Zhang Jianzhi (張柬之) appeared before the empress and argued in support of abandoning the prefecture and reinforcing the garrisons around the upper Yangtze river. For Zhang believed no solution existed to end the ongoing corruption, violence, and chaos in the far southwest. Bias surely played a part in his opinions, as Zhang viewed the Man tribes in Yunnan as “brigands and vagrants” who were incapable of embracing Chinese culture.<sup>149</sup> Already possessing a dislike for Zhang as a statesman, Wu acknowledged his comments but dismissed his proposals. As Wu, now herself emperor, continued to see value in maintaining control over Yaozhou in her growing empire.

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<sup>147</sup> JTS 196a.5224-25.

<sup>148</sup> Backus, *The Nan-chao Kingdom and China's Southwestern Frontier*, 34.

<sup>149</sup> Backus, *The Nan-chao Kingdom and China's Southwestern Frontier*, 34-35.

## *Wu Zetian and Tibetan Domestic Troubles: 692- 740*

Despite the failed offensives, the Tang appeared to benefit from the turmoil occurring within Tibet. During the same year as Wu Zetian's failed invasions, the Tibetan ruler Khri-ḥdus-sroñ dismissed his steward mGar-Khri-'bring in favor of his mother, Khri-ma-lod. From this point the ruler took full command of the army and gave his brothers appointments as military generals and dispersed them across the state.<sup>150</sup> Then in 699, the Tibetan ruler hatched a scheme to eliminate a high minister by the name of Khri-ḥbriñ btsan-po, who responded by gathering thousands of his supporters and submitting to the Tang.<sup>151</sup> The complications in Tibet continued when Tibet's southern regions rebelled in 703. Khri-ḥdus-sroñ, now an adult, commanded an army to suppress the southern rebels, but complications ensued as the affair broke down into a sibling rivalry for control of the throne. The next year, the Tibetan ruler Khri-ḥdus-sroñ died. A small fight ensued over the rightful successor; however, in the end the former ruler's son Khri-mang-slon-rtzan was placed upon the throne.<sup>152</sup>

Tibet's domestic problems encouraged tribal chieftains to once again switch alliances back to China, which now appeared the stronger state. Starting in 692, a Tibetan chieftain by the name of Hesu (曷蘇) expressed his desire to submit to the Chinese state along with his people. In response the Empress dispatched the general Zhang Xuanyu (張玄遇) with 200,000 Chinese soldiers to the Dadu River to receive Hesu and his people. However, the Tibetans discovered Hesu's plan and had him seized and sent to the capital, where most likely he met a gruesome fate. A second Tibetan general also sought to defect in the same year. Again, the empress dispatched Zhang Xuanyu, and this time the Chinese general received the foreign general along

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<sup>150</sup> JTS 196a.5225; Helmut Hoffman, "Early and Medieval Tibet," 380.

<sup>151</sup> JTS 196a.5225-5226.

<sup>152</sup> JTS 196a.5225, 6399; ZTJ 205.6569, Helmut Hoffman, "Early and Medieval Tibet," 380.

with 8,000 Qiang tribesman whom he settled within the prefecture. Zhang celebrated the event by erecting a tower with an inscription commemorating the event on the bank of the Dadu River.<sup>153</sup>

As war raged far from Jiannan, both the Chinese and Tibet engaged in campaigns to establish relationships with local tribes. The Tang in 694 dispatched the imperial censor Pei Huaigu (裴懷古) of Shouchun (壽春) to console and collect information on the southwestern Man tribes. The expedition achieved some success as both officials persuaded a local chieftain by the name of Dongqi (董期) to submit to Tang rule along with his tribe of 10,000 households.<sup>154</sup> Tibet, despite the recent military defeats, also continued to establish ties in Yunnan and on the northwest. A court discussion held in 696 indicated that Tibet's accruing internal problems had expanded to alienate the allied tribes that composed much of Tibet's armed forces. Court official Yuan Zhen (元振) articulated:

Tibet is exhausted by forced military labor and a long time ago desired to cement relationships with ethnic groups, Qinling (the ruler) benefitted from combining his political leadership with the army and therefore [became] a despot, and the old soldiers did not desire to return home with sincerity. It appears the country in the first year sent officials to the border frontiers, and Qinling did not comply to orders and the state's people daily grew to resent Qinling and hoped daily the state's [ruler] kindness would grow daily. Because he desired greatness he also instigated [border] trouble. This saturated all with discord, but cause all under Heaven to suspect a hopeless situation of misfortune and chaos that will bring rebellion.<sup>155</sup>

Yuan Zhen thus anticipated further desertion of local tribes as Tibet continued to appear weakened from the succession crisis.

From the weakening of Tibet emerged strengthening of foreign diplomacy between the two countries. Sometime in the fall of 703 or early in 704 the Tibetan ruler Khri-dus-sroṅg died

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<sup>153</sup> JTS 196a.5225; ZZTJ 205.6482.

<sup>154</sup> ZZTJ 205.6494.

<sup>155</sup> ZZTJ 205.6509.



while attempting to suppress a large rebellion occurring in the south involving the Nepalese.<sup>156</sup> The death of Khri-dus-sroṅg fundamentally helped reset diplomatic relations between Tibet and China, as the new Tibetan ruler sought to consolidate his power and gain Chinese recognition. Therefore in 705, the Tibetan chief minister Xixunrang (悉薰然) travelled to China and presented local gifts to the emperor while simultaneously entreating the Tang for a marriage alliance. Emperor Zhongzong (中宗) found the proposal beneficial and agreed to the request. In the following year a Tibetan envoy arrived to escort the emperor's foster daughter princess Jincheng (金成公主) back to the Tibetan capital.<sup>157</sup> Diplomatically the marriage recemented peace between the two countries, and Tibet once more sent yearly tribute missions to Chang'an. The marriage appealed to Zhongzong, who exempted all Tang subjects from taxes for a year in celebration of the matrimonial accord. The loss of his adopted daughter saddened the emperor, but Zhongzong believed the treaty would "consummate a peaceful relationship, and then the border would be peaceful and military duty would cease."<sup>158</sup>

### ***Li Zhigu and the Loss of Yunnan: 710-730s***

Peace between the two empires survived through the dethronement of Wu Zetian in 705 and carried into the fifth year of Ruizong's (睿宗 r. 684-90; 705-712) second reign as emperor. At this time, the imperial censor Li Zhigu (李知古) approached the emperor and voiced his concern that Yaozhou (姚州) still possessed natives that held ties to the Tibetans. Li then persuaded the emperor to send him to the southwest and recruit an army from Jiannan to punish

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<sup>156</sup> JTS 196a.5226; ZZTJ 207.6562, 6569; Helmut Hoffman, "Early and Medieval Tibet," 380.

<sup>157</sup> JTS 196a.5226.

<sup>158</sup> JTS 196a.5227.

those tribes that remained friendly towards China's enemies.<sup>159</sup> Upon arriving in the southern prefecture, Li under the threat of force persuaded the local natives to submit themselves as vassals of the Tang. Li succeeded in defeating the Man and sought to bring Yaozhou (姚州) entirely under Tang control. The difficulty of controlling Yunnan resurfaced as Li Zhigu and his assistant, Xu Jian (徐堅), began exploiting the local population through heavy taxation and forced servitude. In addition, Li sent his army to construct city walls in an effort to limit the power of local people of "exceptional abilities," after which Li's army pillaged the local aboriginals and enslaved their sons and daughters.<sup>160</sup> The injustices prompted the soliciting of Tibet by a local chieftain by the name of Bangming (傍名), who requested the Tibetans to enter Yaozhou and end Li Zhigu's oppression. Bangming then acted as a guide for the army navigating through the "traversable paths" of Guizhou (嶺州). Taken by surprise, Li Zhigu surrendered, and the locals sacrificed him to heaven. The eleventh century historian Sima Guang articulated the Tibetan success had been due to the paths, claiming that after the event, the same pathways became "impassable" for the Tang.<sup>161</sup>

Following Li Zhigu's death, the tribes of Yunnan acted against the Tang who through the actions of Li had been shown to be repressive. Some locals followed the traditional pattern and changed allegiance away from China, such as the locals of the 'Jang areas of Yunnan who agreed to become vassals of Tibet in 712.<sup>162</sup> Three years later witnessed the beginning of a new trend as Man forces invaded Jiannan's borders. Not since the mid-seventh century had local Man tribes gathered against the Chinese regime. Now the emperor responded by ordering a cavalry general,

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<sup>159</sup> JTS 196a.5228.

<sup>160</sup> ZZTJ 210.6661.

<sup>161</sup> ZZTJ 210.6661.

<sup>162</sup> Helmut Hoffman, "Early and Medieval Tibet," 381.

Li Xuandao (李玄道), to repel the enemies. The danger of the attacking tribesmen must have been considerable, because the Tang defensive force organized under Li Xuandao comprised 30,000 soldiers drawn from old regional garrisons as well as new recruits from more than six prefectures including the Jiannan divisions of Rongzhou (戎州), Luzhou (瀘州), and Liangzhou (梁州).<sup>163</sup> No break came for the local governors, as the following year Tibet once more crossed the northern roadways into Songzhou (松州). However, Songzhou's local governor Sun Renxian (孫仁獻) surprise attacked the unprepared Tibetans and greatly defeated the Tibetans beneath the city walls.<sup>164</sup>

The following years witnessed a general loss of support from the local people, despite the Tang achieving two military victories in the late 720s. In 725, the Tang began strategizing ways to reclaim territory previously lost from wars and rebellion. Two years later, Emperor Xuanzong dispatched orders for the local Prefect of Weizhou (維州), Jiao Wei (焦淑), along with a local chieftain, Dong Dunyi (董敦義), to enter and attack Tibetan lands. The invasion began, but soon Dong Dunyi took his forces and allied with local Tibetan forces. The attack at this point transformed from an invasion into a punitive expedition, and Jiao Wei now led his army comprised of Chinese and non-Chinese soldiers in an effort to discipline and defeat his former ally.<sup>165</sup> Then in 729, Man tribes crossed the paths of Guizhou (嵩州) and invaded western Jiannan for a second time. The local governor-general Zhang Shousu (張守素) not only soundly

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<sup>163</sup> The six prefectures mentioned in the ZZTJ in order: Rongzhou 戎州, Luzhou 瀘州, Kuizhou 夔州, and Bazhou 巴州, Lizhou 黎州, and Feng 鳳州, ZZTJ 210.6712.

<sup>164</sup> ZZTJ 211.6716, 6719; *Xuanzong sinian* 玄宗四年 as quoted in Yu Xianhao 郁賢皓, *Tang Cishi Kao Quan Bian* 唐刺史考全編 (Nanjing: Anhui daxue chubanshe, 2000), 3132.

<sup>165</sup> *Cen Zhongmian* 岑仲勉, "Jinshi luncong 金石論叢 - Li bo xin fa xian sui Huizhou tongdao ji ba 理蕃 新發現記跋" as quoted in Yu Xianhao 郁賢皓, *Tang Cishi Kao Quan Bian* 唐刺史考全編 (Nanjing: Anhui daxue chubanshe, 2000), 3116.

defeated the tribesmen but managed to march onward, seizing the two cities of Kunming (昆明 not the city in Yunnan) and Yanzhou (鹽州) in southern Guizhou.<sup>166</sup>

The Chinese continued to pursue relationships with local groups in Yunnan and allied with the Mengshe (蒙舍) tribe that would later establish the Nanzhao kingdom. Prior to 730, the Mengshe had been the region's only tribal group to maintain a friendly relationship with the Tang. As one of six evenly powerful states in the area, the Mengshe had received support from the Chinese, and by 730, the chieftain Piluoge (皮邏閣) had managed to gain enough strength to subjugate the other tribes. Now in control of the region, emperor Xuanzong chose to bestow on Piluoge, a crucial ally in Yunnan, the title of "King of Yunnan" (雲南王) in 738. The Chinese had struggled to maintain control in southern Yunnan, and the formation of the kingdom was a natural way to unite the region and maintain the support of the local population. Now as an ally of the Tang, Piluoge expanded his border inflicting a defeat on Tibet, and captured the city of Dahecheng (大和城) where he established his capital. The small state continued to grow, receiving the formal name of "Nanzhao" (南詔), or "southern state" in the late eighth century.<sup>167</sup>

In the decades before 740, the Tang experienced a general decline in local support as many chieftains and tribes vacillated between regional powers when it appeared most advantageous. The Tang did manage to inflict a few losses on Tibet during this period, yet these small victories changed little about Tibet's hegemony along the border regions. Although probably some benefits came from the Zhang Zhousu's recapturing of a major salt-producing

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<sup>166</sup> The city of Kunming (located in Guizhou) was a major salt-producing center for the region and therefore a valuable city to reclaim. ZZTJ 213.6783; *Xin Tangshu* 新唐書, *Xuanzong ji* 玄宗記 as quoted in Yu Xianhao 郁賢皓, *Tang Cishi Kao Quan Bian* 唐刺史考全編 (Nanjing: Anhui daxue chubanshe, 2000), 3126.

<sup>167</sup> ZZTJ 214.6835-36; XTS 22a.6270.

hub at Kunming (嵩州). In Yunnan, the prefecture of Yaozhou had continued to produce violent and ineffective governors, causing even the imperial court to entertain the idea of abandoning the prefecture. The appointment of Piluoge and rise of the Mengshe provided a pragmatic solution for the difficulty of administering the region but had profound influences as the state grew into a powerful empire in the ninth century.

### ***Losing the Loyalty of the Locals: 740-786***

During the 730s Tibet had continued to raid the border unhindered, destroying border markets and looting the countryside. Such violence extended into the far western regions, where both states battled many times in an effort to control the valuable and strategic trade routes that navigated Eastern Turkestan.<sup>168</sup> Efforts to undermine the Tibetans in the northwest eventually extended further south into Weizhou (維州). Then in 740, Tang official Zhangchou Jianqiong (章仇兼瓊) began corresponding in secret with intermediaries Didouju (翟都局) and Dong Chengyan (董承宴) who resided within the Anrong Fortress. The three men established a plan that involved Didouju secretly opening the gates of the fortress to approaching Chinese forces. When the time came, Didouju opened the gates to a Chinese army who in turn entered the fortress and exhaustively killed all the Tibetan generals. Upon occupying the fortress, the Tang dispatched an imperial censor by the name of Xu Yuan (許遠) who supervised the installation of a new garrison force inside the fortification. Retaking the stronghold was short-lived as the Tibetans sent a retaliatory force that invaded Weizhou and subsequently besieged the Anrong

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<sup>168</sup> Helmut Hoffman, "Early and Medieval Tibet," 381.

fortress. An army from the capital region of Guanzhong (關中) was dispatched to relieve the entrapped Chinese garrison.<sup>169</sup>

In 749, Xianyu Zhongtong (魚于仲通) was recommended as Jiannan's military-commissioner. Under his oversight, Yunnan descended into chaos as the Man tribes as well as Nanzhao turned against the Chinese. Upon arriving at Chengdu, Xianyu Zhongtong appointed Zhang Qiantuo (張虔陀) as local Prefect of the troublesome prefecture of Yaozhou (姚州). Soon Zhang Qiantuo began committing offenses and sowing discord amongst the local Man tribes. The trouble-making governor then angered the ruler Geluofeng (閣羅鳳), Piluoge's successor, when he demanded heavier taxes, shouted insults, and engaged in inappropriate sexual relationship with the ruler's wife and daughters. An infuriated Geluofeng then dispatched local Man tribesman to besiege the prefectural capital and kill the arrogant official. Surrounded by the enemy, Zhang resisted the Man forces until he was captured and killed in 750. All of Yaozhou then fell under Nanzhao's control.<sup>170</sup>

Upon losing Yaozhou (姚州) once more, as well as the entire state of Nanzhao, Xianyu Zhongtong launched a punitive expedition against the southern Man tribes he now viewed as ungrateful traitors. The initial force consisted of 80,000 men divided into two offensive columns who traveled southward on the roads of Guizhou and Rongzhou. Despite Xianyu's large force, the Tang met defeat against the southern natives, succumbing to an ambush at Lunan (瀘南). The defeat did not entirely sour the relationship between the Tang and Nanzhao, as Geluofeng thereupon dispatched a messenger with an apologetic letter. Within the letter Geluofeng admitted fault for supporting the rebels that seized Yaozhou and killed Zhang Qiantuo, and further

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<sup>169</sup> ZZTJ 214.6840, 6842.

<sup>170</sup> JTS 199.5280-81; ZZTJ 216.6901; XTS 22a.6270.

promised to release all Tang captives held at Kunming. Yet when the messenger arrived at Chengdu, Xianyu refused to accept the apology and had the messenger imprisoned. The embittered Xianyu then launched another attack into Yaozhou, west of the Erhai River (西洱河), suffering a similar defeat at the hands of Geluofeng. Now offended and hostile, Geluofeng abandoned the Tang state as his long-term ally, instead choosing to befriend Tibet to the west.<sup>171</sup>

Now with the help of Nanzhao as well as other Man tribes from the south, Tibet launched unrestrained raids into Southern Sichuan terrifying the local populace. In 752, Tang subjects occupying the borderlands and experiencing unprecedented devastation called upon the new appointed military-governor of Western Jiannan, Yang Guozhong (楊國忠), to secure the border and ensure the people's safety. The military-governor then adopted a plan to pacify the border through sending an army into southern Yunnan to attack Nanzhao directly. The aged Yang chose his subordinate Li Mi (李泌) to conduct the offensive deep into southern Yunnan. Humid conditions, unprepared soldiers, and inadequate supply lines inflicted more damage on the army than Nanzhao. More than eighty percent of the army, including Li Mi himself, perished either of subtropical diseases or by the hands of Nanzhao soldiers. Once again, the far southwest proved too different for conventional methods to control.<sup>172</sup>

If by this time China's enemies in the southwest had gained the upper hand, the revolt of An Lushan in 755 solidified Tibet's and Nanzhao's dominance. An ongoing quarrel and accusations by Yang Guozhong toward Tang military-governor and general An Lushan (安祿山), in the northeast area of Hebei (河北), had led the latter military-governor to amass a personal army for his own protection. When An Lushan felt cornered he rebelled and led his army to the

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<sup>171</sup> ZZTJ 216.6906.

<sup>172</sup> JTS 106.3242; ZZTJ 216.6906; ZZTJ 217.6926.

eastern capital Luoyang (洛陽). When the rebel forces neared Chang'an, emperor Xuanzong fled to Chengdu along with his entourage. Yet, soon after arriving in Sichuan, Xuanzong's son, Li Heng (李亨 posthumous title emperor Suzong 肅宗 r. 756-65), usurped the throne while seeking safety at Lingwu (靈武), to the northwest of the capital. Following the initial revolt, the Tibetans offered to send troops to end the rebellion, but Li Heng, suspecting duplicitous motives by the Tibetans, declined the proposal.<sup>173</sup> Whether Tibet truly desired to aid the crumbling dynasty cannot be determined. Yet the possibility that the foreign empire desired to reinstall the Tang without usurping territory or looting is unlikely. For amid the domestic crisis, China's rivals took the initiative to seize large tracts of territory. From the south, Nanzhao advanced an army and captured the Huitong Army (會同軍) garrisoned at Yegui (越巂). The army then entered Lizhou (黎州) and captured the Qingxiguan (清溪關) mountain pass to the south of Dadu river. Likewise, a reference in the *Zizhi tongjian kaoyi* (資治通鑒考異)<sup>174</sup> mentions Tibet took the opportunity of the rebellion to seize Guizhou (雋州). Another source further indicates that the local Prefect of Maozhou (茂州) during this period took in the local governor of Weizhou (維州), indicating that Weizhou had come under attack at this point.<sup>175</sup>

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<sup>173</sup> JTS 10.246; ZZTJ 218.6992; Wang Pu 王溥, *Tang hui yao* 唐會要 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1955), 97.1733.

<sup>174</sup> The lead Chinese historian of the *Zizhi tongjian* 資治通鑒, Sima Guang 司馬光, in 1086 presented his history of China to the Song emperor. Along with the history, two other works were presented, one of which was the *Zizhi tongjian kaoyi* 資治通鑒考異, consisting of thirty chapters which provided a critical examination of historical events that possessed conflicting evidence. The *kaoyi* also provides quotations from many works now lost. For a more complete overview see Denis Twitchett and Howard L. Goodman, *A Handbook for T'ang History*. Ta-tuan Ch'en and Frederick W. Mote co-editors, Princeton Research Manual Series (Princeton [NJ]: Princeton University Press, n.d.), 36-37.

<sup>175</sup> ZZTJ 218.7000; *Quan Tangwen* 全唐文, chapter 377 Yang Tang 楊譚, "Bingbu zou jiannan jiedu po xishan zei lubu 兵部奏劍南節度破西山賊露布," as quoted in Yu Xianhao 郁賢皓, *Tang Cishi Kao Quan Bian* 唐刺史考全編 (Nanjing: Anhui daxue chubanshe, 2000), 3110.



It seems only logical that with the collapse of Tang authority, Jiannan's government officials took efforts to consolidate control within their respective districts. Already a place difficult to administer, Jiannan saw bureaucratic control ebb following the rebellion. Many Jiannan officials took advantage of the chaos to pursue individual rule and risked rebellion. He Tao (何滔), a local Prefect of Guozhou (果州) in the neighboring Shannan west circuit, rose in rebellion and captured the local official Yang Jilu (楊劑魯). This forced the already strained provincial-governor of eastern Jiannan, Lu Yuanyu (盧元裕), to lead the suppressive forces to quell the aberrant governor.<sup>176</sup> To the west, the Sichuan prefecture army under Guo Qianren (郭千仞) and his followers also rebelled. Ending this revolt required six armies of both cavalry and foot soldiers under the leadership of Li Huan (李岨), now western Jiannan's military-governor. Even a lesser official by the name of Xu Zhidao (徐知道) led his troops in a rebellion in 762. Xu occupied a strategic garrison which prevented western Jiannan's military-governor Yan Wu from suppressing the revolt. Xu's superior general Li Zhonghou (李忠厚) managed to enter the garrison and killed the rebellious official, supposedly reinstating peace in Jiannan.<sup>177</sup>

Perhaps less surprisingly, the lack of stable bureaucratic control coincided with largescale rebellions of Man tribes. Internal rebellions abounded concurrently with a wave of tribal revolts indicating that the effects of An Lushan's rebellion reached beyond the bureaucratic system. A massive rebellion of the Man occurred in 759 enveloping Jiannan in chaos. The extent of the rebellion passed through the prefectures of Qiongzhou, Jianzhou (簡州), Jiazhou (嘉州), Meizhou (眉州), Luzhou (瀘州), Rongzhou (戎州), and supposedly other prefectures.<sup>178</sup> In

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<sup>176</sup> ZZTJ 218.7027.

<sup>177</sup> ZZTJ 218.7027; ZZTJ 222.7130.

<sup>178</sup> ZZTJ 221.7085, 7092.

southern Qinghai (青海) near the headwaters of the Dadu, the Nula (奴剌) tribes revolted and managed to overpower the city of Chenggu before attacking Lizhou (黎州).<sup>179</sup> To the far south the Xiyuan Man (西原蠻), who inhabited the southern circuit of Lingnan (嶺南), resisted local Tang officials and seized the prefecture of Guizhou (桂州) for a short period.<sup>180</sup>

Meanwhile the court, now resisting the rebellion, attempted to regain authority and rein in those officials across the empire that possessed both autonomy and military strength. Not all of the officials willingly rejoined the dynasty, and in some cases the court took measures to reprimand and bring these governors back into the imperial system by force. During the period, Liu Zhan (劉展) the Prefect of Songzhou (松州) became one such target, as the local governor had accumulated great military power. Still living the aftermath of the revolt, imperial court officials dispatched a memorial to the emperor arguing the dangers of Liu Zhan's strength and habit of disobeying orders, indicating: "Zhan is stubborn and does not follow orders when he receives them, and his family name complies with [bad] omens; we call upon you to eliminate him." Fearing for his life after the memorial, Liu Zhan abandoned his post and fled for safety into southern Sichuan.<sup>181</sup>

In 763, a Tibetan force from the northwest managed to cross the Wei river and occupied the capital for fifteen days.<sup>182</sup> At the same time, Tibet dispatched armies that seized the important border prefectures of Songzhou (松州), Weizhou (維州), and Baozhou (保州) (in the north) as well as the Yun mountains (雲山) located in northwest Yunnan. The military-governor Gao Shi (

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<sup>179</sup> In 762, the Nula tribe 奴剌 along with Tangut tribes attacked the northwest before heading southward into Lizhou 黎州 causing the local prefect to flee. See ZZTJ 222.6105, 7119, 7121.

<sup>180</sup> ZZTJ 221.7092.

<sup>181</sup> ZZTJ 221.7098.

<sup>182</sup> JTS 196b.5237.

高適) could not organize an effective defense and the three prefectures as well as all the prefectures on the eastern edge of the Tibetan plateau fell to the Tibetans. An immense amount of the land became lost to the Tang, forcing the emperor to merge eastern and western Jiannan into one circuit. Gao Shi, who had been unable to stop the fall of the three prefectures, was recalled. In his place the court appointed Yan Wu (嚴武) who unlike his predecessor managed to defeat a 70,000-person army capturing the city of Danggoucheng (當狗城) in 764.<sup>183</sup>

### *Conclusions*

Throughout the first half of the dynasty, the Tang endeavored to gain hegemony and control over the unfamiliar southwest. Employing strategies of both violence and peace, the Tang by the end of the seventh century had gained enough influence to claim authority over much of Sichuan and Yunnan. In reality, Tang authority remained inconsistent and pockets of the countryside lay beyond the reach of many officials posted to newly established prefectures. To succeed the Tang turned to local chieftains to govern tribal areas, or used bribery, or imposed military force. In some cases, Tang bureaucrats stuck on the fringes of the state looked to find a pragmatic method of administration; sometimes such methods involved brutality and corruption. At other times the methods of officials involved respect, participation, and goodwill.

The rise of Tibet came almost in tandem with the rise of the Tang dynasty, creating competition for resources. Sichuan possessed wealth and grain and thus became a desired target for Chinese and foreigners alike. However as both states vied for hegemony, tribal groups also became a valuable resource desired by both empires. As both Tang China and Tibet encroached

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<sup>183</sup> ZZTJ 222.7150; ZZTJ 223.7159, 7167.

on the tribal lands, the local peoples increasingly became trapped in the contested and ever-changing frontier zone. Attempting to survive as pawns in a larger geopolitical game, native tribes looked to side with whichever state appeared to possess more power and strength.

In the far southwestern prefecture of Yaozhou (姚州), tribal customs and affiliations prevented China from gaining influence or bureaucratic control. Local officials caught in a quagmire of how to properly administer and appease the locals often found violence, corruption, or disobedience effective ways to handle difficult posts in the wilds of Yunnan. On occasion the actions of these officials alienated or angered the local Man who rose against the Chinese, once more looking to Tibet as the better ally. The formation of the Kingdom of Yunnan under Puluoge helped China unite the difficult and loosely-formed tribal groups within southern Yunnan into a single political unit. Despite friendly foreign relations between the two states during the first half of the eighth century, the Yunnanese, much like other tribal groups of the southwest, changed loyalties to Tibet when Tang governance became unbearable.

Possessing the loyalties of local forces not only indicated which regional state held hegemony on the border, but also indicated which state possessed the roadways within the crucial border prefectures of Guizhou (雋州) and Weizhou (維州). As locals oversaw and maintained the roads, retaining a relationship with local tribesman could provide valuable aid in war, or likewise provide guidance to armies navigating the mountainous terrain. As the Tang dynasty continued to exert more and more control in the region during the second half of the dynasty, these roads, and the prefectures that contained them, became increasingly important for the states that possessed them. Roads allowed entry into Jiannan, and possessing these roads, in many ways, meant possessing the local natives who inhabited the same areas.

## Chapter 5 - The Role of the Man: Post-755 to the End of the Tang, c. 763-906 A.D.

Tibet prospered from the An Lushan Rebellion by seizing the important territory within the strategic prefectures of Guizhou and Weizhou that pushed Jiannan's borders inwards. Through 678, the Tang struggled to repel continued intrusions by the Tibetans into the southwest. Furthermore, despite the official end of the rebellion in 763, the Tang remained focused domestically. The situation worsened as Tibet launched a largescale invasion in 763, seizing Songzhou (松州), the rest of Weizhou (維州), and Baozhou (保州), as well as portions of the Yun mountains (雲山) located in northwestern Yunnan. As China lost immense lands in the immediate years after the revolt, the loss of further territory had a profound impact on Chinese administration in western Sichuan. The situation appeared bleak, and the local military-governor Gao Shi (高適) failed to stop the advancing Tibetan army and watched as the three prefectures subsequently fell into enemy hands. The loss of territory only exacerbated the losses incurred after the initial rebellion in 755. As western Jiannan shrank, the Tang court decided to absorb what was left of western Jiannan (西川) into the eastern division. Unable to act against Tibet, the Tang recalled Gao Shi and appointed a new military-governor Yan Wu (嚴武), who now assumed responsibility for defense of the province.<sup>184</sup>

Under Yan Wu, Jiannan managed to stop the continued pressure of Tibet and reclaim some cities lost earlier to the Tibetans. Once in Chengdu, Yan Wu had obtained the services of

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<sup>184</sup> Sima Guang 司馬光, *Zizhi tongjian* 資治通鑒 (Beijing: Guji chubanshe, 1956), 244.7158-59 [hereafter ZZTJ].

Cui Ning (崔寧),<sup>185</sup> a local official from the neighboring western Shannan circuit (山南西道), who helped him to end rampant brigandage along the roads of Lizhou (黎州). Then in 764, Cui Ning led an army against 70,000 Tibetan soldiers, managing to inflict a crucial defeat and bringing several cities previously lost back under Chinese control. Upon defeating the enemy, Yan Wu showered Cui Ning with treasures for his actions.

The situation changed when Yan Wu died, and the emperor appointed Ying Yi (英乂) provincial-governor, much to the chagrin of Cui Ning who also desired the post. Animosity existed between the two officials, and each official came to launch a coordinated attack on the other, employing false claims of rebellion and foreign invasion to justify each official's military actions.<sup>186</sup> When Ying Yi later accompanied the emperor on an outing to conduct divination rituals, Cui Ning entered Chengdu with his army and seized the capital claiming that Ying Yi had rebelled – despite Ying Yi currently aiding the emperor. Without access to his troops or support from local governors, Ying Yi fled to Jianzhou (間州), a western prefecture of Jiannan, whose local prefect received the governor before killing him and delivering his head to Cui Ning to gain favor.<sup>187</sup> The event divided Jiannan, as officials supported either Cui Ning or the now deceased Ying Yi. Thereupon a civil war ensued within the region, and in the vacuum left by Ying Yi's death, the emperor appointed Du Hongjian (杜鴻漸) as Jiannan's military-governor.

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<sup>185</sup> The JTS employs the name Cui Ning 崔寧 throughout the official's biographical chapter. However, the ZZTJ employs the name Cui Gan 崔旰 until the year 775, at which point the record begins to call the official Cui Ning. See for name Cui Gan see ZZTJ 7186, 7191; for the first mention of Cui Ning see ZZTJ 225.7273.

<sup>186</sup> During the winter 765, Cui Ning was appointed an assistant official in the western mountains. As military-governor of Jiannan, Ying Yi recalled Cui to Chengdu, but Cui declined the summons claiming he was making preparations against a Tibetan attack. Ying Yi then led an army against Cui Gan, claiming he was "coming to Gan's aid because of a mutinous local garrison." Because of a snow storm, Cui managed to inflict a defeat on Ying Yi who fled back to Chengdu with only a fifth of his original soldiers. See ZZTJ 224.7186-87.

<sup>187</sup> ZZTJ 244.7186-87.

Meanwhile local military generals Bo Maolin (柏茂琳), Yang Zilin (楊子琳), and Li Changkui (李昌夔) rose to resist Cui Ning, who now waged war against a neighboring military-governor to the east. Cui, a resilient and an artful strategist, managed to defeat the rival military-governor and returned safely to Chengdu. When Du Hongjian reached Chengdu, Cui Ning had assumed the responsibilities of Chengdu's governor and received Du hospitably. Unable to rectify the errant actions of Cui Ning, emperor Daizong reluctantly agreed to make Cui Ning military-governor of Jiannan and promoted Bo, Yang, and Li to governors of their respective prefectures.<sup>188</sup>

Amidst the backdrop of Cui Ning's appointment as military-governor of Jiannan, the southwestern border lay open, yet quiet. When Tibet occupied Chang'an, the balance of power had overwhelmingly shifted in Tibet's favor. Tibet had greatly reduced the size of Jiannan and briefly seized the capital for fifteen days in 763. Now Tibet stood as the dominant force in the southwest and focused its attention to the northwestern peripheral areas of the Tang empire – except for the three invasions repelled by Cui Ning discussed below. Tibet thus continued through the early 780s to seize a series of cities located in the area of modern-day Xinjiang province. From north to south along the western border of the Tang state, Tibet had effectively severed China's connection to the western world as well as to India in the south. China thus lay enfeebled. A peace treaty between Tibet and the Tang brought temporary peace in 783. However, in the same year, the rebel Zhu Ci (朱此) led a serious revolt that gained the support of the Uighur tribes. Extremely weak and unable to muster an adequate defense against Zhu Ci and the Uighurs, the Tang formed an alliance with the Tibetans, who dispatched soldiers led by a

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<sup>188</sup> ZZTJ 224.7191.

Chinese general against the rebels.<sup>189</sup> After saving Chang'an, the Chinese court failed to adhere to the terms of the agreement, choosing to deny the rewards promised the Tibetans for helping the Chinese. Naturally the Tibetans became angry and considered the peace treaty of 783 broken.<sup>190</sup>

In the southwest, the conflict over Cui Ning's appointment disappeared almost as quickly as it had occurred, and Cui now acted as western Jiannan's military-commissioner for the next fifteen years. Under his authority, the region was peaceful for close to a decade. However, Tibet and Nanzhao, still possessing the territory lost after An Lushan's revolt, again started yearly invasions in 775 that continued until Cui Ning's death in 783. Not all the raids ended in defeat for the Chinese, as Cui Ning managed to counter largescale Tibetan attacks containing Qiang(羌) and Man (蠻) tribesman in 775, 776, and 777.<sup>191</sup>

During the winter of 779, Tibet and Nanzhao joined forces and attacked the northwestern borders of Jiannan. The northern forces entered through Fuzhou (扶州) and headed south into Maozhou (茂州) to the north of Yizhou (益州) and the capital Chengdu. The other forces headed eastward across the paths entering Lizhou (黎州) and Yazhou (雅州) to the west of Chengdu. Cui Ning, still the military-governor of Jiannan, had travelled to the Tang capital and therefore remained away during the attack. Without his presence, local Tang officials fled from the enemy armies, seeking shelter within the mountains and valleys. Fear gripped the capital, and emperor Dezhong (德宗 r. 779-805), newly enthroned, desired to send Cui Ning back to Sichuan to mount

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<sup>189</sup> Christopher Beckwith, *The Tibetan Empire in Central Asia: A History of the Struggle for Great Power among Tibetans, Turks, Arabs, and Chinese during the Early Middle Ages* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1987), 149-150.

<sup>190</sup> ZZTJ 224.7203.

<sup>191</sup> ZZTJ 225.7229, 7237, 7249.



a coordinated resistance. However, court politics intervened and Yang Yan (楊炎), then acting as the deputy head of the Chancellery (門下省), informed the emperor of Cui Ning's growing power in Jiannan. Yang Yan stated:

Shu's territory is rich and abundant; it has been fourteen years that Ning has controlled it and the court has lost its external storehouse. Although Ning has come to court, [his] entire army still guards his rear and the taxes and tribute do not come in; it is the same as being without Shu. Moreover, Ning was originally of the same rank as the various generals but took advantage of disorder to obtain his position – [hence the court's] awesome commands are not extended [to Shu]. Now, if we send him back we must fear the possibility that he will be without merit; in the event that he does have merit, his righteousness cannot be snatched away. In this case, the loss of Shu's territory would be certain, and victory also could not be obtained.<sup>192</sup>

Yang Yan then asked the emperor to send Zhu Ci, not yet an enemy of the state, instead of Cui Ning to Jiannan to end the Tibetan invasion. Dezong agreed to the proposal, and Cui Ning<sup>193</sup> did not return to Jiannan.

From the capital, the imperial court appointed Li Sheng(李晟) to lead a force of 4,000 imperial guards and 4,000 other soldiers to save Jiannan from the Tibetan attack. Additional orders called upon soldiers from Fanyang (范陽) commanded by Quhuan of Anyi (安邑曲環) to march southward and penetrate Jiannan from the north, successfully allowing the Tang to reclaim Weizhou (維州) and Maozhou (茂州) territory. Meanwhile Li Sheng's forces advanced to the Dadu River (大渡河), inflicting another defeat on Tibet. With the campaign conducted during the winter months, the natural climate worked to the advantage of the Chinese, as the Nanzhao and Tibetan forces succumbed to hunger and cold temperatures that killed as many as 80,000 to 90,000 soldiers. The Nanzhao ruler, witnessing the defeat of his army, constructed a fortress at Jumie (苴咩城) that extended into Chinese territory by fifteen *li*.<sup>194</sup>

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<sup>192</sup> ZZTJ 226.7270.

<sup>193</sup> Cui Ning in 783 became accused of supporting Zhu Ci, who at that point held the capital and was plotting to usurp the throne for himself. The emperor then ordered Cui Ning killed.

<sup>194</sup> One *li* 里 is equal to roughly 500 meters, so the border extended 5,000 meters into Tang territory. ZZTJ 226.7270

Problems continued to arise in Jiannan in the years following the attack on Chengdu. In 783, Zhang Fei (張朏) an assistant minister within Chengdu, also revolted. The official along with mutinous local soldiers managed to seize and occupy the capital, forcing Zhang Tingshang (張廷賞), Cui Ning's successor, to flee north to the safety of Hanzhou (漢州) prefecture. The emperor then ordered the Lu Tou (鹿頭) garrison to recapture Sichuan's capital. After his troops had defeated and the city retaken, was executed along with his entire family. Zhang Tingshang then returned to Chengdu.<sup>195</sup>

### ***Back to the Top: Wei Gao, the Dongman, and Tibet from 785-806***

In the decades leading up to the late 780s, Tibet conducted ongoing yearly raids into Tang territory plundering the border prefectures. By 785 the Tang court had largely dealt with the fallout of An Lushan's rebellion and pieced the state back together. Much like a broken vase glued back together, the Tang state appeared recomposed albeit extremely fragile. Some governors in the areas where the rebellion had fermented would remain virtually independent of the state for the rest of the dynasty.<sup>196</sup> Now feeling the situation in the capital regions had become stable, emperor Dezong turned his attention to the southwest, appointing Wei Gao the new provincial-military governor in 785. The selection of Wei Gao was highly beneficial for the Tang, as Wei would successfully pacify the southwestern borders for the next three decades and achieve greater success than any other military-governor that preceded him until his death in

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<sup>195</sup> ZZTJ 229.7378.

<sup>196</sup> For a full account of the Hebei governors following the rebellion see Liu Xu 劉昫, *Jiu Tangshu* 舊唐書 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1975), 12.337-345 [hereafter JTS].

806. However, despite Wei Gao's successes, the dynasty remained fragile, and Wei administered the southwest autonomously, wielding *de facto* authority over all the region's affairs.

Once Wei Gao arrived in Chengdu, the new governor observed that when the Tibetans invaded Jiannan, the enemy generals enlisted tens of thousands of Yunnanese Man soldiers to act as the army's vanguard. Cunningly, Wei Gao sought to deplete the Tibetans' access to this resource of manpower. Therefore in 789, Wei Gao dispatched a local magistrate named Cui Zuoshi (崔佐時) to entice the Nanzhao kingdom to distance themselves from the Tibetans and return to the Tang as an ally. Yimouxun (異牟尋) received Cui Zuoshi and his message from Wei Gao warmly. Afterwards the Nanzhao ruler dispatched Dongman (東蠻) tribesmen who followed three different routes to Tang territory and correspondingly were sent forward to Wei's court. As Nanzhao became warmer to the Tang, Guizhou, which for the past twenty years had been controlled by the Nan Man (南蠻) tribe, who relied on Tibet, returned to China and once again began paying tribute.<sup>197</sup>

The following year Wei Gao commanded his general Wang Youdao (王有道) to lead an elite force into Tibetan territory. In the offensive the Tang forces allied with the local Lianglin Man (兩林蠻) as well as Dongman (東蠻) tribes of Guizhou (嵩州), who recently had submitted to the Tang, and inflicted a major defeat upon the Tibetan governors of Qinghai (青海) and Lacheng (臘城) territories. The Tibetan armies suffered a colossal defeat and the Chinese either beheaded or captured the leaders. Many of the Tibetan soldiers decided to avoid capture and jumped to their deaths in a local ravine. To the delight of the Tang, the victory also brought the death of a local Tibetan official who had a prominent reputation for routine raids across the

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<sup>197</sup> JTS 140.3822-23; ZZTJ 232.7453.

border. Despite the battle's impact on the power dynamics of the borderlands, Wei Gao had achieved victory from befriending the local Man tribes who resided within the border prefecture of Guizhou, only reiterating the geographic importance of the prefecture and the people who resided there.<sup>198</sup>

Previously, Geluofeng had died, bringing Yimouxun (異牟尋) to power as the ruler of Nanzhao. Despite the ill-feelings that had caused the southern state to turn against the Tang in the early 750s, Yimouxun had grown disillusioned with the Tibetans, and his lead general Zheng Hui (鄭回) advised the Nanzhao ruler to switch allegiances back to the Chinese. Meanwhile Wei Gao had grown to believe that most Man tribes in Yunnan disliked Tibet's frequent demands for Yunnanese soldiers and viewed China favorably because the Tang did not enforce corvée labor in the far southwest at that time. Therefore, Wei Gao began a campaign to win over the local chieftains and extended amnesty to local leaders who desired to change allegiances and surrender. The order was only the start of a larger campaign on behalf of Wei Gao, who dispatched yearly letters to Yimouxun in an effort to entice the ruler to turn against Tibet.<sup>199</sup> Although Yimouxun desired to ally with the Tang, he still feared the power of Tibet and therefore waited seven years, until the spring of 794, to break the state's relationship with the Tibetans. When Nanzhao once again became an ally of China, the power dynamics in the region shifted one again in favor of the Tang. The event then left Tibet isolated, and Yimouxun took advantage of the situation to attack Tibetan cities in Yunnan, seizing all of Yunnan's territory and establishing a new capital at Dali.<sup>200</sup>

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<sup>198</sup> JTS 140.3833; ZZTJ 233.7519.

<sup>199</sup> ZZTJ 232.7477, 7489.

<sup>200</sup> JTS 197.5258-59; ZZTJ 232.7479, 7513, 7515-16, 7517, 7537, 7547.

The success of Wei Gao at the turn of the ninth century came from the military-governor's knowledge of surrounding terrain and his support from local natives. From 798 to 801, Wei Gao again raised armies and launched repeated attacks that all inflicted heavy defeats upon the Tibetans. Through these attacks the Tang managed to reclaim Guizhoucheng (雋州城), as well as an additional seven cities and five Tibetan garrisons that also brought the surrender of 3,000 people who were then settled within Tang territory.<sup>201</sup> In addition, often major contingents of Wei Gao's attacking forces contained local natives who provided a significant number of soldiers as well as contributed valuable knowledge of the region. Thus in 801, Wei Gao launched a major offensive against Tibet, seeking to penetrate deep into Tibetan territory. Ordered by emperor Dezhong to draw Tibetan troops away from the battles occurring in the northwest, the offensive involved a nine-pronged attack that entered Tibet from Weizhou (維州) and Songzhou (松州) in the north, and Yaozhou (姚州) in the south. To mobilize the attacks, Wei Gao utilized the major highways that connected Guizhou (雋州), Lizhou (黎州), Qiongzhou (邛州), and Yazhou (雅州) to dispatch the various armies he required.<sup>202</sup> The southern army comprised 4,000 Mosuo Man (磨些蠻) and Dongman (東蠻) tribesmen, whose goal was to seize Kunmingcheng (昆明城) and Nuojicheng (諾濟城). Meanwhile, Chinese forces in the north led by Xing Ci (邢玘) took the northern routes with orders to take the city of Weizhou (維州城) before heading deeper into Tibetan territory. Soldiers here most likely followed the northern highway that connected Tibet with Weizhou, and therefore the purpose of taking Weizhoucheng involved both reclaiming old Tang territory and possessing a strategic location for supply routes. Tibet then

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<sup>201</sup> ZZTJ 236.7599.

<sup>202</sup> JTS 140.3834.

launched a counterattack from the northwest, drawing forces away from the Tarim Basin, but the Tang soldiers, knowledgeable of the army's objectives, laid an ambush and soundly defeated the 100,000 person army that included the well-known Tibetan general Lunmangre (論莽熱).<sup>203</sup> As the attack ended and the Tang armies returned to the east, the Tang, under Wei Gao, had effectively restored all territory lost after the An Lushan rebellion.

During the last decade of the eighth century, the military success of the Tang did not go unnoticed by the local natives, many of whom changed their allegiance to the new dominant regional power. During the spring of 794, Wei Gao had received 20,000 households of Qiang (羌), Man (蠻), and other tribal clans of the Western Mountains (西山) and had personally escorted the families for a time on route to the capital.<sup>204</sup> A year later the Tang seized Kunming taking captive two enemy Nanzhao kings. Shortly thereafter a Man tribe chieftain named Gao Wantang (高萬唐) with more than twenty people surrendered to Wei Gao.<sup>205</sup> Of greater significance in the outcome of the 801 campaigns was the defection of two Tibetan generals, Ying Ying (嬰嬰) and Ma Dingde (馬定德), who pledged their allegiance to the Tang along with eighty-seven other generals and 20,000 villagers. Ying Ying was the governor-general (節度) of Nanggong (囊貢), Lacheng (臘城) and another nine prefectures, and Ma Dingde was his superior officer. Ma, an educated man who had studied military texts, became influential for his knowledge of the region's many mountains and rivers that he now employed for the Tang's advantage. Wei Gao found Ma Dingde a valuable man and made the chieftain an advisor. Strategically, Ma employed the Tang postal system to deliver critical intelligence on Tibetan affairs to Tang generals on the

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<sup>203</sup> JTS 140.3834; JTS 196.5259; ZZTJ 236.7597; ZZTJ 236.7599.

<sup>204</sup> ZZTJ 234.7551.

<sup>205</sup> ZZTJ 234.7570.

front lines. Because of Ma's actions, the Tang managed to counter all of Tibet's attacks during the period.<sup>206</sup>

By 804, the Tang had reversed the balance of power and now held the allegiance of most border tribes and the crucial border prefectures, placing regional hegemony firmly in their own hands. Furthermore, in the same year the Tibetan ruler died, reducing Tibet's incentive to continue waging war against China.<sup>207</sup> What then developed from Wei Gao's efforts in the southwest was nearly two decades of peace on the borders. The military-governor had managed to intertwine Tang bureaucracy, tribal alliances, and foreign diplomacy throughout the cities and settlements of Jiannan, a feat no governor before him had achieved. Wei Gao recognized that local groups possessed strength, and unlike other frontier governors, looked to strengthen relationships with these groups rather than alienate them. Besides including the Man tribesman in his governmental affairs, Wei Gao also looked to support the local people by such actions as eliminating land taxes for three years or teaching local artisans Chinese tool-making. Wei Gao's connection to the locals lasted long after his death, so that later in the ninth century he became a local land deity for some of Yunnan's tribes.<sup>208</sup> Furthermore, by bringing Nanzhao back to the side of the Tang, China now possessed a potential ally that could be called upon to supply troops should Tibet decide to attack.

The decades prior to 820 appear to have bred peace along the borders of the southwest, altering little with the occasional border disturbances or rebellion. The borders even remained intact during the brief civil war initiated by Wei Gao's successor Liu Pi (劉闢) in 806. Peace

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<sup>206</sup> The *Jiu Tangshu* Tibetan chapter emphasizes the Ying Ying was a great strategist and that Dingde possessed knowledge of the region and utilized the Tang postal system to communicate with frontline generals. The *Zizhi tongjian* and Wei Gao's biographical chapter in the *Jiu Tangshu* attribute the Tang success solely to Ma Dingde. JTS 140.3834; JTS 196.5259-60; ZZTJ 236.7593.

<sup>207</sup> JTS 196b.5261.

<sup>208</sup> ZZTJ 236.7620.

instead prevailed, a product of Wei Gao's legacy as the Tang continued to hold the strategic border prefectures and correspondingly still held the allegiances of many tribesmen. Likewise, Nanzhao now existed as a close Tang ally in the far south providing some reassurance that soldiers could be obtained from the southern state should need require. At Chang'an, emperor Xianzong (憲宗 r. 805-820), who arose to power a year before Wei Gao's death, proved a strong leader. Over his fifteen years in power, Xianzong actively sought to reassert imperial power and managed to reverse, for the time being, the general trend of declining state power that had emerged following the An Lushan rebellion, roughly fifty years prior. Under the emperor's guidance, the Tang even managed to briefly bring the *de facto* independent governors of Hebei back under imperial control.<sup>209</sup> For the moment, internal and external dynastic strength bred peace and prosperity in Jiannan.

The peace broke in 819 as the Tang and Tibetans once again clashed over control in the Tarim Basin in the northwest. The attack had come as a surprise as months before a messenger from Tibet had arrived at the Tang capital presenting a message that expressed the Tibetans desired a peace treaty. Yet while the messenger resided at the capital, the Tibetans had dispatched their army that entered the western regions capturing large numbers of unprepared Chinese officials as well as horses and sheep. Despite the initial success, Tang generals in the area counterattacked, quickly retaking the lost cities and livestock. In the southwest, the war-mongering military-governor Wang Bo (王播) capitalized on the Tang success and invaded Tibet seizing Ehe (峨和), Qiji (淒雞) and other cities.<sup>210</sup> Because of the deception, the Tibetan messenger was seized, and Xianzong issued a decree denouncing the duplicitous nature of Tibet

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<sup>209</sup> For full account see JTS 12.337-345.

<sup>210</sup> JTS 196b.5262.



whose recent actions had violated decades of peace. Xianzong now questioned the diplomatic relationship between the two states, as the Tibetans had clearly become “against Tang benevolence.”<sup>211</sup> Although angered, Xianzong permitted the release of the messenger.

In 820 Xianzong abruptly died and rumors circulated that a palace eunuch had been behind the suspicious death of the emperor. Xianzong’s son, the crown prince Li You (李宥) posthumous title emperor Muzong 穆宗 r. 820-824), thereupon assumed the throne as emperor.<sup>212</sup> Unlike his predecessor, Li You proved unable to handle the powerful provincial governors on the borders. The Hebei governors that Xianzong managed to bring under control once again distanced themselves from the capital.<sup>213</sup>

With Li You now on the throne, Tibet and China began a period of friendly diplomacy between the capitals and violence on the borders. Upon the death of Xianzong, China in the second month dispatched messengers to deliver news of the mourning to the Tibetans. The following month, Tibet sent troops to attack Qingsaibao (青塞堡) in the Tarim Basin. Four months later the Tibetans dispatched an envoy to express the Tibetan ruler’s condolences over Xianzong’s death. Another three months later, Tibet again attacked cities in the northwest.<sup>214</sup> Yet the western empire also chose to expand southward, sending an army deep into the prefecture of Yazhou (雅州) to the west of Chengdu.<sup>215</sup>

In 821 the Tibetans approached the Tang expressing a sincere desire to establish a firm peace between the two states. Muzong supported a peace treaty, and preparations began on the

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<sup>211</sup> JTS 196b.5262.

<sup>212</sup> Li You received the post-humous title of Muzong 穆宗 and ruled from 820-824.

<sup>213</sup> For full account see JTS 12.337-345.

<sup>214</sup> JTS 196b.5263.

<sup>215</sup> ZZTJ 241.7775, 7785; Wang Pu 王溥, *Tang hui yao* 唐會要 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1955), 97.1738 [hereafter THY].

swearing and ritual ceremonies required. The treaty simply stated that the West “was for the great Tubo and the East was for the great Tang.” The agreement also articulated that neither country should “take over or attack each other; nor should either state regard [the other as] an enemy, nor invade the border.”<sup>216</sup> In many cases, the treaty was more successful than those of the past and instigated a period of ongoing diplomatic exchanges between the two states, with diplomats dispatched to each country’s capitals. In year 822, the Tibetans appeared before the Chinese emperor and requested both states agree on a formal delineation of the southwestern boundary. The following year, the Tibetans again appeared before the imperial court, this time requesting a map of the Wutai (五臺山) mountains as well as presenting to Li You a mélange of exotic animals that included a rhinoceros as well as a deer.<sup>217</sup> Interstate diplomacy continued intermittently through the late 830s. Yet by 840 diplomacy had ceased, as the Tibetan empire began to collapse, resulting from conflict over the royal succession in 838 and 842.<sup>218</sup>

### ***Du Yuanying, Li Deyu, and Interstate Tribal Connections: 829-840s***

In 829, conflict erupted inside Jiannan as the Man tribes rebelled against the military-governor Du Yuanying (杜元穎). Du apparently lacked knowledge of military affairs and reduced the amount of rations and garments for the soldiers under his command. Desiring adequate provisions and clothing, the soldiers roamed the countryside plundering food and equipment from the local Man tribes. Angered and left destitute, the tribal groups rose in rebellion against the soldiers and Du Yuanying. When news of the affair spread amongst the

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<sup>216</sup> JTS 196b.5265; ZZTJ 242.7799; THY 97.1738.

<sup>217</sup> JTS 197.5266; THY 97.1738.

<sup>218</sup> ZZTJ 247.7983,7969; Helmut Hoffman, “Early and Medieval Tibet,” *Cambridge History of Early Inner China*. Ed. Denis Sinor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987; reprint Taipei: SMC Publishing Inc., 1900), 388.

local tribes, a Nanzhao general by the name of Cuo Dian (嗟顛) planned an invasion into Jiannan to aid the terrorized locals. News of the impending attack had come to many local border prefects, who warned Du Yuanying. Yet the military governor, ever distrustful of his own border officials, hesitated to heed the warnings. Cuo Dian's invasion quickly seized the territories of Guizhou (靛州) and Rongzhou (戎州),<sup>219</sup> largely a result of the Man tribesman who eagerly volunteered to guide the advancing army through the region. Du Yuanying marched an army against Cuo Dian and inflicted two defeats upon his troops, who retreated northward. But when Du Yuanying pursued the army and fought a third battle in Qiongzhou (邛州), he met defeat and fled northward toward Chengdu.<sup>220</sup>

Cuo Dian then followed the local foot paths northward and besieged Chengdu, where Du Yuanying now manned the walls and organized a defense. The emperor now called armies from the eastern province of Jingnan (荊南) as well as Xingyuan (興元) to alleviate the siege, and gave command of all western and eastern Sichuan to Guo Zhao (郭釗), then military-governor of Jiannan's eastern circuit.<sup>221</sup> The court also called upon general Dong Zhongzhi (董重質) to lead a joint army of soldiers from Taiyuan (太原) and Fengxiang (鳳翔) in the northwest southward to alleviate the siege. When Dong Zhongzhi's forces closed in on Sichuan, the general began an exchange of letters with Cuo Dian over the reasons for the attack. Within the correspondence,

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<sup>219</sup> Altogether the distance that separated western Guizhou from eastern Rongzhou is considerable, and an enormous journey for an army proceeding eastward through both prefectures. Although no record exists, there is reason to speculate that two armies attacked. One army entered through the paths that connected Guizhou to Yaozhou in the south, therefore allowing the army to head north along the main highway. The other army advanced north along the Tang highway that extended northeast from Kunming and ran parallel to the Yangtze river to the east. Also, the *Zizhi tongjian* (p. 7868) mentions an attack on Zizhou 梓州 to the east of Chengdu at the same time Cuo Dian was conducting his siege of Chengdu in 829, indicating perhaps another force existed to the east.

<sup>220</sup> ZZTJ 224.7864.

<sup>221</sup> Called Dongchuan 東川 during this period.

Cuo Dian described his actions as retaliatory for injustices incurred from border raids committed by Du Yuanying, and “for this reason had started military operations for revenge [against Du], that is all.” Cuo Dian remained at Chengdu for only ten days before retreating to the south, but not before conducting immense pillaging of the locals that included the enslavement of thousands of people. Once the Nanzhao army had returned to the south, Cuo Dian dispatched a letter to the capital expressing that he remained a loyal subject of the emperor. The Nanzhao general further articulated that the emperor should not punish the soldiers, but rather he should severely punish Du Yuanying to appease the anger of Sichuan’s people. The letter apparently convinced the emperor to demote Du Yuanying, who already had received a demotion to prefect of Shaozhou (邵州), once more reducing the former military-governor to an assistant official for the prefecture of Xunzhou (循州).<sup>222</sup>

Du Yuanying had disrupted decades of peace through his actions that caused harm to the many local tribesman under his control. Instead of a single isolated rebellion where the soldiers pilfered the local natives, the interconnectedness of the Man tribes on the border spread news of the injustice beyond Sichuan’s borders. Following patterns now centuries old, the local Man switched loyalties and welcomed another regional power – this time Nanzhao – to combat Tang maladministration. Cuo Dian, appealing to the plight of the locals and perhaps capitalizing on the situation, planned an attack. Locals not only provided no resistance for Cuo Dian, but in fact happily aided the foreign armies, enabling Nanzhao to seize two prefectures before Du Yuanying could appear with an army. There remained a lasting consequence, as the affair revealed the insufficient border security in the south. Cuo Dian’s invasions had effectively proven that

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<sup>222</sup> ZZTJ 244.7867-69.

Nanzhao forces could penetrate Jiannan territory and conduct successful attacks. In the aftermath of the attack, the Tang considered initiating a peace treaty with Nanzhao. Yet the treaty never materialized, and the small southern country now began harassing, raiding, and plundering the borders.<sup>223</sup>

In 830, Guo Zhao requested replacement because of ill health, and the emperor dispatched Li Deyu (李德裕) to the southwest to oversee western Jiannan. Raiders continued to cross the borders and caused massive devastation across the borderlands. The frequency of raids had reached such a point that Tang governors could not repair damage inflicted from earlier incursions in between attacks. To bring safety to the borders, the emperor ordered Li Deyu to conduct a study on the roads to the south of the Qingxiguan pass (清溪關) in Lizhou (黎州) just to the south of the Dadu River. Li Deyu followed orders and inquired into the paths to the south of the mountain pass, but also expanded his report to the surrounding areas. To acquire further information the military-governor discussed border affairs with local veteran soldiers. Likewise, Li Deyu also dispatched all non-Han peoples employed by the army to explore the region in order to chart Sichuan's cities, mountains, and rivers. After learning the entire situation in Sichuan, Li Deyu dispatched his report to the emperor indicating that monitoring and destroying local roads, especially at the Qingxiguan pass, could not effectively stop Nanzhao's armies from attacking. The paths that did extend southward from the strategic mountain pass, he noted, "multiplied into immeasurable numbers of narrow paths," and each path, he admitted, was "maintained" by the local Dongman (東蠻) tribes. Rather than control the roads through defensive fortifications, the military-governor believed that constructing large mobile armies

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<sup>223</sup> ZZTJ 244.7868.

capable of maneuvering through the terrain would deter the enemy forces. Emperor Wenzong (文宗 r. 827-840) agreed with his proposal and permitted Li Deyu to restructure defenses in southern Sichuan in a way that included retraining troops, repairing fortresses, and stockpiling emergency grain.<sup>224</sup>

Despite Li Deyu's efforts, the following decade witnessed decline in Jiannan. The various armies that Li sought to improve continued to deteriorate. Furthermore, illness abounded causing the deaths of many of the region's older soldiers who succumbed to disease, causing Li Deyu to construct mass graves for the bodies. Chengdu called for more soldiers and requested recruits from the north as Jiannan could not afford to levy military service from the local artisans and farmers. Amid this hardship Nanzhao continued to raid, launching a largescale invasion in 831 that entered through the paths of Guizhou (雋州), seizing three counties and forcing Li Deyu to move the prefectural capital northward to Taidengcheng (臺登城).<sup>225</sup>

During the decade of the 830s, a curious event occurred, as a local Tibetan chieftain named Xi Damou (悉怛謀) looked to abandon his city within Tibetan-held portions of Weizhou (維州) when a power struggle inside the city caused him to seek protection from the Tang. Acting quickly in accordance with orders received from Li Deyu, Tang Prefect Yu Zangjian (虞藏劍), who administered Weizhou on the Tang side, entered Yu Damou's now un-garrisoned city. Despite what most Chinese officials might consider a victory, the imperial court disputed over the propriety of keeping the city. Li Deyu fought for keeping the city, stating in a memorial

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<sup>224</sup> ZZTJ 244.7872.

<sup>225</sup> ZZTJ 244.7878-79.

the importance of the city and Weizhou's territory for the Tibetans. Li Deyu, recounted the strategic importance of the prefecture as told to him by Yu Damou, stating:

Weizhou relies on lofty mountains and isolated peaks, facing the [Min] river on three sides; in the barbarians' onslaught to subdue Sichuan, it is the road for inserting troops into Han territory. Earlier when He and Long were both lost, this place alone held out. Tibet secretly married a woman into a prominent family of this prefecture, and twenty years later when [her] two sons were grown they surreptitiously opened the gate in the city wall, guiding troops into the city and causing it to fall and become known as "No Worries City" (無憂城). From this time on, [the Tibetans] were able to double their strength on the western border and had no worries about the southern route. Relying on the high ground to enter the imperial domain, they kept busy day after day. During the Zhenyuan period, Wei Gao had designs upon He and Huang, and needed this city as a starting point. Legions exhausted their strength in urgent assaults for several years; although they returned having captured Lunmangre, the city's resolute defenders could not be overcome.<sup>226</sup>

Court official Niu Sengru (牛僧孺), an archrival of Li Deyu, argued against keeping the city and held that possessing Tibetan lands "did not lessen Tibetan strength" and victory for China could only come from honesty and benevolence. Emperor Wenzong eventually agreed with Niu Sengru and ordered Yu Damou as well as the city of Weizhou returned to Tibet.<sup>227</sup>

### ***The Decline of Tibet: 849-860***

In 847, China once more began a period of increased hegemony across the southwest as Tibet, already in decline, continued to unravel from domestic conflict. Efforts in the northwest had successfully enabled the Tang to retake Hexi (河西). Although it was not located in the southwest, the retaking of the territory tilted the geopolitical power in the region toward China. Since the peace treaty of 821, both nations had largely limited violence toward each other. The need to keep peace for Tibet extended into the 830s, as the empire began experiencing a series of unfortunate events that continuously tested its stability. In 838, the ruler Khri U'i dum brstan

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<sup>226</sup> ZZTJ 247.7976-77.

<sup>227</sup> ZZTJ 244.7878.

rose to power by conducting a bloody coup that permitted his rise to power at the expense of creating factional cliques within his court. Power struggles ensued among figures of the Tibetan ruler's court which then became exacerbated with Khri U'i dum brtsan's death four years later in 842. In addition, Tibet during this time had suffered a serious earthquake and a series of floods that destroyed crops and led to massive famines.<sup>228</sup> Suffering and confusion among the people and instability and infighting amongst the Tibetan elite had pushed Tibet on a course of implosion that the state would not be able to recover from. However, in 847, Tibetan armies once more crossed the borders to plunder the borderlands. This time the Tibetans met a crushing defeat at the hands of the newly enthroned emperor Xuanzong (宣宗 r. 846-59), who led the Tang armies himself.<sup>229</sup> The defeat exposed Tibet's weakened state, causing the Tang to plan offensives to retake lost territory. The military-governor of the western Shannan circuit, Zheng Ye (鄭涯), managed to reclaim Jiannan's most northern prefecture of Fuzhou (扶州). Du Cong (杜悰), now western Jiannan's acting military-governor, also seized the opportunity to attack and claim all of Weizhou (維州).<sup>230</sup>

### ***Nanzhao's Rise and Dominance Across Jiannan: 861-880***

From 840 onward, the relationship between Nanzhao and China declined until 859 when outright war was declared. During the 840s and 850s, the Chinese had observed the small Nanzhao state as an opportunity to once again extend Chinese culture and "righteous"

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<sup>228</sup> Hans Bielenstein, *Diplomacy and Trade in the Chinese World, 589-1276* (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 245-246; Wang Zhenping, *Tang China in Multi-Polar Asia: A History of Diplomacy and War* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2013), 187.

<sup>229</sup> Wang Zhenping, *Tang China in Multi-Polar Asia: A History of Diplomacy and War*, 188.

<sup>230</sup> For information on Tibetan succession issues and decline see ZZTJ 247.7969; Records regarding the seizing of prefectures see ZZTJ 248.8040-41; Helmut Hoffman, "Early and Medieval Tibet," 388.



government into the frontiers. For Nanzhao tribal chieftains, the potential to obtain Chinese knowledge could bring immense benefit and potential employment as Tang-appointed local officials. It was therefore common during this period for tribal chieftains across the southwest to send their sons to Chengdu to study the Confucian classics and become local Tang officials. The custom reached a zenith in 859 and inundated the region with educated local natives all possessing imperial titles and ranks. The sheer number of these native appointees apparently had a major impact on imperial matters, and numerous Chinese officials from the North felt inclined to routinely denounce the tribal-affiliated officials in the many reports they sent to the capitals. Such practices caused problems in 859 when the emperor ordered Du Cong (杜悰), now in his eleventh year as military-governor, to economize what had become an inefficient and overstaffed administrative circuit. Du complied with the order and eliminated any redundant and unneeded officials under his control. This action unfortunately angered Nanzhao's ruler Fengyou (豐祐), who viewed Du Cong's choices as unfairly biased towards Han Chinese. Despite not agreeing with the removal of many Man tribesmen from government positions, the ruler continued to submit tribute and refrained from raiding the southwestern border.<sup>231</sup>

Then relations between the two empires crumbled as both Nanzhao's ruler, Fengyou, and emperor Xuanzong died in 860. Tension between the two states had risen over the elimination of the aforementioned local Man officials as well as both states having come into conflict in the protectorate of Annan (安南) in far southeast. Emperor Xuanzong's rejection of a gift rhinoceros offered by a Nanzhao envoy further had not helped to improve the growing rift between the two states.<sup>232</sup> In the midst of these issues, Fengyou died and the new ruler Qiulong (酋龍) voiced

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<sup>231</sup> ZZTJ 249.8078.

<sup>232</sup> THY 99.1766.

concern that the Chinese had failed to follow proper diplomatic etiquette during the dynastic transitions of both states, and informed the Chinese: “My state is also in mourning, and the court did not offer sacrifices for the deceased. Nor did it bestow an imperial edict upon the late king (故王).”<sup>233</sup> Only a few of the Tang officials present for Qiulong’s statement apparently gave the new ruler a courteous reception, and the officials returned to China to inform the emperor of his grievances. In reality Qiulong’s name had closely resembled Xuanzong’s and thus the Nanzhao leader possessed a taboo name, and for this reason, the Chinese emperor refused to send officials to present Qiulong with the title of king (王). Qiulong, frustrated, announced the title of his own dynasty as Dali (大禮) and sent soldiers to seize Bozhou (播州) in Jiannan’s eastern neighboring province of Qingzhong (黔中道).<sup>234</sup> Nanzhao and the Tang had once again become enemies.

As war with Nanzhao emerged, Du Cong memorialized to the emperor his fears that an uncertainty had swept the local natives employed in the armies. The governor listed a series of problems occurring in the circuit that he believed, if not solved, could only lead to mass rebellion or defection of the many tribes. One of the more immediate problems Du indicated involved a shortage of army rations causing insufficient and unpredictable meals for local forces. The interconnectedness of tribes across the region further spurred Du to request that the emperor formally recognize Qiulong as ruler of Nanzhao to appease the Man. A third potential strategy the military-governor proposed to alleviate tribal concerns involved the sending of Tang officials into the southwestern border areas to confer titles and ranks on the locals. This final idea, Du believed, would bring great results as it was “entirely in the interest of the common people.”<sup>235</sup>

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<sup>233</sup> ZZTJ 249.8078.

<sup>234</sup> ZZTJ 249.8078.

<sup>235</sup> ZZTJ 250.8095.

The emperor found Du's proposal promising and agreed to the strategy. Yet, the plan never came to fruition as two separate Nanzhao armies crossed the border: one employing the paths of Guizhou (雋州) in the south, and the other employing the northern routes through Weizhou (維州) to attack the strategic Qionglai (邛崃關) mountain pass.<sup>236</sup>

For the next twenty years of Qiulong's reign, the Nanzhao ruler launched yearly attacks on the Tang in Jiannan or in the southeast in modern-day Guangdong province or the protectorate of Annan (安南都護府) in northern Vietnam. In 863 to 864 an army once again attacked Guizhou (雋州). The local governor Yu Shizhen (喻士珍) managed to inflict a defeat upon the Nanzhao army. Understanding the crucial access Guizhou provided the Nanzhao troops, Yu issued an order to send 5,000 men from the Right Shence Army (右神策兵) in the northwest as well as all local circuit forces to establish a garrison within the prefecture. At the behest of Zhongwu's (忠武) great general Yan Qing (顏慶), who realized the defensive necessity of Guizhou, Yu further initiated a series of construction projects to construct city walls and fortifications within the prefecture cities of Xin'an (新安) and Herong (遏戎).<sup>237</sup> Construction on these defenses left the region vulnerable and Nanzhao launched another attack into the border areas. The attacking forces never approached the two cities, as loyal Lianglin (兩林) tribesmen, a derivative of the Dongman (東蠻), intercepted and defeated the Nanzhao army "killing and capturing very many soldiers." In the wake of the victory, a Nanzhao general named Du Shoulian (杜守連) disobeyed his orders and appeared upon the mountainous roads of Lizhou (黎州), and there surrendered with his troops to the Tang.<sup>238</sup>

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<sup>236</sup> ZZTJ 250.8095.

<sup>237</sup> ZZTJ 250.8108.

<sup>238</sup> ZZTJ 250.8109.

### *The Sichuanese Man Support Nanzhao: 860- 880*

The Tang had repelled a Nanzhao attack thanks to Guizhou's local Lianglin Man tribes who intervened. Within two years, the Tang had soured the relationship as well as violated a number of other tribes that inhabited the border. In 865, Yu Shizhen, who had defeated Man armies the previous year, now functioned as Guizhou's Prefect. Succumbing to corruption and violence, Yu extorted the Lianglin Man (兩林蠻), who had defeated a Nanzhao force themselves a year prior, in an effort to accumulate gold. When a Nanzhao force again entered Guizhou in the same year, the Man tribesman rebelled and opened the gates for the foreign army. Yu, taken by surprise and possessing no allies, subsequently surrendered to the enemy force.<sup>239</sup>

From 861 to 878 the Tang became embroiled in constant warfare against the Nanzhao ruler Qiulong who upon ascending the throne embraced a hostile attitude towards China. Open war had begun when Li Shiwang (李師望), the military-governor of the newly created Dingbian (定邊) circuit, killed a Nanzhao envoy by the name of Yang Qiuqing (楊酋慶) in 869.<sup>240</sup> During the period, the regional capital was attacked twice, and no defeat ever sent the enemy into a hasty retreat back towards the south. In addition, continual border raiding occurred amidst the larger invasions led by Qiulong in 869 and in 874 that managed to besiege Chengdu. During these times, the Tang failed to hold onto Guizhou (雋州), Weizhou (維州), and other border prefectures, enabling Nanzhao access into the Sichuan Plain.<sup>241</sup> In addition, both largescale invasions by Nanzhao managed to overcome traditional defensive areas like the Dadu River, Qingxiguan (青溪關), or Qionglaiquan (邛崃關) mountain passes that the Tang had come to

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<sup>239</sup> ZZTJ 250.8111.

<sup>240</sup> ZZTJ 250.8150.

<sup>241</sup> ZZTJ 251.8150, 8172; THY 99.1766.

rely on when defending against foreign foes.<sup>242</sup> Even following the first siege of Chengdu, a general renovation of the army and strengthening of Jiannan's defenses under the military-governor Lu Yan (路巖) failed to halt border raiding or, likewise, prevent Qiulong from besieging Chengdu a second time in 874.<sup>243</sup> Access enabled the foreign armies to reach Lizhou (黎州), forcing the Tang to deal with invading armies usually after they approached the strategic passes or Dadu River – deep within the territory of western Jiannan. At the start of the century, Wei Gao had successfully repelled both Tibetan and Nanzhao forces (before Nanzhao shifted loyalties to the Tang in 794) using native tribesman and roads to control border prefectures. Further Nanzhao's second invasion that reached Chengdu, had ended in an unofficial truce, as the Tang military-governor Gao Pian (高駢) had engaged in talks of peace with Qiulong while relying on troop reinforcements and established defenses. In short, Gao Pian had outlasted the enemy army, not achieved a decisive victory.<sup>244</sup>

For both China and Nanzhao, the cessation of hostilities only occurred when the two geopolitical powers had exhausted their own resources and manpower attacking each other. As no formal peace appeared from the diplomatic efforts of 878, a general ceasefire occurred as both sides looked towards domestic issues and neither possessed the means to mount another largescale attack. Qiulong's death in 877 helped quell animosity between the states, as his successor Longshun (隆舜) did not desire to continue hostility and instead continued efforts to establish an alliance with the Tang that ultimately never occurred.<sup>245</sup> By 880, both states had

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<sup>242</sup> For the invasion of 869 see ZZTJ 251.8150, 8154-55; for 874 invasions see ZZTJ 252.8171-73, 8175-77, 8183

<sup>243</sup> Lu Yan took effort to repair defensive structures, retrain soldiers, and refill grain reserves. The military-governor also created another circuit army and stationed the soldiers in Qiongzhou 邛州. See Hu Sanxing's 胡三省 commentary referencing the *Kaoyi* 考異 found within the *Zizhi tongjian*. ZZTJ 252.8165, 8168.

<sup>244</sup> ZZTJ 252.8175, 8176, 8177.

<sup>245</sup> ZZTJ 252.8185-86, 8190.

begun general declines. The Tang increasingly found themselves fighting internal rebellions, most notably those begun by Wang Xianzhi (王仙芝) in 874 and Huang Chao (黃巢) who instigated his rebellion a year later. Wang Zhenping gives the most compelling argument indicating the reason for Nanzhao's collapse, observing that the international community unified Yunnan's people and formulated the small state's entire identity.<sup>246</sup> The Tang had created Nanzhao for the purpose of gaining an ally in the southwest to counter Tibetan aggression. However, once Tibet and China no longer looked beyond their respective borders, no reason therefore existed for tribal Man groups to continue unifying behind a single leader.

After 880, foreign relations became marginalized as internal discord destabilized Jiannan. Xizong appeared in Chengdu because of trouble in the north, appointing Chen Jingxuan (陳敬瑄) military-governor over western Jiannan in 880. Corrupt but wielding Xizong's favor, Chen formed a group of officials called "Agents of Inquiring Affairs" (*xunshiren* 尋事人) who held the authority to forcibly take the wealth of the local peoples. Soon, rebellions erupted in Yazhou (雅州), Qiongzhou (邛州), and other areas.<sup>247</sup> The chaos enabled a Tang general by the name of Wang Jian to rise against Chen, ending any semblance of imperial bureaucratic control over the region. Local governors began running districts more as warlords than government officials. By 907, when the final Tang emperor Aidi (哀帝 r. 904-907) met his death, Wang Jian had successfully reunited all of Jiannan under his control. Declaring his own state of Shu (蜀), he soon encountered the same problems that Tang encountered, fighting the new Chinese dynasty in

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<sup>246</sup> Wang Zhenping, *Tang China in Multi-Polar Asia: A History of Diplomacy and War* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2013), 135.

<sup>247</sup> ZZTJ 254.8263.

the north, the Later Liang (后梁 907-923), as well as confronting the remnants of the Nanzhao kingdom to the south.<sup>248</sup>

## *Conclusions*

Chaos ensued in Jiannan following the An Lushan rebellion in 755. Even after the Tang had regained control of the capital and reasserted authority over most of the former empire, Jiannan continued to experience devastation. The revolt had enabled both Tibet and Nanzhao to seize all the vital territory on the borders, expanding into Chinese territory more than they had ever done before. With the collapse of borders came the abandonment of local natives who viewed the vulnerabilities of the Tang as an opportunity to resist Chinese administration and, in some cases, ally themselves with foreign enemies.

By befriending the local peoples, Wei Gao manage to expand the borders beyond even pre-An Lushan rebellion limits. In addition, by capturing all of Guizhou (嵩州), Weizhou (維州), and other border prefectures, the Tang controlled access points ensuring that no enemy soldiers could enter and employ the various pathways to enter the Sichuan Basin. Finally, the resubmission of Nanzhao checked Tibetan power, as now China had access to thousands of Nanzhao soldiers.

Man tribes under Tang governance associated more with Nanzhao than with imperial culture because of tribal associations and similar cultures. In the middle of the ninth century, the Tang alienated the local native groups in southwestern Jiannan. These offenses circulated amongst the interconnected Man tribes, causing the Chinese to once again go to war with

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<sup>248</sup> Hongjie Wang, "The Former Shu Regime of Wang Jian in the Late Tang and Early Five Dynasties 891-925" (PhD. diss., Brown University, 2008), 91-94, for information on the wars with Later Liang see chapter 4, 147-180.

Nanzhao. Unable to hold onto Guizhou and Weizhou, or secure the southern border, the Tang suffered repeated invasions that penetrated the Sichuan Basin – twice besieging Chengdu. War exhaustion and internal dynastic issues in central China naturally pacified the borders until Wang Jian unified the region under his rule.



## Chapter 6 - Concluding Remarks

Stoic and unbending, the role of the Chinese official remained to extend the virtue of the emperor outward from the capital to all of Asia. Under such a philosophy, the success of an official could be observed by how many foreign people desired to accept Chinese customs and forego violence towards the Chinese state. In Sichuan and Yunnan, these underlying principles were put to the test as local governors travelled to their appointed prefectures or districts, tasked with winning over apathetic local peoples. The appearance of Tibet as a rival reduced the political status of aboriginal tribes to average Chinese subjects rather than important players in the affairs occurring along the southwestern borderlands.

Despite the importance aboriginal peoples played in the foreign policy of China, in many ways native groups never assimilated or desired to fully integrate themselves into the Chinese state. Native chieftains continued to lead their own tribal peoples and willingly changed sides to the enemy when the benefits appeared to offset the negatives. The Tang never came to understand the desires of these tribal groups, continuing to believe that all these aboriginal peoples held an innate desire to adopt Chinese culture and submit to Chinese bureaucracy. Instead, the locals made decisions of loyalty based on tribal connections or their immediate needs. The loss of a tribal group could witness thousands of people crossing the borders, becoming potential enemies and soldiers of the Tang.

Properly overseeing and implementing the Tang dynasty's system of law could not but occupy a minor portion of a border official's average day. Tribal groups inhabited remote areas of the mountains that required navigating the myriad of paths created by the local people, causing difficulty to ministers needing face to face interaction. In addition, the harsh and unpredictable environment forced governors to handle various catastrophes caused by natural

disasters such as flooding or droughts that affected agricultural production and grain stores. Yearly raids, rebellions, and corruption posed further problems and most likely caused frontier officials to spend a considerable amount of time either repairing damage caused by these harmful events or recruiting troops to fight or construct defensive fortifications to deter border harassment by China's enemies. On top of these responsibilities, local officials were charged with acting as diplomats to foreign missions seeking to travel onwards to the Tang capital.

Jiannan became a place for Tibet, Nanzhao, and the Tang to conduct power politics. In such a system, states compete for resources that improve or benefit a country with little regard for the effects that occur from such a policy within the international community. Land and wealth brought Tibet and the Tang – if not the earliest Chinese dynasties – to Sichuan and Yunnan. Naturally divided by the Tibetan Plateau to the west and the Sichuan Basin to the east, those Chinese prefectures established along the boundary became centers of activity for both Asian powers. Although grain and productive land appeared the prize in the earliest years of the dynasty, the fall of the Anrong fortress in 680 transitioned wealth in the region from natural resources to native tribes who could aid local officials, survive the harsh environment, maintain and control major roadways, or provide countless soldiers for wars against foreign countries.

The Tang imperial court chose to separate domestic and international affairs. Although Tibet endured as a cause for rebellious and disobedient officials on the borders, problematic officials persisted in the eyes of the court as a product of personal flaws. In reality, these frontier officials were significant players within the Tang system of conducting foreign relations. All civil and military affairs therefore became intermixed and converged on the frontier official who bore the responsibility of maintaining control within their respective appointed administrative district. During times of war that occurred alongside the loss of local peoples and therefore

border security, frontier officials must have observed their control slipping as violence escalated and locals departed all around them.

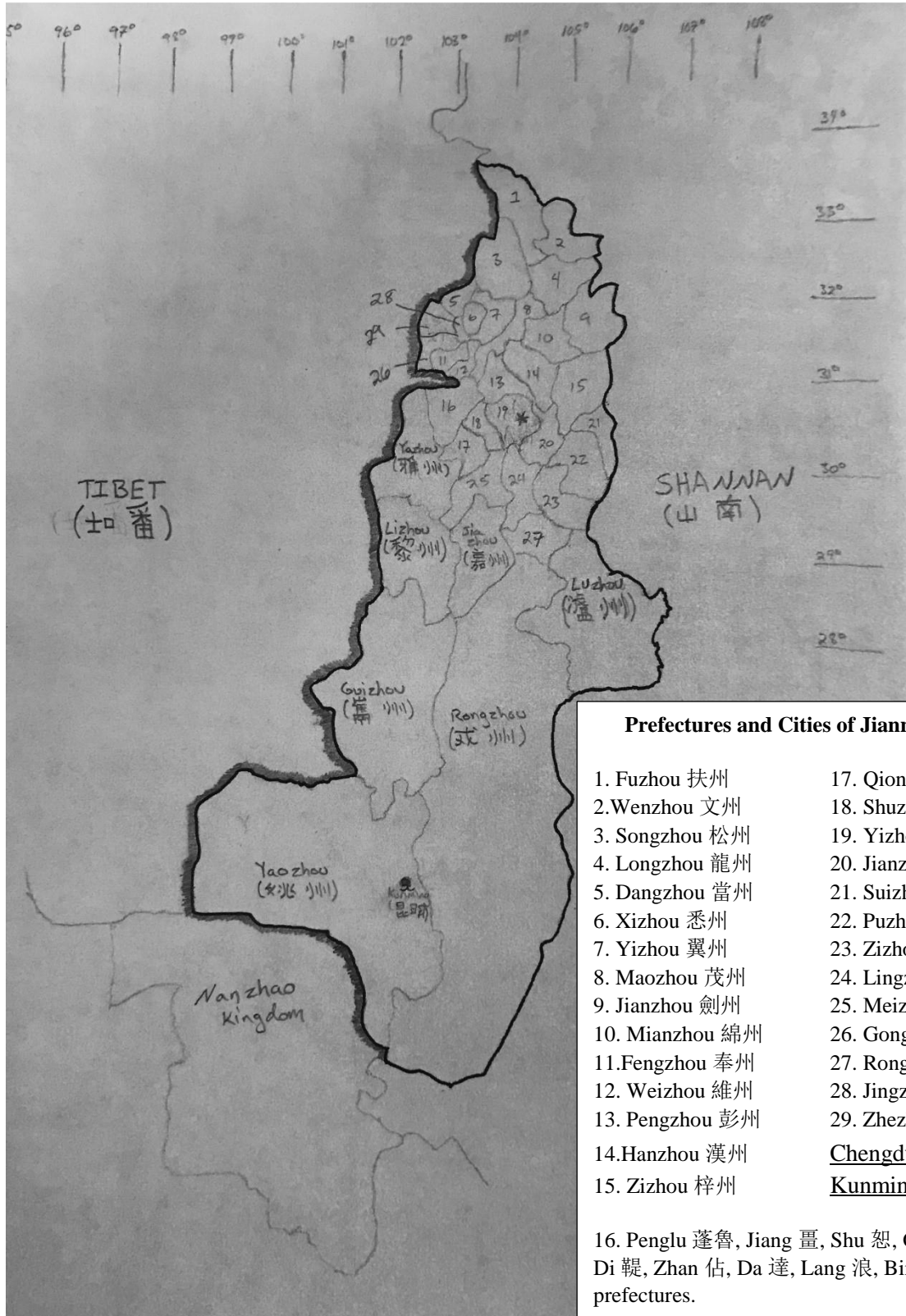
Some southwestern officials could not handle the difficult conditions caused by geographical factors or the foreign attacks, and therefore mutinies and rebellions repeatedly occurred. However, some officials in the southwest did partake in widespread corruption, abuse, and extortion along the southwestern borders. It is important not to defend or denounce the actions of such officials but understand the potential circumstances that caused many of these officials to cause “troublesome” situations that bred rebellions, insubordination, mutinies, or the build-up of personal armies and wealth. Although the southwestern border did see a constant problem of “troublesome” officials, the evidence points such a problem resulted from the region’s fluctuating power dynamics, local people, and instability of the region, rather than established tropes that emphasize personal character flaws such as greed and self-aggrandizement enabled by the lack of centralized authority on the borders.

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## Appendix A - Political Map of Jiannan (劍南道) c.650 A.D.



### Prefectures and Cities of Jiannan 劍南道

- |                 |                     |
|-----------------|---------------------|
| 1. Fuzhou 扶州    | 17. Qiongzhou 邛州    |
| 2. Wenzhou 文州   | 18. Shuzhou 蜀州      |
| 3. Songzhou 松州  | 19. Yizhou 益州       |
| 4. Longzhou 龍州  | 20. Jianzhou 簡州     |
| 5. Dangzhou 當州  | 21. Suizhou 遂州      |
| 6. Xizhou 悉州    | 22. Puzhou 普州       |
| 7. Yizhou 翼州    | 23. Zizhou 資州       |
| 8. Maozhou 茂州   | 24. Lingzhou 陵州     |
| 9. Jianzhou 劍州  | 25. Meizhou 眉州      |
| 10. Mianzhou 綿州 | 26. Gongzhou 恭州     |
| 11. Fengzhou 奉州 | 27. Rongzhou 戎州     |
| 12. Weizhou 維州  | 28. Jingzhou 靜州     |
| 13. Pengzhou 彭州 | 29. Zhezhou 柘州      |
| 14. Hanzhou 漢州  | <u>Chengdu</u> 成都 * |
| 15. Zizhou 梓州   | <u>Kunming</u> 昆明 ● |
16. Penglu 蓬魯, Jiang 薑, Shu 恕, Ge 葛, Wu 勿, Di 鞮, Zhan 佔, Da 達, Lang 浪, Bin 邠, and other prefectures.

## Appendix B - Record of Turbulence in Jiannan Circuit During the Tang Dynasty

- 638 Tibetan invades heading for Songzhou 松州
- 648 Maozhou's Cishi suppresses rebels of Qiongzhou 邛州, Meizhou 眉州, and Yazhou 雅州 with help of Yazhou 雅州 troops.
- 649 Army of 12 prefectures suppresses rebel Southern Man on fringes of Songzhou 松州.
- 652 Zhaoxi Zu defeats Southwestern Man who then submit and are settled in Tang territory.
- 661 Yaozhou 姚州 abandoned
- 676 Sheng Qiang 生羌 rebel in Xizhou 悉州
- 677 Tibetan armies invade Fuzhou 扶州 and Songzhou 松州
- 678 Tibet invades and Guizhou 嵩州 and Yizhou 翼州 to collect SW army.
- 680 Tibet attacks Songzhou 松州, Maozhou 茂州, Guizhou 嵩州, and Weizhou 維州 and seize Anrong Fortress.
- 682 Tibet attacks Songzhou 松州, Yizhou 翼州, and Zhezhou 柘州
- 688 Qiang attack after Wu Zetian attempts to open Shantong 山通 mountain passages in Yazhou 雅州
- 702 Tibet invades Xizhou 悉州 and defeated by Chen Daci
- 710 Man lead Tibetans in attack on Yaozhou 姚州 kill Li Zhigu 李知古.
- 715 Rongzhou 戎州 with other prefectures attack Southwestern Man.
- 716 Tibet invades Songzhou 松州.
- 727 Tang offensives launched into Tibet from Weizhou 維州 by Jiao Wei.
- 729 Guizhou 嵩州 and Yaozhou 姚州 defeat Man armies.
- 740 Tang retake Anrong city, but Tibet sieges and retakes the fortress.
- 750 Zhang Qiantuo causes Lao 獠 and Man 蠻 to rebel across western Jiannan.
- 751 Xuanyu Zhongtong defeated by Nanzhao in Yunnan.  
Army of foreign and Han from eight zhous attack Xianzhi.
- 752 Tibetan invasions of Yunnan and expelled by Yang Guozhong.  
Nanzhao repeatedly harasses borders.

- 754 Li Mi's disastrous invasion into Nanzhao.
- 756 Xuanzong flees to Chengdu  
Tibet invades Guizhou 嵩州
- 757 He Tao local tyrant of Guozhou repels and is suppressed  
Shu army under Guo Qianren mutinies.
- 759 Man tribesmen rebel in Qiongzhou 邛州, Jianzhou 簡州, Jiazhou 嘉州, Meizhou 眉州,  
Luzhou 瀘州, Rongzhou 戎州.
- 760 Tanguts invade and are repelled in Guizhou 嵩州
- 762 Xuzhidao, official in charge of Jiannan's husbandry rebels.
- 766 Cui Ning 崔旰(寧) battles Ying Yi 英义 for control of Jiannan
- 771 Ze Lu invasion of Tibetan held Hexi and Longyou reaches borders of Fuzhou 扶州 and  
Wenzhou 文州.
- 776 Tibet invades Jiannan and repelled by Cui Ning。
- 777 Tibet invades Lizhou 黎州 and Yazhou 雅州
- 779 Tibet/Nanzhao invade Maozhou 茂州, Fuzhou 扶州, Lizhou 黎州, Yazhou 雅州, and  
Wenzhou 文州.
- 780 Tibet takes possession of Weizhou 維州 and stirs court controversy.  
Tibetan minister Shangjiexi defeated in Jiannan 。
- 783 Zhang Fei mutinies in Chengdu against Zhang Tingshang
- 788 Wei Gao sends Lizhou 黎州 Cishi to defend Tibetan invasion of the region.
- 796 Tibet invades Guizhou 嵩州 is defeated.
- 798 Wei Gao retakes Guizhou 嵩州, begins campaign into Tibet.
- 801-3 Wei Gao sends troops to retake old Songzhou 松州 and Weizhou 維州
- 806 Liu Pi rebels in Chengdu capital of Shuzhou 蜀州
- 820 Tibet invades Yazhou 雅州  
Hao Ci from Weizhou 維州 attacks Tibet
- 825-6 Nan Man attack Chengdu and absorb Qiang tribesman in region.



- 829 Nanzhao's Cuo Dian invades Guizhou 嵩州, Rongzhou 戎州, but defeated at Qiongzhou 邛州.
- 830 Nanzhao attacks Chengdu
- 842 Li Kongre follows fleeing Tang army into Songzhou 松州, pillages and massacres the prefecture.
- 849 Zhengya (Shannan West Circuit) reclaims Fuzhou 扶州  
Xichuan jiedushi Du Cong reclaims Weizhou 維州
- 861 Nanzhao invades Guizhou 嵩州
- 864 Nanzhao invades Guizhou 嵩州 and defeated by local Cishi
- 863 Rebel Man open gates for Nanzhao in Lizhou 黎州
- 865 Emperor calls for suppression of Lizhou 黎州 by "original zhous"  
Nanzhao attacks Guizhou 嵩州, and Lianglin Mao open gates.
- 867 6 Man tribal settlements destroyed by Tang and Man army.
- 868 Rebellion within Qiongzhou 邛州
- 869 Nanzhao again attacks Guizhou 嵩州
- 870 Nanzhao army besieges Chengdu
- 874 Nanzhao invades Yaozhou 姚州 and defeated at Dadu River
- 890 Wang Jian rebels in Sichuan