

Towards a History of Eastern Tibet during the Northern Song Dynasty (960–1127)

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1. Introduction

This paper is a contribution to the writing of Tibetan history, and specifically the history of Eastern Tibet. The Tibetan king gLang dar ma was killed in 842, and upon his death there followed what is usually described as a period of turmoil and upheaval in Tibet. There does not exist any extant contemporary history of Central Tibet, much less Eastern Tibet, for the centuries immediately following these dramatic events. To achieve its aim, this paper reinterprets Chinese records for the period from the Tibetan perspective, rather than the Chinese perspective from which they were first set down. This type of re-interpretation has been prosecuted with success by scholars of the early history of the “barbarians” in the west, for example, the Alamanni tribes and the Gauls, who have reread Roman histories in this light.¹ Furthermore, this paper does not encompass the entire Northern Song dynasty on this occasion but deals with events up to the middle of the eleventh century, and thus leaves the remainder of the dynasty for subsequent study.

That China was very aware of Tibet, and very concerned with its relations with Tibet, is clear from the large amount of material found in works such as the imperially sponsored *Outstanding Models from the Storehouse of Literature* (*Cefu yuangui*) that was completed in 1013, and the *Long Draft of the Continued Comprehensive Mirror for Aid in Government* (*Xu Zizhi tongjian changbian*) by Li Tao (1115–1184). Both of these books fortunately are available in reproductions of the original editions, allowing us to read the works as they were written without the questionable benefit of later editing. In addition, there exist important historical compendia such as the *Essentials of the Tang Dynasty* (*Tang huiyao*) and *Essentials of the Five Dynasties* (*Wudai huiyao*) by Wang Pu (922–982), numerous official decrees, and memorials by greater and lesser statesmen of the tenth century and the Northern Song dynasty, concerning China’s relations with Tibet. After 1127, Chinese interests were primarily focused upon dealings with the Jurchen rulers of what had formerly been Chinese territory, and information regarding Tibet dwindles.

Chinese official documents record the death of the king of Tibet in 842. But how much of the turmoil and upheaval in Tibet that ensued is recorded in Chinese official documents? There are numerous records of official visits by

¹ Important works here are Whittaker’s *Frontiers of the Roman Empire*, Woolf’s *Becoming Roman*, and Mattern’s *Rome and the Enemy*.

Tibetan emissaries to the Northern Song imperial court. If Tibet was in a state of internal political turmoil, which authority or authorities dispatched these emissaries? Along the Eastern Tibetan border, extensive cross-border trade was pursued, with the tea-horse trade being the prime example. Which entities in Tibet were the counterparts of the Chinese state traders and private traders? These are some of the questions this study intends to address. While many questions remain unanswered thus far, this paper suggests that a reinterpretation of Chinese materials from the period can fill in a number of blanks in our knowledge of this important period in Tibet's history.

2. Two Important Contributions to Eastern Tibetan History

Before proceeding we may ask ourselves why we need to reconsider the history of Eastern Tibet when there already exists the *mDo smad chos 'byung* or *Ocean Annals of Amdo* by Brag dgon pa dKon mchog bsTan pa rab rgyas (1801–1866)? This work, while impressive in its geographical descriptions and valuable as a history of more recent centuries, has its weaknesses. As Anne Chayet comments,

“L'A mdo chos 'byung suit attentivement l'histoire du développement de la Doctrine en A mdo et dans toutes les régions qui la composent, même s'il n'a pas toujours prêté autant d'attention qu'on l'aurait souhaitée aux établissements religieux non dge lugs pa.”²

Although we do find tantalising references in the book to sBa gor ye shes g.yung drung (*Ba Guoer yexi yongzhong*), Kwa 'Od mchog grags pa, Rong ston seng ge rgyal mtshan, and Lha lung dpal rdor, each of whom was Bonpo, this is almost all the information that is provided. A further comment is that there is only passing mention of the pre-fifteenth century and hence the period prior to Tsong kha pa's (1357–1419) time. In modern times, Tsepou W.D. Shakabpa's *Tibet: A Political History* passes over the years 842–1207 in seven pages without any mention of Eastern Tibet.³ For information on earlier centuries, we must turn elsewhere. However, even Rolf Stein's impressive work *Les Tribus Anciennes des Marches Sino-Tibétaines*, while serving as an invaluable source of detailed information on the earliest history of Eastern Tibet, provides few datable references to historical events, and makes little comment to the period under discussion. There exists therefore a lacuna in western historical research that this paper attempts, albeit insufficiently, to address.

² Anne Chayet, 'A Propos de Notations Geographiques dans l'A mdo chos 'byung', *Tibet, Past and Present*, ed. Hank Blezer, Brill (2002), 248.

³ Shakabpa 1967: 54–60.

3. The Period 824–870

Chinese annalists and statesman-historians in their official histories were careful to date events, even if there are other weaknesses, such as an idiosyncratic, foreshortened and often inexcusably imprecise transliteration of the names of non-Chinese individuals. Regarding the transcription of the names of Tibetan officials and envoys, the tenth century historian Wang Pu explains that the ruler of Tibetan was known as *puzan*,⁴ and that he was assisted by Senior Councillors and Junior Councillors (*dalun xiaolun*) in administering his realm. While Wang Pu is not always correct in his information, for example when he states that Tibetans did not have written records (*wu wenji*), he does note that the capital city was Luosacheng (i.e., Lhasa).⁵ It is thus possible on each occasion that a Tibetan envoy's name when transcribed into Chinese begins with or includes the word *lun* that we may understand it as meaning Councillor. It further appears very likely that the Chinese transcriptions of envoys' names began with their Tibetan clan name, e.g., Zhang, 'Dru, Sog, etc. The great historian Sima (Guang, 1010–1086) further notes, drawing on the *Supplement to the National History* (*Bu guoshi*), that *lun* referred to members of provincial clans (*tuzu*) and *shang* to members of the official clans (*guanzu*), both being similar to the Chinese *lang*, or court gentleman.⁶

Tibetan relations with the Tang dynasty court in the years preceding gLang dar ma's ascension to the throne were cordial, when we consider that in the ninth month of 824 Tibetan envoys were received at court when they came in request of a painting of Mount Wutai, a Buddhist sacred site, which was given to them.⁷ The following year, in the third month of the lunar calendar (April 825), the Tibetan Shang Qilire (?Councillor Khri sum rje)⁸ was received at court when he came to reiterate the peace treaty between Tibet and China made earlier in 822,⁹ and according to Le Shi (930–1007) from that year onwards until the middle of the 840s Tibetan envoys came to court annually without interruption.¹⁰ Ten years after Shang Qilire's reception, in the first month of 835 the envoy Lun Longre (?Councillor rDo rje) came to court, and he was followed in 836 by the envoy Lun Xilire (?Councillor Khri sum rje) who brought with him diplomatic credentials and horses as gifts. This visit was reciprocated in the fifth month of 837 by Li Congjian, Vice-Minister of the Court of the Imperial Clan (*zongzheng shaoqing*) and Vice Censor-in-chief (*yushi zhongcheng*), who

⁴ This appears to be a copyist's error for *zanpu* 贊普, i.e., *btsan po*.

⁵ *Wudai huiyao* 30: 357 (hereafter *WDHY*).

⁶ *Zizhi tongjian kaoyi* 21: 10b.

⁷ *Cefu yuangu* (hereafter *CFYG*) 999: 20, *Tang huiyao* (hereafter *THY*) 97: 1739.

⁸ There exists a significant possibility that *li* 立 is an orthographical error for *xin* 心. On Zhang Khri sum rje, see Richardson 1985: 92.

⁹ *THY* 97: 1739. *CFYG* 972: 8 does not mention the name of the envoy.

¹⁰ *Taiping huanyuji* 185: 3544.

travelled to Tibet bearing with him diplomatic credentials and vessels of gold and silver, jade belts, medicines and other gifts. In 839 the Tibetan envoy Lun Jiaore (?Councillor rDo rje) was received at court, and Li Jingru travelled to Tibet.¹¹ The impression that is received is of inter-state relations at the highest level involving the regular annual visits of leading dignitaries.

In 842 the news was received in China that the King of Tibet had died. At the end of the year, in the eleventh month, the envoy Lun Pure (?Councillor Pu rje) arrived bearing the sorrowful tidings.¹² The Chinese court decreed three days closure and ordered all ministers including and above the fourth grade, in other words all senior ministers, to attend the Court of State Ceremonial (*honglusi*) to present their condolences to the Tibetan envoy. Thereafter Li Jing, Vice-Director for Palace Buildings (*jiangzuo shaojian*) and Vice Censor-in-chief, was dispatched to Tibet to communicate the court's condolences at a mourning ceremony. In the first month of 843 Li Jing returned from Tibet. The duration of this short journey, eight weeks at the most, suggests that Li Jing did not travel to Central Tibet but to Eastern Tibet, probably to the Amdo border.

However, the situation was no longer stable elsewhere on China's western frontier in 843 and Chinese attention was distracted from Tibet. Taking advantage of internal unrest among the Uighurs, the Qirgiz attacked the Uighurs and the survivors fled into Tibet, to the vicinity of Ganzhou.¹³ In the spring of 849 the Tibetan chief minister Shang Kongre killed the Military Commissioner for the Eastern Circuit and occupied Qin, Yuan and Anle Prefectures. These three prefectures lay approximately two hundred kilometers to the west and northwest of the Tang capital Chang'an. An enormous mobilisation ensued, and fighting and disruptions continued until the winter of 866 (tenth lunar month) when Zhang Yichao, the Military Commissioner for Shazhou in the vicinity of Dunhuang, dispatched the Uighur leader Bokug Kagan (*Pugujun*) to engage the Tibetan forces.¹⁴ The Tibetan army was defeated and Shang Kongre was executed.¹⁵ As a gruesome yet typical afterthought, his head was sent as a trophy to the capital.

¹¹ THY 97: 1739, CFYG 980: 19.

¹² THY 97: 1739, CFYG 980: 12a (Song ed.) & CFYG 980: 19b; correcting Lun Zanre 論贊熱 to Lun Pure according to CFYG.

¹³ CFYG 967: 12.

¹⁴ Rybatzki, V. "Titles of Türk and Uighur Rulers in the Old Turkic Inscriptions", *CAJ* 44-2 (2000): 260-261; Yukio Kasai, *Ein kolophon um die legende von Bokug Kagan*, at <http://ir.library.osaka-u.ac.jp/metadb/up/LIBSIALK01/sial19-001.pdf>

¹⁵ CFYG 973: 19, THY 97: 1741.

4. The Period 870–960

From the 870s onwards the Tang dynasty slid rapidly into major internal unrest, leading to the collapse of the dynasty, and an eighty-year long period of disunion in China. However, the Tibetans continued to maintain diplomatic and trading relationships with the various short-lived kingdoms that came into existence in the tenth century. We know that in the second month of 908 two Tibetan envoys named Du lun Xiqie (?Dru Councillor gSang rgyas) and Su lun Qilu (?Su Councillor Khri rogs) came to the court of the Later Liang Kingdom, and a similar mission reached the Liang court in the eleventh month of 911.¹⁶ In the eleventh month of 927 four Tibetan monks bearing two letters written in Tibetan reached the court of the Later Tang Kingdom, but no-one present was able to read them (*ren mo shi qi zi*),¹⁷ and in 928 a Tibetan trading mission reached the Later Tang Kingdom in the autumn of the year.¹⁸ Furthermore, there is evidence of extensive if strictly supervised trading by Tibetans across the Later Tang Kingdom border in the prefecture of Qinzhou that was administered by Wang Sitong.¹⁹ Tibetan trade missions reached the Later Tang court each year between 930–933, bringing with them horses and jade, among other items. The envoys were determined to reach the Later Tang court even when, as in 932, flooding blocked their path and they were thus delayed on their journey.²⁰ In 939 two Tibetan chieftains of the Luoyan clan named Niebao langyi mobiao (?gNya pas glang yes mo biao) and Changhe youluo zhibao came to the court of the Later Jin Kingdom,²¹ and in 942 Tibetans presented more than one hundred horses and were richly recompensed.²²

It is apparent that, despite occasional unwarranted attacks by Chinese generals, for example the apparently unprovoked slaughter by the commanders Feng Duo and Yue Yuanfu of more than one thousand Tibetans one hundred *li* to the west of Tuqiao in Weizhou in 932,²³ the Tibetans of Eastern Tibet were committed to maintaining trading contacts with the rulers of China, whoever they might be. There were products that they could provide, principally horses but even precious objects such as jade and coral, and things that they needed or desired from China, including copper coins that could be converted into religious statuary, medicines, iron and tin objects, and silken and gauze fabrics.

¹⁶ *WDHY* 30: 357; *CFYG* 972: 10a (Song ed.) & *CFYG* 976: 16a conflate the two missions into one, only giving the date of the eleventh month of 911.

¹⁷ *WDHY* 30: 358. *CFYG* 972: 14 less straightforwardly reads, ‘*wenzi wei xiang*’.

¹⁸ *CFYG* 972: 15.

¹⁹ *CFYG* 429: 17.

²⁰ *CFYG* 972: 11a (Song ed.) & 972: 17.

²¹ *WDHY* 30: 358; *CFYG* 972: 19.

²² *CFYG* 169: 18.

²³ *CFYG* 435: 9.

And in times of acute food shortage cross-border trade became a matter of life and death.²⁴

5. The Period 960–980

When the Song dynasty was founded in 960 it was not particularly strong or stable. For example, its cavalry desperately needed Tibetan horses. The very first edict concerning Tibet promulgated by the Northern Song emperor in 961 was a decree forbidding the continuation of the practice, common in the first half of the tenth century, of Chinese crossing the border to steal Tibetan horses that venal officials would then purchase and register so as to make up the acute lack in cavalry steeds. In the tenth month of 961 the emperor forbade all such clandestine activities, and ordered the return of stolen horses.²⁵ This was followed by a decision in 962 to transfer Gao Fang from the administration of Qinzhou, and replace him by Wu Tingzuo.²⁶ The reason for the imperial decision was that, “the emperor did not want the border region to become troublesome (*shang buyu bianjing shengshi*)”, for that is precisely what had happened. Xiyang settlement in the west of Qinzhou to the north of the River Wei was Tibetan territory, and in its north-western part there was a great forest whose timber the local people utilized. Gao Fang thrust one hundred *li* into this Tibetan enclave, and employed three hundred conscripts to fell tens of thousands of great trees whose trunks were transported to the capital. The local religious leader named Shangpoyu reacted by leading his followers to assault the conscripts and force them to desist.²⁷ Gao Fang responded by mobilising his forces and captured forty of the Tibetan leaders. At this point the emperor brought the conflict to a halt. Wu Tingzuo’s first act was to issue an amnesty for Shangpoyu and his followers, secure the release of the remaining Chinese

²⁴ In his proposal to enforce the ban on cross-border trading written in 1069 Wen Yanbo notes that there had recently been a crop failure in Tibet and grain prices had increased substantially. The result was that there was a lively, and from Wen’s point of view unacceptable, trade in cattle, goats and salt across the border, see *Wen Lugong wenji* 19: 2a.

²⁵ *Songban Xu Zizhi tongjian changbian* 3: 5b (hereafter XZZTJCB [Song ed.]) and *Xu Zizhi tongjian changbian* 3: 68 (hereafter XZZTJCB).

²⁶ Gao Fang, then Vice-Director in the Ministry of Revenue (*hubu silang* 戶部侍郎), was transferred to the position of Fiscal Commissioner for the Army of the Front (*qianjun zhuanyunshi* 前軍轉運使) in the spring of 960, see *Song huiyao jigao: shihuo* 49: 3.

²⁷ Sima Guang 司馬光 (1010–1086) refers to him as the ‘Shangpoyu of the Qinzhou Tibetans’ (*Qinzhou shu qiang Shangpoyu* 秦州屬羌尚波于), see *Sima wengong Jigulu* 17: 90a, while Li Zhi (ca.1161–1238) calls him the ‘Tibetan Shangpoyu’ (*Tubo Shangpoyu* 吐蕃尚波于), see *Huang Song shichao gangyao* 1: 2a. It is possible that *shangpoyu* is a Chinese transcription of the Tibetan *tshangs spyod*, meaning ‘cleric’.

conscripts held prisoner by the Tibetans, and halt all logging.²⁸ This incident could have resulted in the recognition of the rights of the Tibetans residing in Eastern Tibet to the natural resources that they had disposed of for generations. However a form of aggressive usufruct, resulting in the destruction of the natural resource and the curtailment of its availability for its Tibetan owners, was to become general praxis. In the case of the wrongly felled timber, it seems that the Tibetans continued to act upon their grievance. In 964 Li Xigu replaced Wu Tingzuo as prefect of Qinzhou. To secure an end to border skirmishes, Li took as hostages all the sons and younger brothers of the Tibetan headmen, and thus enforced an end to the disturbances.²⁹

The conciliatory beginning to the reign of the first Song dynasty emperor ended on a much lower note than it began. By 972 Tibetans were withstanding the brunt of repeated Chinese so-called 'retaliatory attacks'. Shi Fu, the Acting Prefect of Qingzhou, claimed to have killed one hundred 'bandits' at Hua Lake, at the same time as he secured 600 heads of cattle and goats,³⁰ and two Tibetan leaders referred to as the leaders of the Great Rock and Little Rock clans were duly repelled by Zhang Bing, Prefect of Qinzhou when they attacked settlers in the winter of 975.³¹ To underline the tense cross-border relations, an edict was promulgated in 974 reiterating the prohibition of permitting copper currency to cross the border.³² However, it is clear that cross-border trade defied central government edicts. In 978 a new edict was promulgated complaining of the fact that Tibetan traders in Qinzhou and Jiezhou were exchanging fabrics for copper currency that they then transported across the border, and forbidding its continuance.³³

6. Projections of Chinese Power into the Border Region in the Eleventh Century

In 998 Zhebuyou longbo (?rgyal po 'lang po) came to court.³⁴ He was the fourth leader of his clan in succession to receive Chinese titles, and as a result of his clan's alliance with the Song dynasty he already at that time held the honorary title of Assistant Junior Counsellor to the Hexi Army and 'Reverted to Virtue' General (*Hexi jun youxiang fushi guide jiangjun*). He presented more than two

²⁸ *XZZTJCB* (Song ed.) 3: 6a; *XZZTJCB* 3:69.

²⁹ *XZZTJCB* 5: 128.

³⁰ *XZZTJCB* 13: 279.

³¹ *XZZTJCB* 16: 356.

³² *XZZTJCB* (Song ed.) 14: 1b; *XZZTJCB* 14: 298.

³³ *XZZTJCB* 19: 423.

³⁴ *XZZTJCB* [Song ed.] 39: 10b; *XZZTJCB* 43: 920–921. He is described as the chief headman of the Six Valleys in Xiliang Prefecture (*Xilingfu liugu dashouling* 西涼府六谷大首領), yet was in fact chief minister of the left (*zuoxiang fushi* 左相副使) in the Six Valleys territory, see *XZZTJCB* 49: 1079.

thousand horses as tribute, and represented his territory as the outermost bulwark against the vast expanses of Tibet.³⁵ In 1002 Panluozhi, the chief headman of the Six Valleys in Xiliang Prefecture, who also had been richly rewarded for his loyalty to the Song,³⁶ submitted five thousand horses as tribute for which he was rewarded with one hundred bolts of coloured silk, one hundred catties of tea and a special banquet.³⁷ Early in 1003 he sent his representative, the Tibetan official Wufu shengla, to present tribute,³⁸ thereafter his nephew Situowa early in 1004, followed by his elder brother Bangbuzhi in the summer of the same year.³⁹ Panluozhi died in the autumn of 1004 and was succeeded by Siduodu.⁴⁰ Early in 1005 Siduodu sent his nephew Hexi to submit tribute, and was rewarded with tea, at the same time that Panluozhi's son was richly rewarded with vessels and money.⁴¹ When the following month a request was received from the Yangdan clan in Xiliang, which was under the control of Siduodu, to be allowed to purchase bows and arrows, it was not immediately dismissed. According to previous legislation, bows, arrows and other weapons could not be transmitted to outer barbarians (*waiyi*). On this occasion, however, the emperor considered the strength of the clan and specially permitted the Weizhou officials to accommodate the request. Siduodu had also submitted horses, as well as a request for gold-leaf to embellish Buddhist temples. This request was also approved.⁴²

There are other similar cases of the disbursement of religious apparel and special treatment shown to Tibetan headmen who displayed loyalty to the Northern Song dynasty, for example in 1020 when a disciple of the Tibetan lama Nubu nuo'er was presented with purple robes,⁴³ and in 1042 when Fachun, the abbot of the Huiming Temple on Mount Qiangtong in Weizhou, who had previously lead his disciples into combat against marauders from beyond the border to protect the Imperial Calligraphy Hall (*Yushuyuan*), as well as Tibetan and Chinese aged and children and large numbers of livestock, was presented with purple robes.⁴⁴ In addition to the bequest of material gifts acknowledging acts of loyalty, the Song court on rare occasions presented honorary names signifying the same, such as 'Loyal (*zhong*)' and 'Resolute (*yi*)', to important

³⁵ XZZTJCB [Song ed.] 39: 10b; XZZTJCB 43: 920.

³⁶ In 1001, he was appointed Defense Commissioner for Yanzhou (*Yanzhou fangyushi* 鹽州防禦使) and concurrently Chief Military Inspector for Western Lingzhou (*Lingzhou ximian duxun jianshi* 靈州西面都巡檢使), see XZZTJCB 49: 1079.

³⁷ XZZTJCB 53: 1162.

³⁸ XZZTJCB 54: 1180.

³⁹ XZZTJCB 56: 1240.

⁴⁰ XZZTJCB 58: 1277.

⁴¹ XZZTJCB 59: 1317.

⁴² XZZTJCB 59: 1326.

⁴³ XZZTJCB 96: 2229.

⁴⁴ XZZTJCB 138: 3328.

figures, for example Ba'e duoerji (?sPa'i rdo rje) and Bale suonuomu (?Pa bSod rnams) in the winter of 1074.⁴⁵

The wealth that the Song dynasty offered in return for the acceptance of sinecures was substantial, yet the income derived from these titular sinecures escalated rapidly over a very short space of time, costing the Song court significant sums. In 1031 Gusiluo of the Qingtang Tibetans was appointed 'Calming Distant Regions General-in-Chief' and Military Training Commissioner for Aizhou.⁴⁶ His monthly emolument was fifteen bolts of imperial brocade, fifteen catties of block tea and fifteen catties of loose-leaf tea. His councillor Wenbuqi (d. 1034) who was granted the lesser title of 'Reverted to Virtue' General, a title that Jiebu yilangbu had already received in the tenth century, received as a monthly emolument ten bolts of imperial brocade, five catties of block tea and fifty catties of loose tea. In 1035, when Gusiluo's titles were advanced to 'Maintaining Submission' General and Deputy Military and Surveillance Commissioner, his emolument doubled to thirty bolts of imperial brocade, thirty catties of block tea and one hundred catties of loose-leaf tea, and just four years later in the winter of 1038–39 while his titles were substantially unchanged his emolument had increased thirty-fold to one thousand bolts of imperial brocade, one thousand catties of block tea and one thousand five hundred catties of loose-leaf tea. Eventually all pretence of a monthly stipend was abandoned and in 1041 he received a feoffdom of nine thousand households, although as Zhang Fangping notes, in reality it amounted to only two thousand four hundred households.

Assistance was also extended to efforts to enhance the trade in horses and to improve the life of the troops serving on the border. In 1025 a request from Cela (?Shes rab), the senior Tibetan military official in Qinzhou, to be allowed to construct a monastery at Coming from Afar Fortress (*Laiyuanzhai*) to serve as accommodation for those coming and going involved in trading horses was approved.⁴⁷ Another example is the gift in 1072 to the Military Commission for the border region on the Qinfeng Circuit of ten thousand strings of copper cash for the construction of a Chinese Buddhist temple for the soldiers garrisoning the Taozhou border, along with a horizontal board bearing the inscription 'Temple of Great Martial Virtue' (*Daweide chanyuan*) in the imperial calligraphy.⁴⁸ Both these imperial grants bear witness to the projection of the Northern Song dynasty presence into the border region, rather than contributing in any way to the development of the Tibetans in the region. The spate of

⁴⁵ The bequest of the names was as a result of a request from Zhao Sizhong 趙思忠 (d. 1077), the Military Training Commissioner for Rongzhou (*Rongzhou tuanlianshi* 榮州團練使), see *XZZTJCB* 258: 6295.

⁴⁶ *Lequan xiansheng wenji* 22: 14a.

⁴⁷ *XZZTJCB* 103: 2390.

⁴⁸ *XZZTJCB* 239: 5809.

establishment in the 1070s of Chinese academies for the instruction of the sons of Tibetan headmen – in Xizhou in 1073, Minzhou in 1074 and Hezhou in 1075 – can be seen in the same vein as an attempt to introduce Chinese influence into the region, rather than enhancing existing Tibetan education.⁴⁹

The ongoing unwillingness to allow the transmission of anything more than superficial Chinese knowledge to Tibetans in the eleventh century is adequately explained in the following admonitory statement made by prime-minister Wang Anshi in 1073 in reply to an imperial comment regarding the growing strength of the Tibetans in Taozhou and Minzhou,

While the nature of the Tibetans cannot be expected to change suddenly, if they could make peace with one another and obtain skills, their use of them could overcome the people of the middle country.⁵⁰

Here Wang Anshi, consciously exaggerating the threat posed by the Tibetans to China, is echoing a comment made by Yu Xiulie (692–772) three hundred years earlier when Tibetan envoys requested copies of the Chinese classics the *Book of Songs* (*Mao shi*) and *Spring and Autumn Annals* (*Chunqiu*) that,

[G]iving them these writings would allow them to understand our military strategy. It would make them even more cunning and that would not be to our nation's profit.⁵¹

At the same time, attempts were repeatedly made by Chinese officials in the eleventh century to introduce Chinese law as a way to subjugate Tibetans in the borderlands. For example, revenge was an enduring element in Eastern Tibetan border society, where numerous small regions remained locked in centuries-long cycles of internecine strife and conflict. The deaths that inevitably were the result of this phenomenon were adjudicated according to Tibetan customary law,⁵² which stipulated that the penalty for homicide was restitution by payment in the form of livestock.⁵³ In a way that was unacceptable for Chinese officialdom, when Tibetans killed Chinese living in the border region, they similarly offered livestock as restitution for their offences, a practise witnessed by Cao Wei when he was in Qinzhou.⁵⁴ Various proposals, such as that of Lü Tao (1028–1104) who suggested that marriages between Tibetans and Chinese should be forbidden so that conflict could later be avoided, did not bring any

⁴⁹ XZZTJCB 248: 6059, 256: 6248, 261: 6357.

⁵⁰ XZZTJCB 247: 6029.

⁵¹ *Zizhi tongjian* 209: 12b, and Greatrex 1997: 95f.

⁵² *Jingde ji* 21: 234.

⁵³ *Yuanxian ji* 34: 353.

⁵⁴ *Linchuan wenji* 90: 5a.

respite.⁵⁵ Reminiscent of the sorts of silence practised in many societies where rivalry is intense and bloody, along the eleventh century Eastern Tibetan border no instance that called for revenge went without being avenged. To fail to seek revenge would bring down dishonour on oneself, and imperatives for revenge were never forgotten, even for a single day.⁵⁶ So as to avoid incurring repeated problems Chinese officials along the border adopted a means of deferring to Tibetan customary law, albeit in a modified form suggested by Fan Yong (979–1046) that had met with imperial approval in 1025:

When Tibetans are guilty of crimes the fine is exacted in the form of livestock. According to the old system of law they forfeited five hundred cash per animal. [These days] when after sentencing they are made to hand over their livestock the Tibetans detest it. I request that from now onwards there is a return to the old system of forfeiting cash, and where the crime is of a minor nature payment shall be made in copper in accordance with Chinese law.⁵⁷

Cao Wei memorialised on the immorality of the practise, and in an attempt to reform this habit in 1080 the Song court attempted to enforce the use of Chinese law in such cases, stipulating that when Tibetans killed one another customary law would be applicable, but then the crime involved Chinese living along the border Chinese law would be used and a death sentence would be imposed.⁵⁸ In an attempt to eradicate revenge when he was serving in Qingzhou Fan Zhongyan (989–1052) formulated a regulation that in the case of revenge when injury had occurred, the cost of redemption was one hundred livestock and two horses, but if homicide had already occurred the guilty party was to be executed. In the case that injury had not occurred a lesser fine was to be levied, and further paragraphs allotted fines in the case of failure to act as directed in the event of Tibetan border encroachments.⁵⁹ While perhaps well-intentioned and humane, this proposal, rooted in an adaptation of Chinese judicial ideas, disregarded the complex and culturally independent society in the border regions that had existed for centuries, and was thus doomed to failure.

What we see thus far from contemporary Chinese records is that the Northern Song dynasty court attempted alternatively to cow the Tibetans into submission through military force, subjugate them through the use of Chinese law, or entice Tibetan leaders with costly gifts and impressive titles. The prime objectives of the court during the first one hundred years of the Northern Song dynasty remained consistent however, namely to obtain a steady supply of

⁵⁵ *Jingde ji* 21: 234.

⁵⁶ *Luancheng ji* 40: 12a.

⁵⁷ *XZZTJCB* 103: 2388.

⁵⁸ *Yuanxian ji* 34: 353.

⁵⁹ *Songshi* 314: 10271.

Tibetan horses for the cavalry and the usufruct of natural resources, particularly timber, in the mountainous border region. Understandably, resentment at deprivations in domains that had been inhabited for centuries by Tibetans and attempts at establishing notional Chinese authority over them exploded repeatedly into armed resistance. The result was almost invariably excessive and tragic loss of life to the Tibetans. The Eastern Tibetan border in the mid-eleventh century consequently remained simultaneously a locus for cultural confrontation and an ambivalent region where mutually profitable, and in the view of Chinese officialdom illegal, cross-border trading flourished.

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