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Luc Kwanten

**China and Tibet
during the Northern Sung**

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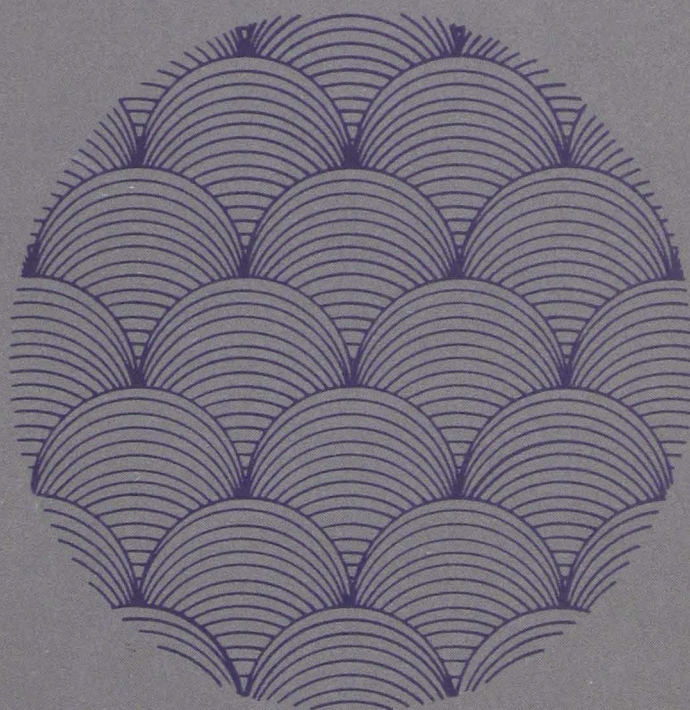
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China and Tibet during the Northern Sung

By Luc Kwanten

(Indiana University)

The history of political relations between the Sung and its "barbarian" neighbors has progressed considerably during the last decades¹. It is natural that emphasis has been primarily on the major enemies of the Northern Sung, especially on the Ch'i-tan and, to a much lesser extent, on the Tangut². Recently there has finally developed some interest in the foreign policy decision making process of this period³. But one aspect of foreign relations has been completely neglected, namely relations between China and Tibet during the Sung.

There is essentially nothing surprising in this. Tibet⁴ has always remained outside the mainstream of history, and our knowledge of Sino-Tibetan relations in general is extremely spotty. There are basically only four Western language works devoted to such separate periods as the T'ang, Yüan and Ch'ing dynasties. There are numerous reasons that can be advanced to explain this situation. It is, however, regretful that the relations between Tibet and the Northern Sung have not been examined, especially in light of their importance to Sung-Tangut relations. This brief article is not intended to be a detailed study of those relations, but will give some information gathered in the course of the author's ongoing research on Sung-Tangut relations⁵.

From the time of Glan-dar-ma's death in 842 until the contacts between the hierarchs of Sa-skya and the Mongols in 1242, Tibet was divided into a series of petty kingdoms or principalities, about which our present knowledge is very limited. Central authority had collapsed, and, to a certain extent, Tibet had reverted to the state of anarchy that prevailed before the establishment of the Tibetan kingdom by Sron-btsan-sgam-po⁶.

¹ Schwarz-Schilling, Ch., *Der Friede von Shan-yüan (1005 n. Chr.). Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der chinesischen Diplomatie*, Wiesbaden, 1959; Thiele, D., *Der Abschluß eines Vertrages: Diplomatie zwischen Sung- und Chin Dynastie, 1117—1123*, Wiesbaden, 1971.

² Seiro Okazaki, *Historical Study of pre-dynastic Tangut*, Kyoto, 1972; Tao Jing-shen, *Shung-Liao Relations. A Case of Diplomatic History, 29th International Congress of Orientalists*, Paris, 1973; L. Kwanten, "Cinggis-khan's Conquest of Tibet. Myth or Reality?" *Journal of Asian History*, vol. VIII, no. 1, 1974, pp. 1—23.

³ A. W. Sariti, "A Note on Foreign Policy Decision Making in the Northern Sung", *Sung Studies Newsletter*, number 8, 1973, pp. 3—11.

⁴ P. Pelliot, *Histoire ancienne du Tibet*, Paris, 1949; Ahmad, Z., *Sino-Tibetan Relations in the Seventeenth Century*, Rome, 1970; L. Petech, *China and Tibet in the early XVIIIth century: History of the Establishment of Chinese Protectorate in Tibet*, Leiden, 1972; L. Kwanten, *Tibetan-Mongol Relations During the Yüan, 1206—1368*, Ph. D. Diss., University of South Carolina, 1972.

⁵ See the author's article in the *Journal of Asian History*, vol. VIII. He is also preparing a detailed biographical study of Li Chi-ch'ien and an annotated translation of the chapters on Hsi Hsia in the *Sung-shih*.

⁶ Also known as Khri-lde-sron-btsan. He reigned from 634 to 650. *Chiu T'ang-shu*, 196A:2a; *Hsin T'ang-shu*, 216A:2b; J. Bacot, "Le mariage chinois de Sron-btsan-sgam-po", *Mélanges Chinois et Bouddhiques, III*, Brussels, 1935, pp. 1—60.

When the central authority that had existed during the Tibetan Royal Period (634—842) collapsed after the assassination of gLañ-dar-ma, the local nobility attempted to increase its power by increasing its landholdings. During the early part of the period of the Local Hegemons (842—1247), the monasteries, which had been reconstructed after the destructions brought on by the anti-Buddhist persecutions of gLañ-dar-ma and the ensuing civil war, did not develop into sectarian hegemonies⁷. It was only in the eleventh century, when internecine warfare had drained the resources of the nobility that religious sectarianism became an important factor. New monasteries, often resembling fortresses, were being built all over Tibet, and this provided the local religious leaders the opportunity to indulge in their own political aspirations. The political history of these developments is unknown. Only when the "political" role of the local hegemons became inseparably tied to their "religious" role did the Tibetan historians once again narrate political events⁸.

The reconstruction of the political history of the Local Hegemons is an extremely difficult and tedious task. One must critically examine all the biographies of the ecclesiastics who lived during this period if one hopes ever to find all the necessary data. If little can be learned about Tibetan history from Tibetan sources of this period, even less can be learned from them about relations between Tibet and China. Whereas Tibetan chronicles of the T'ang period frequently mention China, the Sung dynasty seems to remain unknown to Tibetan historians. It is not even certain that the Sung dynasty itself was aware of the political situation in the territory of the former Tibetan kingdom. An examination of the references to Tibet in the *Chiu Wu-tai shih*, *Wu-tai shih-chi*, *Wu-tai hui-yao*, *Sung-shih* and *Sung hui-yao* indicates that throughout the Five Dynasties and the Northern Sung, relations existed only with the local Tibetan hegemons of the Northern Amdo region, that part of Tibet located in present-day Tsinghai province.

The history of Sino-Tibetan relations during the Northern Sung is closely tied to the history of Sung-Tangut relations. At the beginning of the Sung dynasty, and in contrast to the Five Dynasties period, Sino-Tangut relations were relatively peaceful. When the Tangut ruler Li Yi-hsing^[1] died in October 967, the Sung court granted him posthumously the title of Great Preceptor and of Prince of Hsia⁹. As yet, little is known about the reign of his two successors, Li K'o-jui^[2] (died 978) and Li Chi-chün^[3]¹⁰.

⁷ Ideological differences between the various monasteries were almost non-existent. The differentiation sets in in the late eleventh century.

⁸ Turrel V. Wylie, "Mar-pa's Tower: Notes on the Local Hegemons in Tibet", *History of Religions*, vol. III, No. 2, 1964, pp. 278—291.

⁹ Li Tao, *Hsü Tzu-chih-t'ung-chien ch'ang-pien*, Chekiang Shu-chü ed., 1881 (henceforth HCP), 8:9a—10a.

¹⁰ HCP, 19:8b.

Li Chi-chün, however, did not survive his father very long. He died sometime in August, 979, and his brother Li Chi-p'eng^[4] inherited his position¹¹. This succession was not to the liking of most members of the ruling Tangut T'o-pa clan¹² in what was then still known as the Hsia prefecture. The first indication of serious trouble in the Hsia prefecture^[6] occurred in May, 982. At the time, Li K'o-wen^[6], the brother of Li K'o-jui and prefect of the Sul prefecture, memorialized against the Sung court's recognition of Chi-p'eng's inheritance as ruler of the Hsia prefecture¹³. K'o-wen apparently feared that Chi-p'eng's intention of submitting in allegiance to the Sung would trigger a civil war between the latter and his cousin Li Chi-ch'ien^[7] (963—1004).

K'o-wen's fear were amply justified. In June of the same year, Chi-p'eng submitted to the Sung and offered to the Sung the four prefectures of Yin^[8], Hsia, Sui^[9] and Yu^[10]¹⁴. In July, his cousin Li Chi-ch'ien rebelled and escaped with his followers to the Chin-tse^[12] territory located 300 li to the northeast of the Hsia prefecture¹⁵. From then on there was continuous war, with varying degrees of success, between the Sung and the rebels under Li Chi-ch'ien's leadership. The war ended with the death of Li Chi-ch'ien in 1004¹⁶.

The career of Li Chi-ch'ien and the evolution of the first Sung-Tangut war are outside the scope of this article¹⁷. It is to be noted, however, that Chi-ch'ien's "rebellion" must have had very broad support in the Ho-hsi^[13] area. Within a few years he was powerful enough to establish an alliance with the Ch'i-tan¹⁸, to be granted a princess in marriage¹⁹, and to be recognized by the Ch'i-tan court in 990 as King of Hsia²⁰. For all practical purposes this is the beginning of the independent state of Hsi Hsia, although a formal proclamation did not occur until made in 1038 by Li Yüan-hao^[14] (1032—1048)²¹. With Yüan-hao's accession to the throne, the wars between the

¹¹ HCP, 20:4a.

¹² On the relationship between the Tangut T'o-pa and the T'o-pa of the Northern Wei, see the author's dissertation and his article in the *Journal of Asia History*.

¹³ HCP, 23:7a.

¹⁴ HCP, 23:7b—8a; *Sung Shih* (SS., SPPY ed.), 4:8b; Wu K'uang. *Hsi Hsia Shu Shih*^[11] (HHSS), Hsiao-hsien shan-fang ed., 1849, 3:10b.

¹⁵ SS, 4:8b.

¹⁶ There is some confusion as to the exact date of his death. The *Liao shih* (LS) SPPY ed., 14:2b mentions it under the fifth month of the twenty-fourth year tung-ho (June 3 — July 1, 1003), whereas the SS, 7:2a has it in the second month of the first year ching-te (February 23 — March 23, 1004).

¹⁷ This will be treated in the author's forthcoming study on Li Chi-ch'ien.

¹⁸ LS, 11:1a.

¹⁹ LS, 11:5b, 12:3b.

²⁰ HHSS, 4:17a; LS, 13:1a, 115:4a.

²¹ HHSS, 12:17b; Nien Ch'ang, *F'o-tsu li-tai t'ung-tsai*^[18] (FTTT), Taisho, vol. 49, 18:663c.

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- [4] 李繼捧 [5] 夏州 [6] 李克文 [7] 李繼遷 [8] 銀州
[9] 綏州 [10] 宥州 [11] 西夏書事 [12] 斤澤 [13] 河西
[14] 李元昊 [15] 念常：佛祖歷代通載

Sung and the Tangut, interrupted during the reign of Li Te-ming^[16] (1004—1032), erupted again.

It was in these wars against Li Chi-ch'ien and Li Yüan-hao that the Northern Sung found in the Tibetans valuable, although sometimes unpredictable, allies. Those Tibetans who aided the Northern Sung were apparently chieftains of the independent kingdoms in the Northern Amdo area. The two principal figures involved were Fan-lo-chih^{[17]²²} and Chio-ssu-lo^{[18]²³}.

Although Tangut-Tibetan relations throughout the Five Dynasties Period had been less than good²⁴, some Tibetan sided with Li Chi-ch'ien against the Sung during the early part of his rebellion. There is mention of a certain Wa-ni-ch'i-i^[19] in March, 986²⁵, but other than a name, very little is known about him, or about other chieftains who aided Li Chi-ch'ien. Most frequently, the Tangut continued their traditional policy of raiding Tibetan and Uighur tribute missions to China²⁶. Throughout his life, Li Chi-ch'ien regularly made devastating raids on different Tibetan clans, such as the one on the Shui-ni^{[20]²⁷} in 995.

The constant harrassment by Chi-ch'ien apparently resulted in a Tibetan revolt against him, for in 996, taking advantage of attacks by Li Chi-lung^{[21]²⁸} and Fan T'ing-chao^{[22]²⁹} against him, the Tibetans asked to join the Sung in punitive raids against the Tangut ruler³⁰. The Sung was apparently responsive to this request. As of August 996, the Tibetan clans of the Liu-ku-fan^[23] submitted formally to Sung authority³¹.

However, it was not until the latter part of the year 1001 that the Tibetans, under the leadership of Fan-lo-chih, entered in earnest into the war against Li Chi-ch'ien³². The authority of Fan-lo-chih over the Tibetan tribes was not very strong, since, early in 1002, Li Chi-ch'ien was able to come to terms with the Ngo-yü clan^{[24]³³}. On numerous occasions, Chi-ch'ien attempted to convince Fan-lo-chih to join with him, but without success. The latter renewed his allegiance to the Sung³⁴. From that time on, Fan-lo-chih, together

²² SS, 492:5b—11a.

²³ SS, 492:11b—18a.

²⁴ See J. R. Hamilton, *Les Ouighours à l'époque des cinq dynasties*, Paris, 1955.

²⁵ LS, 11:1a.

²⁶ *Hsi Hsia chih (HHC)*, 1:12b.

²⁷ HHC, 2:8a; HHSS, 6:2a.

²⁸ Biography in SS, 257:17b—24a.

²⁹ Biography in SS, 289:7b—10b.

³⁰ HHC, 2:11a—11b; SS, 5:13a.

³¹ SS, 492:3a.

³² SS, 6:7b; HHC, 3:9b.

³³ SS, 6:8a.

³⁴ SS, 6:9a.

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|----------|----------|----------|-----------|
| (16) 李德明 | (17) 潘羅支 | (18) 角斯羅 | (19) 瓦泥乞移 |
| (20) 睡泥 | (21) 李繼隆 | (22) 范廷詔 | (23) 六谷番 |
| (24) 訛遇 | | | |

with another Tibetan, Che-lung^[25], continuously, but with little success, attacked Li Chi-ch'ien⁸⁵.

In the beginning of the year 1004⁸⁶, Fan-lo-chih was able, through treachery, to encircle Li Chi-ch'ien, and in the ensuing battle the latter was wounded and killed⁸⁷. Fan-lo-chih did not survive the battle very long either. Li Chi-ch'ien was succeeded by his son Li Te-ming, and a period of unstable peace between the Tangut and the Sung came into being. Tibetan assistance had not helped in the elimination of the Tangut menace.

During the reign of Li Te-ming, Sino-Tibetan and Tibetan-Tangut relations are very obscure. It is during his reign, however, that there appears an interesting personage under the name of Chio-ssu-lo⁸⁸. He is interesting not only because of the peculiar nature of his relations with the Sung, but because he is often identified with the chief hero of the Tibetan Gesar saga⁸⁹.

Apparently he was not originally from the Northern Amdo region but arrived there in 1008 from extreme Western Tibet. He was fetched from there by a certain Sung-ch'ang-ssu-chün^[26] because the Tibetans wanted an authentic descendant from the original Tibetan kings. Chio-ssu-lo was identified as such⁴⁰. Chio-ssu-lo was a name given to him by the inhabitants of the Amdo area and meant "Son of Buddha" or, in Tibetan, rGyal-sras. His original name was Ch'i-nan-ling-wen⁴¹. Originally he settled in the town of I-kung^[27], to the north of the Yellow river, but through a series of intrigues outside the scope of the present article, settled in the Miao-ch'uan^[28] area, to the east of present-day Hsi-ning^[29]⁴². Soon he was the uncontested leader of the bCon-kha area⁴³.

Chio-ssu-lo or rGyal-sras and his minister Li Li-tsun^[31] first came to the attention of the Sung court in 1015—1016 when they sent a gift of 582 horses⁴⁴. At the same time, for unknown reasons, rGyal-sras offered to attack the Tangut⁴⁵. Apparently there was no reply to his offer, although gifts were given as a return for the presented tribute. Soon thereafter, however, a conflict between rGyal-sras and his minister permitted the Sung to

⁸⁵ *HHSS*, 7:13b; 7:17b; *SS*, 7:1a.

⁸⁶ In the twelfth month of the sixth year hsien-p'ing (December 26, 1003 — January 24, 1004).

⁸⁷ *HHC*, 3:20a; *HHSS*, 8:6b; *SS*, 7:2a; 485:5a.

⁸⁸ The author is preparing a biographical study of Chio-ssu-lo.

⁸⁹ See R. A. Stein, *L'épopée et le barde au Tibet*, Paris, 1960.

⁴⁰ *SS*, 492:6b; Tseng Kung, *Lung-p'ing chi (LPC)*, 20:9a.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ The area between the Huang-ho (Tib.: rMa-chu) on the south and the Huang-ho^[30] (Tib.: bCon-chu) to the north. Its now called Huang-chung.

⁴⁴ *SS*, 8:6a; 492:6b; *Sung Hui-yao (SHY)*, 199, 7819.

⁴⁵ *SS*, 8:6b.

[25] 者龍 [26] 聳昌斯均 [27] 移公 [28] 遼川 [29] 西寧
[30] 湟河 [31] 李立違

intervene directly in the affairs of the bCon-kha area. A dispute erupted between rGyal-sras and Li Li-tsun, who had assumed the regency during the former's minority, as to who was the real leader of the area and who should be recognized as such by the Sung⁴⁶. An expedition under the direction of Ts'ao Wei^[32]⁴⁷ was sent to settle the matter. Ts'ao Wei defeated Li Li-tsun and settled the authority problem in bCon-kha in favor of rGyal-sras⁴⁸. The latter was apparently not completely satisfied and on February 5, 1020, Ch'en Yao-sou^[33]⁴⁹ was instructed to settle the matter definitely⁵⁰. A year later, on October 14, 1021, rGyal-sras asked to submit to allegiance. This was granted, and he was instructed to send an annual tribute mission⁵¹ and given honorary official rank on several occasions⁵².

From that year on, relations between the Tibetan kingdom of bCon-kha, under the leadership of rGyal-sras, and the Sung were on a good basis. For the Sung it was an important ally and tributary state, although the supposedly annual tribute arrived very irregularly. The whole matter suited the Sung very well, especially in light of the fact that the situation in the Tangut state had changed quite drastically. Li Te-ming had been succeeded by his son Yüan-hao, whose ambition it was to create an independent empire called Ta-hsia^[34], known to the Sung as Hsi Hsia.

Li Yüan-hao aspired to expand his territory not only at the expense of the Sung but also at that of the Tibetans and the Uighurs. In 1035—36, a conflict broke out between Yüan-hao and rGyal-sras. Although the Tangut forces were numerically superior to the forces at the disposal of the Tibetan king, by clever strategy rGyal-sras was able to inflict a severe defeat on Yüan-hao's forces⁵³. Although the first Tibetan-Tangut war had lasted almost a year and had been disastrous for the Tangut, Yüan-hao persisted in making another, equally fruitless attempt to conquer bCon-kha. Thereafter he turned his attention to the Uighur territory⁵⁴.

From then on, the Sung continuously gave rGyal-sras important gifts and titles in return for a continuous harassment of the Hsi Hsia borders⁵⁵. Henceforth, rGyal-sras was called the "maternal uncle of the Son-of-Heaven"⁵⁶. When Yüan-hao was succeeded by Li Liang-tsu^[35] (1048—1068), rGyal-sras continued to harass the Hsi Hsia borders in the name of the Sung.

⁴⁶ *LPC*, 20:9a.

⁴⁷ Biography in *SS*, 258:8a—12b.

⁴⁸ *SS*, 258:9b.

⁴⁹ Biography in *SS*, 284:4a—8a.

⁵⁰ *SS*, 8:12a.

⁵¹ *SS*, 8:12b, 9:2a.

⁵² *SS*, 10:1a—1b; 10:4b.

⁵³ *SS*, 485:8a; 492:7a; *LPC*, 20:9b.

⁵⁴ *SS*, 482:8a.

⁵⁵ *SS*, 492:7b; *HHSS*, 13:4a.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

In 1058—59, he defeated a major army sent to bCoñ-kha by Liang-tsu⁵⁷. At about the same time, rGyal-sras established friendly relations with the Ch'i-tan⁵⁸. With the death of rGyal-sras in 1065—66 at the age of 68⁵⁹, Sino-Tibetan relations again disappeared into the background of general Sung foreign and internal politics. There was a brief attempt by Liang-tsu to take advantage of the succession problems in bCoñ-kha but without success.

Although Tibet did not play major political role during this period, it is important to note that the territory under the control of the bCoñ-kha kings was crucial to communications between Inner Asia and China. The Sung, unable to control the frontiers military, attempted to deal with the problems caused by an expansionist Tangut state politically, by making the Tibetans their favorite allies. Although the present state of research on Sino-Tibetan, Sino-Tangut, and Tangut-Tibetan relations during the Northern Sung does not permit the drawing of definite conclusions, it seems evident that the Sung policy was effective in containing the southern expansion of Hsi Hsia and that this policy is indicative of the foreign policy decision making process at the Sung court⁶⁰.

⁵⁷ SS, 492:7b; HHSS, 20:1b.

⁵⁸ SS, 492:7b. The *Liao shih* is silent about this.

⁵⁹ SS, 492:7b; LPC, 20:10a.

⁶⁰ See note 3.

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