

The Relations between the Tang Dynasty and the Gök Turks and Did It Lead to Turkish Western Migration?

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Abstract. By the early seventh century, the Göktürks had become the biggest threat to the Celestial Dynasty (China) since the days of the Xiongnu empire. According to the Old Book of Tang, the primary document of the Tang dynasty, “the Göktürks held a large standing army over one million soldiers. The strength of northern barbarian was unprecedented”. The Göktürks had become a threat to China since the previous dynasties. Before the Tang dynasty was established, the Göktürks, just like the Roman empire once did, was split into two parts: the eastern Göktürks and the western Göktürks; however, both parts of the Göktürks were still strong enough to threaten the newly established Chinese dynasty. When Emperor Gaozu started the uprising, the Tang dynasty made an alliance with the Göktürks. In 630, the lands of the eastern Göktürks were annexed by the Tang dynasty. Just decades later, the western Göktürks fell under Tang attack. The Tang dynasty established protectorates in the land of former Göktürks empire. The battles and relationship between the Turks and Tang dynasty will be explored in order to understand how the once powerful Turkic empire collapsed both internally and externally and why the Turks eventually migrated westward. It will be argued that the Tang empire’s military conquest of Göktürks eventually led to the Turkic westward migration. As some of the Turkic tribes did not want to surrender to the rule of the Tang Dynasty during the process of decomposition and integration, they migrated to Central Asia and West Asia and came to dominate the tribes they encountered.

1. Introduction

In order to understand the causation and rationale for the westward migration of Turks, one needs to understand the rise and fall of the Göktürks empire. Some historians believed that the Göktürks were descendants of the Asian Huns (Xiongnu). In 552, the Göktürks conquered the Rouran khaganate under the leadership of Ashina clan, and by the end of the same century, they had become a world power, stretching from Manchuria in the east to the western outskirts of Pontic Steppe in eastern Europe in the West[1]. The wolf was the principal totem of the Göktürks. It has been suggested that the head of the gray wolf was also used on their flag. The Göktürks could also be translated as the Blue Turks, or as the Eastern Turks. “According to the ancient color-coded cardinal-direction system, gok (blue) also meant east [2]. The color blue was sacred to the Ancient Turks, and gok also meant sky or heaven”. According to the astrology of ancient China, the color blue also symbolises eastern heaven, suggesting that the Turks might have adopted the Chinese system of Yin-Yang[3].

After the Göktürks conquered the state of Ephtalites in the west during sixth century, the Turks found themselves neighbors of Persia. At this time, the Persians were enemies of the Eastern Roman Empire. Thus, the Turks established an alliance with the Romans against the Persian Sassanid Empire. Around the year 562, the leader of the Göktürks sent the Roman emperor its first Turkic embassy, asking for the intelligence on the Avars, who had escaped from the wrath of the Göktürks. In the beginning of the Sui dynasty (581-618), the once powerful Göktürks empire was split into two parts, the Eastern Turkic Khaganate and the Western Turkic Khaganate[4]. The son and the nephew of Mugan khagan divided the empire into the eastern part and western part. During the time of Sui dynasty, the Chinese emperors were able to utilize the internal conflicts between the eastern part and western part of

Göktürks to persuade one to fight against another, holding political leverage on the both sides. The Romans also sent embassy to the Turks[5]. The Roman envoy likely met with the western khagan of the Turks at a place referred to as Ektag, or Ak Tag, the White Mountain, in Turkish. But the Romans described this place as the Golden Mountain (similar to the Golden mountain in the Chinese sources). In another words, it might refer to the Altai mountains, which was possibly the center of the Western Turkic Khaganate[6].

After the division of the Göktürks empire, the eastern khagan was the supreme khagan of entire Göktürks dominion, ruling from the Orkhon valley. In 576, when the second Eastern Roman embassy paid a visit to the Göktürks, Tardu khagan accused the Romans of “speaking with ten tongues and lying with all of them”. In 598, the Turks sent an embassy to the Roman emperor Maurice[7]. The Romans described the Turkish khagan by self-proclamation as the “Great Lord of Seven People and Controller of Seven Climes of the World”. A similar description was also used by the Ottoman sultans later on, indicating the continuation in Turkish culture. The Eastern Roman historian reported that in the Turkish khagan’s letter to Emperor Mauricius, the khagan boasted about his past victories over multiple people, including Avars and Oghurs. The tribes of Var and Hunni might have fled from the Göktürks and arrived in Europe during the reign of Justinian (527-65) under the name of Avars[8].

2. The Interaction between the Tang Dynasty and the Eastern Turkic Khaganate

In the beginning of 600s, the Sui dynasty crumbled due to internal conflict. Many generals and lords, along with civilians, rebelled against the Sui, such as the Eastern Turkish-support Liu Wuzhou and Li Mi. In July of 617, Li Yuan seized the opportunity and formally rebelled against the Sui dynasty, and asked the Eastern Turkic Khaganate for help. In winter 617, he captured Chang’an and declared Yang You, the King of Dai, as the emperor. He had himself made regent. In spring 618, Emperor Yang of Sui was killed at Jiangdu (江都, in modern Yangzhou, Jiangsu) in a coup led by the general Yuwen Huaji[9]. When the news reached Chang’an, Li Yuan had Yang You yield the throne to him, becoming Emperor Gaozu of the Tang Dynasty. Li Shimin was appointed as the King of Qin[10].

Li Shimin soon helped his father to annihilate numerous warlords and contribute greatly to the reunification of China; however, Li Yuan did not make him the heir of the empire. Instead, his elder brother, Li Jiancheng held the title of crown prince. Thus, the tension between the brothers had been escalated. In summer 626, the Göktürks attacked again, and under Li Jiancheng’s suggestion, Emperor Gaozu, instead of sending Li Shimin to resist the Göktürks as he first intended, decided to send Li Yuanji instead. Li Yuanji, who was the loyal follower of the crown prince, was given command of much of the army previously under Li Shimin’s control, further troubling Li Shimin, who believed that with the army in Li Yuanji’s hands, he would be easily eradicated by his elder brother[11]. Knowing his brother was plotting against him, Li Shimin decided to act in advance. He ambushed and killed both his brothers Li Jiancheng and Li Yuanji at the Xuanwu Gate, and forced his father to abdicate. Thus, Li Shimin became the new emperor of the Tang empire, known as Emperor Taizong of Tang (626-649)[12].

Soon after Emperor Taizong became the emperor, many vassal tribes of Eastern Turkic Khaganate rebelled against Jieli khagan, the leader of eastern Turks. Jieli khagan sent his nephew, Tuli khan, to repel the rebels; however, Tuli khan was defeated[13]. Jieli khagan was furious and held Tuli in prison for more than ten days. Tuli escaped to Chang’an and surrendered to Emperor Taizong. In 627, Tuli made the plea of attacking Jieli khagan. The emperor granted it. In late 629, believing that the time was ripe for a major attack on the Eastern Turks, Emperor Taizong appointed the general Li Jing with overall command of a multi-pronged army, assisted by the generals Li Shiji and Xue Wanche, to attack the Eastern Turks at multiple points. The army was successful in its attacks, forcing Jieli khagan to flee,

and by late spring 630, Jieli khagan had been captured, and Eastern-Turkish chieftains all submitted to the Tang dynasty. Emperor Taizong spared Jieli khagan but detained him at Chang'an[14]. Because of the military success and the benevolence that Emperor Taizong showed to the Turks, numerous Turkish chieftains revered Emperor Taizong as the Tengri khagan, the khan from the heaven. Emperor Taizong accepted this title, and thus became the ruler of both Chinese and the Turks. The title of Tengri khagan showed that at least some Turks accepted the Chinese emperor as their leader, indicating some Turks identified themselves as the people of Tang in certain extent[15].

When Jieli khagan was defeated and sent to Chang'an, there was a debate among the Tang court about how to settle Turkic civilians. Most of the ministers suggested that the Tang dynasty should allow the Turks to settle in the northern provinces, so the Turks could become subjects of the emperor; however, Chancellor, Wei Zheng, argued against such proposal. He argued that the emperor should allow the Turks to settle in their homeland, because the number of surrendered Turks was simply too large, becoming a potential threat to the Tang empire within its domain. Emperor Taizong eventually adopted his proposal.

Emperor Taizong then appointed Tuli Khan as the governor in the north, allowing Tuli to return to the land of the former Eastern Turkic Khaganate; however, he stipulated that Tuli and his people must obey the laws of the Tang dynasty[15]. After Tuli passed away, Emperor Taizong allowed his son to succeed his position. Emperor Taizong established six protectorates in the land of the former Eastern Turkic Khaganate and allowed the Turks to settle in the north of the Yellow River[16]. More than a hundred of Turkish chieftains were appointed as generals in the Tang dynasty, because Emperor Taizong gave enough trust to his new subjects. Therefore, thousands of Turkish families moved into the city of Chang'an, the capital of the Tang empire[17].

The foreign policy of Tang dynasty was very interesting. On one hand, Emperor Taizong settled the Turks in their previous homeland, allowing them to retain their lifestyle. On the other hand, the Tang emperor appointed hundreds of Turkish chieftains as generals of the Tang dynasty[18]. After conquering the former enemy, the Tang emperor not only spared its leader, but also allowed the Turks to govern their lands according to the laws of Tang[19]. The magnanimity of the Tang emperor was truly impressive. There were some benefits in such foreign policies. Firstly, by sparing Jieli khagan and detaining him in Chang'an, the Tang emperor could show his magnanimity to the Turks while eliminating the chances of a resurgence of Jieli khagan. Secondly, by appointing numerous Turkish chieftains as the Tang generals, the Tang emperor demonstrated his trust in the Turks. Therefore, the Turks would not feel isolated and marginalised, and would be willing to fight for the Tang emperor. In fact, the Turks contributed many prominent generals to the Tang empire, such as Ashina Simo and Ashina Buzhen. Lastly, by sending loyal Turkish generals to govern Turkic lands, the Turkic civilians would be more willingly to become the subjects of the Tang empire. Therefore, instead of adopting the oppressive policies towards the conquered people, the Tang emperor adopted permissive structures to govern the newly gained territory and people[20].

3. The Interaction between the Tang Dynasty and the Western Turkic Khaganate

In 635, Li Jing's forces crushed Tuyuhun forces. The kingdoms of Shule and Khotan surrendered to the Chinese in 632, as did the kingdom of Yarkand in 635. Emperor Taizong began a series of campaigns against the Western Turks and their allies, the oasis states of the Tarim Basin, around 640. In 640, Emperor Taizong deployed Hou Junji, assisted by Xue Wanjun, to launch a major attack on Gaochang. As they approached Gaochang, the king of Gaochang, Qu Zhisheng, offered to submit, but Hou demanded a surrender, which Qu Zhisheng refused. Hou put Gaochang under siege, and with aid from the western Turks not arriving, Qu Zhisheng surrendered. The king of Gaochang was captured and sent to Chang'an. Thus, Emperor Taizong established the Anxi protectorate in the Tarim Basin.

As early as the time of Jieli khagan, the tribe of Xueyantuo rebelled against their khagan. When the Eastern Turkic Khaganate was conquered by the Tang dynasty, Zhenzhupiqie khan seized the chance and captured many territories previously held by the eastern Turks. During the time of Emperor Taizong's expedition against Goguryeo, Goguryeo asked Zhenzhupiqie khan for help, intending to make an alliance with Xueyantuo; however, Zhenzhupiqie khan refused, because he did not want to start a war against the Tang dynasty. Unfortunately, Zhenzhupiqie Khan passed away in 645. His son, Duomi khan, abandoned his father's foreign policy, and declared war against the Tang dynasty. Soon after Emperor Taizong withdrew from Goguryeo, Li Shiji defeated Xueyantuo. Various Turkic tribes under Xueyantuo asked Emperor Taizong to be their khagan. Therefore, Emperor Taizong established the Anbei protectorate in the north.

During Emperor Taizong's reign, the leader of Western Turkic Khaganate, Ashina Helu, pledged his loyalty to him. He even sent envoy to Chang'an, paying tribute and respect to the Tang emperor. But, when Emperor Taizong passed away in 649 at Cuiwei Palace, Ashina Helu rebelled against the Tang authority. In the spring of 657, Emperor Gaozong appointed general Su Dingfang as the chief commander, assisted by many Turkic generals such as Ashina Buzhen, to launch a military expedition against western Turks. The battle was decisive and swift as Su Dingfang's forces killed over 200 Turkic chieftains. Ashina Helu reorganized his defeated armies and attempted to make further resist; however, Su Dingfang combined his forces with Ashina Buzhen's and defeated Ashina Helu once again on the Chu river, located in modern day northern Kyrgyzstan. Ashina Helu escaped to Chach, located in modern day Tashkent of Uzbekistan, and sought for political refuge; however, the lord of Chach arrested Ashina Helu and delivered him to the Tang general. Ashina Helu told the Tang general "I am a defeated barbarian. The former emperor treated me well, but I rebelled against him. My defeat was the punishment from heaven. I heard that according to the law of Tang, the execution would always carry out in the city. When facing my doom, I would like to face the direction of the tomb of Emperor Taizong to apologize for my crime". After hearing the touching words of Ashina Helu, Emperor Gaozong spared him. Two years later, Ashina Helu passed away. Emperor Gaozong ordered his men to bury Ashina Helu around the tomb of Jieli Khagan, and to inscribe the deeds of Ashina Helu on the tablet.

From this time on, the once powerful Göktürk empire was totally annexed by the Tang dynasty. The territory of the Tang empire stretched as far as the Lake Baikal in the north and the eastern part of Persia in the west. Both the Eastern Turkic Khaganate and the Western Turkic Khaganate fell under the expansion of the Tang dynasty. Tang established protectorates in the land of former Göktürks empire, but most of the region remained self-governing under Turks.

The story of Ashina Helu demonstrated the general relationship between the Tang dynasty and the Göktürks during this period. The once powerful Göktürk empire fell under the expansion of the Tang empire, and its leaders were captured and sent to Chang'an. The Tang emperors usually spared the leaders of the Turks, and granted them positions in the Tang court. After the leaders of the Turks passed away, Tang emperors usually granted them a formal burial and inscribed their deeds on the tablet. Most of the Turkic leaders were willing to become subjects of the Tang emperors due to the superior military force of the Tang empire and the magnanimity of the Tang emperors. After the end of the reign of the Ashina family in the Western Turkic Khaganate, most of the land from the former Western Turkic Khaganate was annexed into Tang protectorates; however, Turgesh and Qarluqs, two subordinate Turkic tribes under the Ashina family, gradually rose to power, becoming the actual leaders of the Turkic tribes in Central Asia. Still, both Turgesh and Qarluqs paid tribute to the Tang dynasty and recognized the supreme authority of the Tang emperor, though they also rebelled against the Tang empire occasionally. Along with the Tibetan empire, Tang dynasty and Arabic caliphate, Turgesh and Qarluqs became one of the influential players in Central Asia.

4. The Interaction between the Tang Dynasty and the Late Eastern Turkic Khaganate

In 681, Guduolu khagan rebelled against the Tang dynasty, and revived the Eastern Turkic Khaganate, known as the Late Eastern Turkic Khaganate. In 691, Guduolu khagan passed away. His younger brother succeeded his position, known as Mochuo khagan. At this time, Emperor Gaozong had passed away. His wife, Wu Zhao, had usurped the throne from the Li family and declared herself as the emperor, known as Empress Wu Zetian (690-705). Soon after the usurpation of Wu Zetian, Mochuo khagan sent an envoy to Chang'an, asking for a political marriage. Wu Zetian granted it and ordered her nephew's son, Wu Yanxiu to go to the Turkish lands and marry Mochuo's daughter; however, when Wu Yanxiu arrived, he was imprisoned by Mochuo khagan. Mochuo declared "we, the Turkish people, had served the royal Li family for generations. I heard that most of the descendants of the Li family had been killed, but two sons remained. Today, I am going to launch a military expedition to assist them to reclaim their throne". Whether this statement of Mochuo khagan was genuine could be debatable because one could argue that it was just an excuse made by Mochuo to rebel against the Tang dynasty; nevertheless, it might indicate that there were still many people who were loyal to the Tang dynasty among the Turks at this time. Otherwise, Mochuo khagan would not need to make such justification to fight Wu Zetian.

The conflict between Mochuo khagan and the Tang dynasty lasted for decades. In 716, the fourth year under Emperor Xuanzong's reign, Qarluqs, along with other Turkic tribes, rebelled against Mochuo khagan. The rebel army, with the help from the Tang dynasty, ambushed and killed Mochuo. Mochuo's brother soon repelled the rebellion and became the new leader of the Late Eastern Turkic Khaganate, known as Bilge khagan (716-734). The tribe of Qarluqs under the domain of the late Eastern Turkic Khaganate divided into two groups. One submitted to Bilge khagan, while another submitted to the Tang dynasty. In 743, the Qarluqs together with the Uighurs, rebelled against their khagan. In the following year, the last khagan of the Late Eastern Turkic Khaganate was defeated and fled from his capital. The Qarluqs and Uighur then, started to fight each other. Qarluqs was defeated, and a branch of Qarluqs began to migrate westward. Thus, the Late Eastern Turkic Khaganate met its doom.

5. The Interaction between the Tang Dynasty and Sub-Turkic Tribes and the Events Led to Turkic West Migration

The Göktürk empire used to be a vast empire, stretching from Manchuria in the east to the western outskirts of Pontic Steppe in eastern Europe in the West. At its zenith, it bordered four great civilizations of its time: China, India, Persia and the Eastern Roman empire. It had also united most Turkish tribes under one banner for the last time in history. With the collapse of the Göktürk empire, this Turkish political unity ended in the history. Turkish tribes, on the other hand, dispersed over a wide range of land from China to Eastern Europe. With the annexation of the west part of Göktürks empire into Tang domain, many sub-Turkic tribes started to fight for the control of the lands that were left with a political vacuum by the Tang dynasty, including Qarluq, Turgesh and Uighur, Turgesh was the most powerful entity among them in this early stage. But, even the Turgesh was included in the tributary system of the Tang dynasty, symbolizing that the khagan of Turgesh was still subordinate to the Tang emperor, though Turgesh occasionally invaded the Tang protectorate in Central Asia with the help from the Tibetan empire. After the year 734, Turgesh began to grow more and more powerful, and eventually rebelled against the Tang authority. The Tang empire allied with the Abbasid Caliphate and conquered Turgesh in the following years.

Qarluqs were a Turkic tribal confederacy who submitted to the Ashina family during the Göktürks era. In 628, Qarluqs divided into two branches. The eastern branch of Qarluqs entered the north of the Gobi Desert to serve Jieli khagan, while the western branch stayed in Central Asia and continued to serve the Ashina family in the west. After Jieli khagan was

captured and sent to Chang'an, the eastern branch of Qarluqs joined the rebellion of Xueyantuo. In 649, the Tang dynasty launched a massive expedition to the north, the eastern branch of Qarluqs submitted to the Tang authority for the next 43 years. In 716, the eastern branch of Qarluqs rebelled against the Late Eastern Turkic Khaganate. In 744, the eastern Qarluqs together with Uighur, rebelled and defeated their khagan; however, Qarluqs and Uighur soon started to fight each other. Qarluqs was defeated, and a branch of eastern Qarluqs began to migrate westward. The branch of eastern Qarluqs who migrated westward eventually integrated into the western branch of Qarluqs. The western branch of Qarluqs, on the other hand, submitted to Turgesh in 709, after serving the Tang dynasty for decades. After the year of 738, Turgesh divided into black Turgesh and yellow Turgesh under the pressure from both the Tang dynasty and Abbasid Caliphate. It was possible that at this time, a branch of the western Qarluqs annexed the state of Cao, located in Ushrusana, modern day Tajikistan. Thus, Qarluqs replaced Turgesh, becoming the largest Turkic state in Central Asia. The territory of Qarluqs stretched all the way from the Golden mountain to Chu river. In the year of 751, the Tang force led by general Gao Xianzhi confronted a large Arabic army of Abbasid Caliphate. Qarluqs sent a considerable force of cavalry to assist Gao Xianzhi; however, the Qarluqs force betrayed the Tang dynasty at the critical point of the battle, and caused the final defeat of the Gao Xianzhi. Although the Qarluqs cavalries betrayed Gao Xianzhi, Qarluqs paid tribute to the Tang empire continuously. The relationship between Qarluqs and the Tang empire had not been affected by this defection. It was possible that after the collapse of the Uighur Khaganate in 840, the eastern branch of Qarluqs and the western branch of Qarluqs finally united as one in Central Asia.

Oghuz was another Turkic tribe under the Ashina family during the Göktürks period. The earliest record of Oghuz could be dated back to eighth century. In Mongolia, archaeologists discovered Turkish runes which were erected by Bilge khagan to memorize his younger brother, Kul Tigin. The name of Oghuz could be found on the inscription. After the collapse of the Western Turkic Khaganate, the Oghuz rushed into Central Asia, trying to fill up the power vacuum left by the Tang dynasty. In the following centuries, Oghuz continued to fight against Qarluqs in the area around Syr Darya river, covering the area from modern day Kyrgyzstan to Uzbekistan. In the mid-ninth century, the Oghuz finally conquered the neighboring tribes, and established an empire stretching from Jambyl region in Uzbekistan to the Aral Sea. The eastern neighbor of Oghuz was Qarluqs. The northern part of Oghuz was bordered by the Kimak, and it faced Khazars and Bulgars in the west. In the south was the region that the Arabs had conquered, where a large number of Muslim residents lived. Oghuz ruled a lot of cities, and one was nearby the present-day Petrovsk City. At this time, Oghuz did not have their own khagan, and their chief was called yabghu. The main location of its regime was in the lower reaches of the Syr Darya river, and Yengui-kent was the encampment of the yabghu. It is obvious that Oghuz regime was a tribal alliance without a distinct class differentiation. Around 975, Alihan became the yabghu of Oghuz. He soon involved into a serious conflict with the Seljuk clan. In 1043, the Seljuks defeated the son of Alihan and ended the Oghuz regime. The term of Oghuz, thus, was replaced by the term of Turkmen by the Arabic scholars. Many of the Turkmen joined the Seljuk empire later on, and made great contribution to it.

According to many scholars, the Seljuks also originally came from the Oghuz. In Turkish, people call their military leader as Su basy, which should be pronounced as Seljuk in the ancient tone. Therefore, the name of Seljuk derived from one military leader of Oghuz. The father of the founder of the Seljuk empire, Duqaq, was the leader of a large tribe within the Oghuz regime. Duqaq favored the religion of Islam, and thus broke with the yabghu of Oghuz. His son, Seljuk, then left the yabghu of Oghuz and served the Samanid empire after converting to Islam. According to historian Ronnie Ellenblum, the Seljuks also came from Oghuz. He stated "although the two groups, the Seljuks who plundered the northeast and the

Oghuz who were active in Khurasan, belonged to the same ethnic Oghuz stock, they often operated against each other”.

To understand the Seljuk conquest in Western Asia, one could look at the writing of Armenian historian Aristakes Lastiverttsi at this period: “the gate of heaven’s wrath opened upon our land. Numerous troops moved forth from Turkestan, their horses were as fleet as eagle, with hooves as solid as rock. They sped like lions, and like lion cubs, they mercilessly threw the corpses of many people to the carnivorous beasts and birds. God poured his wrath down upon us by means of a foreign people, for we had sinned against him”. Just like the mighty Huns before, the Seljuk Turks were also the nightmare for the sedentary states in the west. One of the descendants of the Seljuks, the Ottomans, would eventually conquer Constantinople and build a large empire across Asia, Europe and Africa. But, the establishment of the Seljuk and the Ottoman empire was not isolated from the events happened in Central Asia couple centuries earlier. The rise of the Tang dynasty and its conquest of the Göktürk empire led to the power vacuum in some regions in Central Asia. The ancestors of the Seljuk Turks, the Oghuz, moved in those regions and fought with other tribes for centuries. It was possible that during this time, Oghuz was defeated by the Qarluqs and migrated to the further western regions.

6. The Causation of the Turkic West Migration

Frankly speaking, the tribes under Western Turkic Khaganate contributed the most to the Turkic western migration. Both Qarluqs and Oghuz were probably mostly under the influence of the Western Turkic Khaganate. The power vacuum left by the Tang dynasty in Central Asia lured various Turkic tribes to fight in this region. The conflict between Qarluqs and Oghuz lasted for centuries. In the beginning, Turkic immigrants lived in the north of the Syr Darya river. Then, they moved to the south of the Amu Darya, entering the Persian world. The route of the west migration of the Turks can be concluded that they moved to Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan in Central Asia along the Altai Mountains and gradually infiltrated into Afghanistan, Iran and Iraq in West Asia. In the 11th century, the Turks controlled Iran, Iraq, Caucasus, most areas of Asia Minor and Syria, etc. The powerful Seljuk Empire was founded by Seljuks, a branch of the Oghuz union of tribes. The west migration of Oghuz occurred as the Western Turkic Khaganate was annihilated by Tang dynasty in 659. During the process of westward migration, Oghuz began to believe in the religion of Islam and integrate into the local civilization. The thriving of Seljuks corresponded with the converting to Islam of Turks. Other than the Tang Dynasty, the political and military system of the Arabic Empire had great defection. The empire heavily depended on Islam to maintain the unity and governance. When Arabic empire faded in the 11th century, the Shia Islam dynasty extended its territory to the capital of Arabic Caliphate, Baghdad. In the mid-11th century, Seljuks attacked Baghdad to overturn the rule of Shia Islam and restore the regime of Sunni Islam. Due to this achievement, the chief of Seljuks was honored with the title of Sultan. Thereafter, Seljuks fought on many fronts and repelled the rebel forces within the realm. They established the Seljuk Empire in the territory of the former Abbasid dynasty.

Since the mighty Tang dynasty firmly controlled the East Asian, The Turks who were unwilling to be assimilated would eventually move westward. The political means and military tactics that the Turks learned from hundred years of the war against Tang dynasty would be the valuable experience, allowing the Turks to invade the West and achieved the great deeds in West Asia and Eastern Europe. The Turks took down cities and occupied regions in Western Asia and Eastern Europe, demonstrating the powerful military strength of Tang dynasty comparing to the states in the West. The main reason for the Turkish military success in the west was probably the lessons they learned from the repetitive failures against the Tang Empire.

The Xuanwu Gate Incident led to a series of domino effect in the Eurasian continent. Emperor Taizong became the emperor of the newly found Tang dynasty, after killing his two brothers. He soon launched a series of political reform and brought both the Eastern Turkic Khaganate and the Western Turkic Khaganate into subjugation. Emperor Taizong brought China from ashes of ruins into probably the most powerful empire on the planet within decades. His heir, Emperor Gaozong, conquered the Western Turkic Khaganate in the first decade of his reign, and captured the khagan of the western Turks, Ashina Helu, to his capital city, Chang'an. The Turkic tribes had only three choices at this time. They could either choose to integrate into the Tang empire, continue rebel against Tang dynasty, or migrate to further west regions as Emperor Gaozong's conquest to the Western Turkic Khaganate created power vacuum in parts of Central Asia. Therefore, many Turkic tribes, such as Qarluqs and Oghuz, poured into this region and fought for the domination. Qarluqs might have gained the upper hand in the beginning. Oghuz continued to fight against Qarluqs in the area around Syr Darya river, covering the area from modern day Kyrgyzstan to Uzbekistan. Until mid-ninth century, Oghuz finally conquered neighboring tribes. They established an empire stretching from Jambyl region in Uzbekistan to the Aral Sea.

One of the branches of Oghuz, the Seljuks, entered Anatolia. One of the descendants of the Seljuks, the Ottomans, would eventually conquer Constantinople and build a large empire across Asia, Europe and Africa. It appears that interaction and integration between Tang and Turkic culture, people and geographies, which began in the period of the Tang dynasty, led to the formation of the Ottoman Empire. For example, Osman I (r.c.1299-1323/4), the founder of the Ottoman Empire was descended from the Turkic people of the Oghuz tribe. The reason for this is that the Turkic soldiers and generals that had settled in Central Asia under the Tang dynasty spearheaded mass Turkish migration into the area. Following this move, the Turkic culture and language of the Turkic soldiers came to displace the native culture and the Turkic people increasingly came to dominate, eventually leading to the foundation of the Ottoman Empire.

7. Conclusion

In conclusion, the rise of the Tang Dynasty led to the decomposition and demise of the Turkic Dynasty (marked by the emergence of the Eastern and Western Turkic Khaganate and the final demise of the Late Eastern Turkic Khaganate). During the process of decomposition and demise of the Göktürks, some Turkic tribes did not want to surrender to the rule of the Tang Dynasty and migrated to Central Asia and West Asia to find new living space. After centuries of development, one of them, the Seljuk Turks, has sprung up and continues to develop and eventually created the Ottoman Empire.

The Turks were an ethnic minority in the northwestern region of the ancient China. According to Chinese historical records, the Turks originated in the south of the Altai Mountains, the Golden Mountains, and used to be subordinate to the Rouran Khaganate. In 552, the Göktürks conquered the Rouran khaganate under the leadership of Ashina clan, and by the end of the same century, they had become a world power, stretching from Manchuria in the east to the western outskirts of Pontic Steppe in eastern Europe in the West. In 630, the Eastern Turkic Khaganate was conquered by the Tang dynasty. In 658, the Western Turkic Khaganate was incorporated into the Tang domain. The interaction between the Tang empire and the Göktürks was not only a military conquest but also a cultural integration between the Turks and the Chinese.

The rise of the Tang empire left only three choices for the Turks at this time. They could either choose to integrate into the Tang empire, continue rebel against Tang dynasty, or migrate to further west regions. The Tang empire firmly controlled the East Asian and parts of Central Asia, The Turks who were unwilling to be assimilated would eventually move westward. The two Turkic tribes, Qarluqs and Oghuz, poured into the areas left to be power vacuum by Tang dynasty, and fought for the domination in Central Asia for centuries. Qarluqs might have gained the upper hand in the beginning. They might even be the force that stopped Oghuz from moving eastward. One

branch of the Oghuz, the Seljuk Turks entered Anatolia and created the Seljuk empire. Their descendant, the Ottomans, would conquer Constantinople and build the famous Ottoman empire in the following centuries. Therefore, the rise of the Tang empire had unquestionable effect to the Turkic west migration.

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