

## The Impact of General Li Jing's Military Thought on the Fall of the Eastern Türk Qaghanate

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### *Abstract*

*The Eastern Türk Qaghanate seemed to enjoy the zenith of its power during the 620s, until it suddenly weakened and fell within a very short time between the years 627 and 630 because of ecologic, economic, military, administrative and social problems. The death blow to this qaghanate was struck by General Li Jing, who commanded a field army of the Tang Dynasty of China and brought destruction upon it. Even though several reasons caused the decline of this qaghanate, Li Jing's military abilities caused its final fall. A work titled Questions and Replies Between Tang Taizong and Li Wei Gong, one of the Seven Military Classics of China, is claimed to be a collection of dialogues between the Chinese emperor Tang Taizong and his general Li Jing. While some scholars believe it to be forged, others think that it is based on original drafts kept in the imperial archives. This work is actually very significant as it contains the military thought of Li Jing, but until now, it still has not been evaluated in the studies focusing on Türk history. Thus, examining the general's military thought in this work also helps us to better understand how he managed to defeat the Eastern Türk Qaghanate in the campaign of 630. In this study, we have examined Li Jing's military thought and we have compared his statements in this work with his actions during the Türk campaign of 630 recorded in the Chinese sources. Our opinion is that because his statements in this work coincide mostly with his actions during the campaign of 630, the Questions and Replies is mostly based on original drafts that had only a few later amendments to it.*

**Keywords:** Eastern Türk Qaghanate, Li Jing, Military Thought, Tang Taizong Li Wei Gong Wen Dui, Tang Dynasty.

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## **General Li Jing'in Askerî Düşüncesinin Doğu Türk Kağanlığı'nın Çöküşüne Etkisi**

### **Özet**

Doğu Türk Kağanlığı, 620'lerde gücünün doruğundayken çeşitli ekolojik, ekonomik, askerî, yönetsel ve toplumsal sorunlar yüzünden 627-630 arasında çok kısa bir süre içerisinde birdenbire zayıflayarak çökmüştür. Bu kağanlığa öldürücü darbe, Çin'deki Tang Hanedanı'nın bir seferî ordusuna komutan eden ve kağanlığa yıkım getiren General Li Jing tarafından indirilmiştir. Her ne kadar kağanlığın gerileşiminin birkaç sebebi olsa da, onun nihaî çöküşüne Li Jing'in askerî yetenekleri yol açmıştır. Çin'deki Yedi Askerî Klasik'ten birisi olan Tang Taizong ve Li Wei Gong Arasında Sorular ve Cevaplar başlığını taşıyan bir eserin, Çin imparatoru Tang Taizong ve generali Li Jing arasındaki karşılıklı konuşmaların bir derlemesi olduğu ileri sürülmüştür. Bazı bilim adamları bu eserin sahte olduğuna inanırlarken, diğerleri onun imparatorluk arşivlerinde saklanan orijinal taslaklara dayandığını düşünmektedirler. Bu eser aslında Li Jing'in askerî düşüncesini barındırması açısından çok önemlidir, ancak bugüne kadar Türk Kağanlığı'nın tarihini inceleyen çalışmalarda değerlendirilmemiştir. Generalin bu eserdeki askerî düşüncesini incelemek, aynı zamanda bize onun 630 Seferi'nde Doğu Türk Kağanlığı'nı nasıl yenmeyi başardığını daha iyi anlamamıza yardımcı olacaktır. Bu çalışmamızda, Li Jing'in askerî düşüncesini inceledik ve onun bu eserdeki sözlerini, onun Çin kaynaklarında kayıtlı olan 630 yılı Türk Seferi'ndeki hareketleriyle karşılaştırdık. Görüşümüze göre, onun bu eserdeki sözleri onun 630 Seferi'ndeki hareketleriyle büyük oranda uyduğu için, Sorular ve Cevaplar büyük oranda orijinal taslaklara dayanarak derlenmiş ve üzerinde sonradan yalnızca birkaç değişiklik yapılmıştır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Doğu Türk Kağanlığı, Li Jing, Askerî Düşünce, Tang Taizong Li Wei Gong Wen Dui, Tang Hanedanı.

Following its foundation in Mongolia in the year 552, the Türk (Tujue 突厥, Gok-türk) Qaghanate became the dominant power in Central Asia by conquering vast territories and subduing numerous peoples. However, rivalries within the ruling dynasty soon led to the division of the qaghanate in 583 between eastern and western halves, which constantly fought against each other for supremacy. In the meanwhile, the once divided China was politically reunited under the rule of the Sui 隋 Dynasty (581-618), a development which speeded up the fragmentation process of the Türk Qaghanate. Soon, the Eastern Türk Qaghanate was reduced to a small puppet state subordinate to the Sui Dynasty, but it started to regain its power while the Sui was constantly growing weaker due to incompetent rulership and economic hardships. The power of this qaghanate reached its zenith during the reign of its energetic ruler Shibi Qaghan (Shibi Kehan 始畢可汗; reigned 609-619), whose besieging of the Chinese emperor Sui Yangdi 隋煬帝 (reigned 604-618) at Yanmen 雁門 in 615 triggered rebellions throughout China, eventually resulting with the fall of the Sui Dynasty. China entered a period of political division and turmoil, in which numerous rival warlords vied for power, including Li Yuan 李淵 (later Tang Gaozu 唐高祖; reigned 618-626) stationed at Taiyuan 太原. During this period, Shibi Qaghan provided military aid to several of these warlords including Li Yuan, and helped Li Yuan to survive in this chaotic environment. Eventually Li Yuan founded the Tang 唐 Dynasty (618-907) and reunified most of China under his rule. As the Tang starting growing stronger, the Türks abandoned their policy of supporting the Tang and instead, starting supporting Tang's rivals. Shibi Qaghan's successors Churī Qaghan (Chuluo Kehan 處羅可汗; reigned 619-620) and Illig Qaghan (Xieli Kehan 頡利可汗; reigned 620-630) continued this policy. The early years of Illig Qaghan's reign were spent with intense raids into China and in the year 626, the qaghan even managed to advance as far as the Tang capital Chang'an 長安, where he met the new and young Chinese emperor Tang Taizong 唐太宗 (reigned 626-649). Power of the Tang Dynasty was still fragile and the Eastern Türk Qaghanate seemed to be enjoying the zenith of its might as Tang Taizong had to bribe the Türks to have them withdraw back to their territories. However, the new emperor had already noticed that the Eastern Türk Qaghanate was actually growing weaker from inside, and it was not as strong and concrete as it seemed from outside (Sinor 1994: 297-298, 305-308; Wright 2007: 140-143, 147-149; Wechsler 2007a: 150-168, 181-182, 2007b: 220-221).

Just a year later, the Eastern Türk Qaghanate was struck in 627 with a series of natural and man-made disasters. Heavy snowfall covered the grazing grounds of animal herds, causing mass deaths among the domestic animals of the Türks. Since Türk economy was primarily based on animal husbandry, these mass deaths disrupted the economy and also caused hunger on a major scale, reducing Türk population. Illig Qaghan's excessive military spending of the previous years was already disrupting the economy, and when combined with ecologic disasters, economic hardships forced the qaghan and his subordinates to resort to heavy taxation. This caused many vassal nomadic tribes to rebel against the qaghanate's administration, and these tribes eventually united under the rule of the newly-established qaghanate of Xueyantuo 薛延陀, one of the rebellious groups. The Xueyantuo Qaghanate also acquired control of the Ötükan region in central Mongolia, which was a sacred location believed to provide

legitimacy to Turkic rulers, thus inflicting further damage on the charisma of Illig Qaghan. In the meanwhile, Illig Qaghan was favoring foreigners like Soghdians and Chinese in state affairs, which made him unpopular among Türk noblemen who were the representatives of the founding element of the qaghanate. When members of the Türk dynasty failed in suppressing the rebellions, they were punished by Illig Qaghan, which led these noblemen to abandon him as they were already dissatisfied from his rule. Some disruptive activities of foreigners living among the Türks also contributed to the fall of the qaghanate during this process. Tang Taizong was already observing the weakening of the qaghanate since 627, but he was of the opinion that it was still too early to organize a military campaign to destroy this qaghanate. Thus, after the first signs of the weakening of the Eastern Türk Qaghanate appeared in the year 627, the emperor waited for two more years. When he was certain that the qaghanate was quite weakened, he decided in the year 629 to take advantage of this opportunity by organizing a military campaign and destroying the qaghanate, so he ordered the preparations of a military campaign to begin. The Tang field army commanded by General Li Jing 李靖 launched a campaign in early 630 and dispersed the remaining Türk forces after three successful raids. Eventually, one of Li Jing's subordinates named Zhang Baoxiang 張寶相 captured Illig Qaghan and destroyed the Eastern Türk Qaghanate (Graff 2002: 33-71; Erkoç 2015: 76-119).

The victorious commander-in-chief of this campaign, Li Jing, was a general with a successful military career.<sup>1</sup> His experiences from previous wars formed the basis of his victory in the Türk campaign of 630, but his victory was also based on his proficiency over Chinese texts on military thought written up to his time. With his military thought strengthened both by his experiences and his readings, Li Jing managed to defeat and destroy the Eastern Türk Qaghanate in the year 630. In order to comprehend how Li Jing managed to do so, we have to examine how Li Jing put his military thought in practice while fighting against the Türks. Li Jing's military thought has been recorded in the *Questions and Replies Between Tang Taizong and Li Wei Gong* (*Tang Taizong Li Wei Gong Wen Dui* 唐太宗李衛公問對; *WD* from here on), one of the *Seven Military Classics* (*Wujing Qishu* 武經七書) of China. It is not known by whom and when this work was written.<sup>2</sup> In the year 1078, the Song Dynasty emperor Song Shenzong 宋神宗 (reigned 1067-1085) issued an edict, in which he ordered all the military texts in China to be edited and their new copies to be prepared.

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1 Li Jing's military career has been narrated in detail in his biographies found in the *JTS* and *XTS* (*JTS* 67.2475-2482; *XTS* 93.3811-3815). His life has also been narrated in his tomb inscription, but his Türk campaign of 630 has not been mentioned there (*Quan Tangwen* 152.1551b-1554a).

2 There are different views on whether this text was based on discussions between the emperor Tang Taizong and his general Li Jing, or not. According to one opinion, this text has been written in the late Tang or early Song 宋 (960-1279) period by being attributed to the emperor and his general; thus, the text is forged, and it is not an original piece. However, according to another opinion, this text is real and it has been compiled by being based on the discussions made between the emperor and the general. Yet, it is still unclear whether this text was compiled directly from the records written during the discussions, or later by the editing of these drafts kept in the palace archive (Sawyer 2007: 312-313, 488-489).

One of the texts demanded by the emperor to be edited and worked on is mentioned in the edict with the title *Li Jing's Military Rules (Li Jing Bingfa 李靖兵法)*.<sup>3</sup> The new version that came out after the palace officials edited, corrected and made additions to the existing text was given the title *Questions and Replies Between Tang Taizong and Li Wei Gong*.<sup>4</sup> According to this work, Tang Taizong summoned his experienced general Li Jing several times to his presence and the two mutually discussed about military matters. The emperor and the general also talked about various military texts written on these matters, primarily the *SZBF*, asking questions to each other and sharing their views. According to this work, Li Jing has also mentioned his confrontations with the Türks several times during the conversations.<sup>5</sup> The fall of the Eastern Türk Qaghanate has been previously studied by Chavannes, Eberhard, Grousset, Gumilëv, Wechsler, Sinor, Taşağıl and Gömeç (Chavannes 1903: 264-265; Grousset 1970: 92; Sinor 1994: 308; Eberhard 1995: 203; Taşağıl 1995: 82-84; Gumilëv 2002: 257-261; Wechsler 2007b: 221-222; Gömeç 2011: 89-93), while Graff has written an important article on the significance of Tang Dynasty's strategy in the fall of this empire (Graff 2002: 33-71). However, even though Li Jing's military thought has been presented in the *WD* in detail, no attention has been given to it in the studies focusing on Türk history. Thus, we are examining this work in our study to be able to comprehend Li Jing's military thought and with what kind of mentality he conducted his campaign against the Eastern Türk Qaghanate.

Li Jing's statements regarding the *Zheng* 正 and *Qi* 奇 tactics, as well as their mutually changeable usage, have been recorded numerous times in the *WD*, which has transmitted Li Jing's military thought.<sup>6</sup> The general has defined *Zheng* and *Qi* in several different ways in the *WD*. While *Zheng* can be the troops advancing forward to attack during a battle and *Qi* can be a feigned retreat (*WD*, *SKQS* 726.145a), the main body of the army engaging with the enemy can also be *Zheng* and the usage

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3 Du You 杜佑 has also quoted from a work titled *Li Jing Bingfa* in his work *TD*. It has also been claimed that *Li Jing Bingfa* as a work of military thought similar to the *SZBF* did not actually exist and that the collection of texts written by the general on military matters was later given this name (Sawyer 2007: 489).

4 According to Li Jing's biographies in the *JTS* and *XTS*, he was given the title *Duke of Wei Country (Weiguo Gong 衛國公)* in the year 637. The reason why *WD*'s title contains the expression *Li, Duke of Wei (Li Wei Gong 李衛公)* is because starting from the year 637, Li Jing was carrying this title (*JTS* 67.2481; *XTS* 93.3815).

5 The *WD* has been translated to English by Sawyer and He. He's translation also contains explanations in modern Chinese (He 2004: 81-265; Sawyer 2007: 321-360).

6 For Li Jing's explanations regarding this matter, see *WD*, *SKQS* 726.145a-146a, 150a-151a, 154b. The terms *Zheng* and *Qi* have been translated into English in many different ways. *Zheng*'s translations include "straight; upright; due; correct; right", "orthodox", "direct", "normal", "straightforward", "regular", "normal and regular methods, frontal attacks and defensive moves" and "conventional". Similarly, among *Qi*'s translations are "strange; queer; rare; uncommon; unusual", "unorthodox", "indirect" "extraordinary", "surprise", "irregular", "unusual and unexpected methods, sudden, surprise attacks, flanking movements" and "unconventional". Likewise, the term *Qibing* 奇兵 has been translated into English as "an army or troops suddenly appearing from nowhere; an ingenious military move" (Erkoç 2015: 191).

of reserve forces can be *Qi* (*WD, SKQS* 726.145b). Units deployed on the four main directions on the battlefield form the *Zheng*, while units deployed on the four corners and reserve forces kept for emergency situations form the *Qi*. These *Qi* units can be deployed and used by the commanders according to the changing conditions of the battle (*WD, SKQS* 726.146b). Similarly, based on the military thought of the famous Three Kingdoms period statesman and strategist Zhuge Liang 諸葛亮 (181-234), Li Jing has defined the units in battles defending the positions as *Zheng* and the maneuvering units as *Qi* (*WD, SKQS* 726.152a, 154b). According to Li Jing, during a battle, *Zheng* units should be used if the enemy forces would be strong, but *Qi* units should be chosen if the enemy forces would be weak (*WD, SKQS* 726.150b-151a). Defining the *Zheng* and *Qi* units in a more physical manner, Li Jing has also stated that cavalry and infantry should be used separately as *Qi* and *Zheng*. According to this view, infantrymen should be taught *Zheng* and cavalymen should be taught *Qi* tactics, and these different units should be used for different purposes during battles (*WD, SKQS* 726.153b). Indeed, Li Jing has used *Qi* units in a changeable way as *Zheng* while fighting against the Türks in the year 630. Attacking the Türks at Dingxiang 定襄 with three thousand and at Tieshan 鐵山 (“Iron Mountain”)<sup>7</sup> with ten thousand cavalymen, Li Jing has used these cavalymen, who would be normally used to make unexpected maneuvers against the enemy (thus as a *Qi* force), as his main striking forces (thus as *Zheng* forces) during both engagements. Just as Li Jing has numerously stated, while normally the *Zheng* units in Chinese armies would be formed usually from infantrymen who would be used for frontal attacks or defenses, Li Jing has used cavalymen as a *Zheng* force when fighting against the Türks, who fought in a manner quite different from the Chinese (*JTS* 67.2479; *XTS* 93.3814; *ZZTJ* 193.6070, 6072).

While talking about battle tactics, Li Jing has laid emphasis on the necessity of launching surprise attacks and he has also given examples from Chinese history regarding this matter (*WD, SKQS* 726.156a, 159b).<sup>8</sup> The reason why Li Jing has numerously mentioned confusing the enemy by launching surprise attacks is because he himself has gained victory three times in the year 630 both at Dingxiang, Yinshan 陰山 (*Chughay Quzi* of the Türk inscriptions)<sup>9</sup> and Tieshan by using this tactic. Following the capture of Dingxiang, Li Jing captured the Türk vanguard positioned at Yinshan while marching towards Tieshan and he continued his march after taking these Türks prisoner. Losing his outpost that could warn him of an incoming attack,

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7 For the location of this mountain, see Liu 1958: 580 and Chang 1968: 98.

8 Apart from these, Li Jing has also talked several times about confusing the enemy by organizing feigned retreats during a battle (*WD, SKQS* 726.145a, 146a, 156a). However, Li Jing has not organized any feigned retreats while fighting against the Türks in the year 630 and he has only conducted surprise attacks.

9 Regarding the location of this place and its identification with the *Chughay Quzi* of the Türk inscriptions, Czeglédy 1962: 57-59, 63, 67. Some scholars have previously chosen to write the first part of this place name as *Choghay*, but recently it has been established that it should be written as *Chughay* (Ölmez 1997: 184).

Illig Qaghan was thus faced with an attack he was not expecting and he was defeated (*JTS* 67.2479; *XTS* 93.3814; *ZZTJ* 193.6072).<sup>10</sup> In the *WD*, it has been recorded that Tang Taizong has reminded Li Jing of the general's usage of *Qi* tactics while fighting against the Türks; as we have seen above, the three raids conducted by Li Jing on the Türks at Dingxiang, Yinshan and Tieshan were all *Qi* tactics (*WD*, *SKQS* 726. 144b).

One of the instances in the *WD* when Li Jing talked about the campaign he conducted against the Türks in the year 630 is at the part where the issue of whether he had used the Chinese envoy Tang Jian 唐儉 as an "Expendable Spy (*Sijian* 死間)" or not.<sup>11</sup> During the conversation, Tang Taizong told Li Jing that he was suspicious of Li Jing using the envoy Tang Jian in this way while attacking the Türks. However, Li Jing rejected the emperor's view and defended himself by saying that he did not use Tang Jian as an "Expendable Spy", but took advantage of the situation by going into action together with his units because he thought the envoy's negotiations with the Türks would remain inconclusive (*WD*, *SKQS* 726.155b).<sup>12</sup> Indeed, we know from the Chinese sources that following his loss of the city of Dingxiang, Illig Qaghan had sent an envoy to the Tang court and declared his intention of submitting to the Tang Dynasty, but he had done this only to stall the Tang field army and strengthen his own army later after fleeing northwards when spring would come. Previously, Li Shiji 李世勣, commander of a unit of the Tang field army, had defeated a Türk force at the Baidao 白道 region<sup>13</sup>; after his victory, he had met there with the commander-in-chief Li Jing following the latter's capture of Dingxiang. When they met, the two commanders realized that the qaghan had the possibility of fleeing to the north of the Gobi Desert

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10 Even though Illig Qaghan easily fell prey to this surprise attack, it was described in the late 6th-early 7th century Byzantine military manual *Strategikon* that it was difficult to make a surprise attack on the Türks and Avars. According to this source, these peoples were forming their encampments and their battle formations under the darkness of the night instead of doing these during daytime and they were placing watchmen on certain spots in a way so that these watchmen would not lose contact with each other. Hence, it was very difficult to launch a night raid on the Türks and Avars (*Strategikon* XI.2). However, the opposite of this information has been given in the *DTCYQJZ*; here, it has been narrated that the Türks, who were constantly on the move, were regularly shifting the places of their encampments, so they did not burden themselves with night watches and daytime patrols (*DTCYQJZ* 1.2).

11 According to the Chinese sources, following the fall of Dingxiang to the Tang forces, Illig Qaghan retreated to Tieshan and sent an envoy to the Tang court to declare his submission to the Tang Dynasty during the 2nd month of the 4th year of the Zhenguan 貞觀 reign period (March 20-April 17, 630) (*JTS* 194A.5159; *TD* 197.5411; *ZZTJ* 193.6072). In response, Tang administration dispatched the state official Tang Jian and General An Xiuren 安修仁 as envoys to Illig Qaghan to conduct negotiations (*JTS* 58.2307, 67.2479, 2485, 194A.5159; *TD* 197.5411; *XTS* 89.3760, 93.3814, 215A.6035; *ZZTJ* 193.6072).

12 Li Jing has also expressed in the *WD* that he thought the usage of spies during a war was an inferior resort (*WD*, *SKQS* 726.155b). However, there are examples of Li Jing's usage of spies in wars. After the fall of Dingxiang, the Türks had fled to the mouth of the Gobi Desert. Chaos broke out in their encampment because of the panic spreading among them and in the meanwhile, spies previously sent by Li Jing persuaded some of Illig Qaghan's entourage who had gained the ruler's trust to abandon him and surrender to Li Jing (*JTS* 67.2479; *XTS* 93.3814; *ZZTJ* 193.6071).

13 This region is currently located to the north of Hohhot in Inner Mongolia (Chang 1968: 96).

and they discussed that the Türks might not have taken enough defensive measures because the Chinese envoys were currently negotiating with the qaghan. As a result of the meeting, Li Jing and Li Shiji decided to launch a surprise attack on Illig Qaghan's encampment (*JTS* 67.2479, 2485; *TD* 156.4005; *XTS* 93.3814, 3818; *ZZTJ* 193.6070, 6072). As we have previously mentioned, even though Li Jing claimed that he acted in this way during the war only because of a necessity, it has been narrated in his biographies in the *JTS* and *XTS* that he and Tang Jian had a disagreement with each other and that he did not like Tang Jian (*JTS* 67.2479; *XTS* 93.3814).

Li Jing has expressed in the *WD* that during a campaign, an army should march with a flexible structure and if necessary, it should be divided into two, while he has also given two examples of this case from Chinese history (*WD*, *SKQS* 726.156b). The method of dividing the army during a campaign has been used by Li Jing against the Eastern Türk Qaghanate in the year 630. As we have already mentioned above, after Li Jing captured the city of Dingxiang from Illig Qaghan by launching a surprise attack, the qaghan had fled to Tieshan. Sending envoys to China with the purpose of stalling Tang forces, Illig Qaghan thought that he was safe when envoys from China visited him, so he had slackened off the defensive measures. Thereupon, Li Jing formed a striking force of ten thousand cavalymen and divided it into three branches. Li Jing himself took command of the main unit, appointed General Su Dingfang 蘇定方 as the commander of the vanguard which would conduct the first charge and sent Li Shiji to the Mouth of the Desert (Qikou 磧口)<sup>14</sup> with the purpose of blocking the qaghan's escape route to the Gobi. Indeed, Illig Qaghan managed to flee when the Tang army attacked and saved himself from being captured by Li Jing, but his route was cut off by Li Shiji while he was trying to escape to the Gobi Desert with his last remaining military force. Türk nobles surrendered upon seeing Li Shiji's unit and the qaghan had to flee with a small group after changing his route (*JTS* 67.2485-2486, 83.2777; *XTS* 93.3818, 111.4137; *ZZTJ* 193.6072-6073).

The matter of providing logistics during a campaign has been briefly mentioned by Li Jing in the *WD*. While talking about logistics, Li Jing has quoted from Sunzi's 孫子 remarks on this matter, expressing that wars should not be conducted for a very long duration. Li Jing has also emphasized the importance of capturing provisions from the enemy, preventing the enemy from acquiring provisions and wearing out the enemy in this way (*WD*, *SKQS* 726.156a). When fighting against both the Xiongnu 匈奴 and the Türks, dynasties in China often could not fight decisive engagements due to the logistic problems that would start after crossing their armies to the northern side of the border. Chinese armies, which were primarily formed from infantry, were carrying their provisions on carts during campaigns, just like the armies of other sedentary empires. However, when marching northwards, logistic problems were starting to rise up where the Chinese-Turkic border ended and the Gobi Desert started. Provisions of the army could not be carried in a fast way together with the army and

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14 For the location of this place, see Liu 1958-II: 580.



Chinese armies crossing the border could not usually advance too far away from the border, being forced to retreat back to China as the danger of running out of their provisions would show up.<sup>15</sup> On the contrary, horseback-riding nomadic Turkic armies fighting against Chinese armies were carrying their provisions with them together with their horses and not with heavy carts. That is why they generally did not suffer from logistical problems and had greater mobility. Because of this, even though Illig Qaghan had started losing his power starting from the year 627, Tang Taizong also had wait for two more years before going to war with his archrival until he finally ordered the preparations for the military campaign against the qaghan to begin in the year 629. Illig Qaghan had already lost the Ötüken region to the newly-established Xueyantuo Qaghanate and got trapped in a narrow area to the south of the Gobi Desert; as the qaghan's escape route to the vast Mongolian steppes was cut off, Tang Taizong finally decided in the year 629 to launch a campaign against the qaghan. Even though Illig Qaghan had now lost the Eastern Türk Qaghanate's vast territories in Mongolia he was previously ruling, he had delayed his surrender to the Tang Dynasty with the expectation of using the advantages of the Gobi Desert for disappearing without a trace. Because of this, Illig Qaghan sent an envoy to the Tang court to conduct peace negotiations when he retreated to Tieshan after losing the city of Dingxiang in the year 630. However, this did not escape the attentions of the Tang commanders Li Jing and Li Shiji, who had met at Baidao after starting the campaign against the Eastern Türk Qaghanate at the head of separate units. During their meeting at Baidao, these two commanders decided to launch a surprise attack on Illig Qaghan, selected ten thousand picked cavalymen for this mission and decided that these riders should depart together with provisions enough for twenty days. Prepared for battle in a way similar to the Türk-style cavalymen Li Yuan had started training in the year 615<sup>16</sup>, this striking force took its provisions with them just like the Türks without requiring heavy baggage carts. Thus, this force found a solution to the logistical problem that might have interrupted the chase, which would have been conducted in case the qaghan fled. Thus, having gotten free of the burden of baggage carts, this striking force delivered a surprise attack to the encampment of Illig Qaghan, ripped the qaghan of his final remaining manpower, quickly captured the qaghan who had fled from the region and delivered him back to China (*JTS* 67.2479, 2485; *TD* 156.4005; *XTS* 93.3814, 3818; *ZZTJ* 193.6072).

To sum up, the military thought of Li Jing, who conducted a successful war against the Eastern Türk Qaghanate and destroyed it after a campaign he commanded in the year 630, has been recorded in the *WD* in detail. Li Jing's dialogues with the

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15 Indeed, one of Sunzi's remarks about the protection of baggage trains has been given in *SZBF* 7.11: 『是故軍無輜重則亡無糧食則亡無委積則亡』 (“We may take it then that an army without its baggage-train is lost; without provisions it is lost; without bases of supply it is lost.”) (Giles 1910: 60).

16 When Li Yuan was serving as the commander of the army of Taiyuan near the Chinese-Türk border in 615, he had trained a mobile force of two thousand cavalymen who were trained exactly like Türk cavalymen. Li Yuan's earliest military achievements during this period were won against Türk raiders thanks to this mobile force (*DTCYQJZ* 1.2; *XTS* 1.2; *ZZTJ* 183.5717).

Chinese emperor Tang Taizong regarding military matters have been recorded in this work. Describing *Zheng* as units engaging in combat with each other after coming face-to-face in battles and expressing that *Zheng* units are generally formed from infantrymen, Li Jing has remarked that *Qi* includes every move the enemy does not anticipate during a battle and *Qi* units are usually formed from cavalrymen. However, the topic Li Jing has especially emphasized is the mutually changeable usage of *Zheng* and *Qi*. According to him, the main striking force of *Zheng* units can be ordered to wait while the attacks can be made entirely with *Qi* units in order to confuse the enemy. Likewise, *Qi* units who are normally used only in times of need can also be used as the main striking force, or in other words, as *Zheng* units. What caused Li Jing to gain victory against the Türks in the year 630 was that he used his cavalrymen, who formed the *Qi* units in his army, for frontal attacks as *Zheng* units, but conducting his attacks in the form of surprise attacks, that is to say, as *Qi* tactics. The general's statements in the *WD* regarding the mutually changeable usage of *Zheng* and *Qi* are depicting his Türk campaign of the year 630. Indeed, while talking about tactics in this work, Li Jing has stated numerous times that it is extremely important to confuse and deceive the enemy during a battle. While examining the general's military career, one can see that he has won many of his victories by launching surprise attacks and raids on his enemies. Li Jing's destruction of the Eastern Türk Qaghanate has also been conducted in the same manner, as a result of him launching three successive raids. Besides, according to him, armies should be divided while on the campaign and different units of the army should be able to come to each other's aid when needed. An example to this suggestion of Li Jing in real life can be seen again in his Türk campaign of the year 630, when he used Li Shiji's units to block the escape route of the Türks and sent the vanguard under the command of Su Dingfang as the primary striking force during the final raid on Illig Qaghan's encampment.

It is surprising that Li Jing has mentioned a most significant matter such as logistics in a very brief way in the *WD*. It is known from the Chinese sources describing his Türk campaign that he paid attention to logistical problems and organized his movements accordingly. One of the general's military thoughts narrated in the *WD* is about the usage of spies during the campaigns, a topic he is observed to have acted differently in real life when compared with his statement in the work. According to the *WD*, Li Jing saw the usage of spies unnecessary, but Chinese sources have revealed that he has made usage of spies during his Türk campaign in the year 630. However, apart from some differences such as in this case, it can be observed that Li Jing's military thought narrated in the *WD* is coinciding on a major scale with his military activities we know from the Chinese sources. Tactics used by the general have been described in the sources in detail, and it can be ascertained that the general's military thought in the *WD* have formed the background of these tactics. This makes one to think that most, if not all, of the *WD*'s text has been based on original records. As to some of Li Jing's thoughts narrated in the text contrary to his practices in real life, they might have been later additions to the text. It is also possible that such examples might have been erroneously copied or written while the text was copied during the later periods.

## Abbreviations

- DTCYQJZ = Da Tang Chuangye Qijuzhu 大唐創業起居注  
JTS = Jiu Tangshu 舊唐書  
SKQS = Siku Quanshu 四庫全書  
SZBF = Sunzi Bingfa 孫子兵法  
TD = Tongdian 通典  
WD = Tang Taizong Li Wei Gong Wen Dui 唐太宗李衛公問對  
XTS = Xin Tangshu 新唐書  
ZZTJ = Zizhi Tongjian 資治通鑑

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