Marriage alliances between Chinese dynasties and neighboring powers in Early Medieval China

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What is it about?

This research focuses on marriage alliances concluded between various Chinese dynasties and other powers in Early Medieval China. These neighboring powers include, among others, Tibet, the Uighurs, the Turks, the Khitan and the Tuyuhun. In most cases, the Chinese side gave a Princess of Imperial kinship as a wife to the foreign ruler. This girl or woman was often not a real daughter of the Emperor, but a member of a distant branch of the Imperial family. She was merely invested with the title of "Princess" for the sake of the alliance.
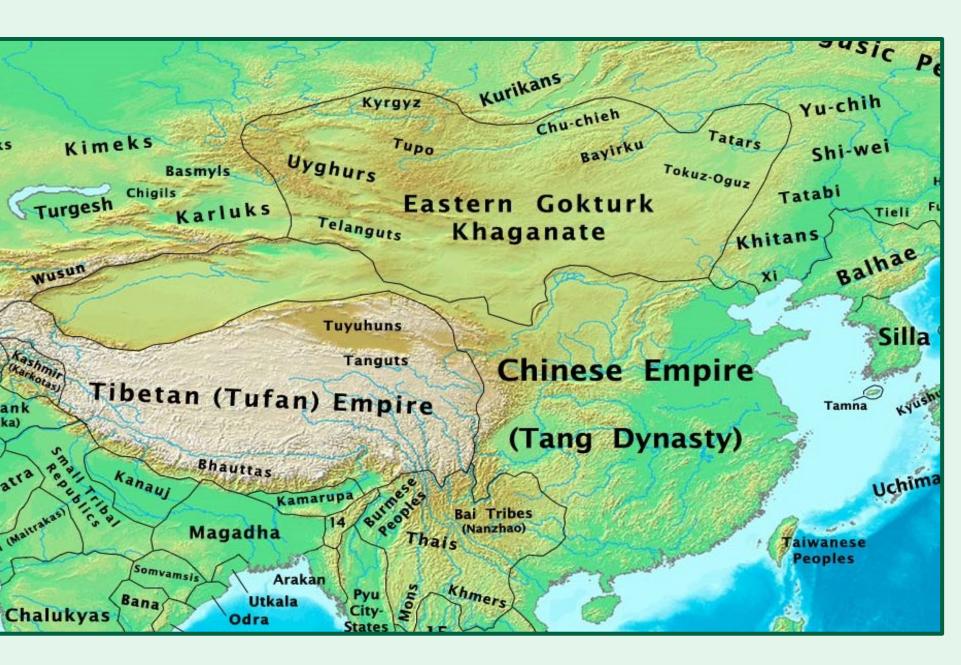
Materials

- Dynastic histories, e.g. *Jinshu*, *Beishi*, *Jiu Tangshu*, *Xin Tangshu*
- Texts and chapters on history, politics, institutions etc, e.g. *Zizhi tongjian*, *Tongdian*, *Tang huiyao*
- Other primary sources, such as epigraphs for the Princesses, their husbands and sons; possibly manuscripts (Dunhuang, Turfan)
- I aim to further include sources that have been transmitted outside Chinese tradition (e.g. Tibetan,Turk)

Research goals

I aim to provide a clear analysis of the described marriage alliances and hope to answer the following questions:

- What factors (political, economical, cultural, social) led to successful marriage alliances?
- Under what circumstances did attempted marriage alliances fail?
- What strategies and motives can be discerned? Is there a pattern? Did it change under different rulers?
- What was the role of the Princesses in the political landscapes of Chinese courts and their husbands' culture?

Tang-China and its neighbors around 700 AD

How can digital methods help me in my research?

For my research, I will be working with a large body of materials. In this case, digital methods (textual markup, database, visualization tools etc.) can be useful for:

- **Organizing** and **managing** large amounts of text
- **Comparing** texts with similar or identical text passages
- **Identifying** rhetorical patterns and emerging discourses around the topic of marriage alliance in the historical sources
- **Clarifying** textual structures
- **Visualizing** results in graphs, charts and maps

References

Map by Thomas Lessman, available at www.WorldHistoryMaps.info

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