

the imperial forces north of the Kuku-nōr, and that notwithstanding the successes won by certain Chinese generals in 673 and 677-9, Chinese supremacy in those regions was not re-established until 692.⁴⁹ It seems difficult to believe that the Tibetans, who had then risen to formidable power, should have conquered the Tārīm basin and made their influence felt even north of the T'ien-shan, without having at least temporarily secured mastery over the oases from Tun-huang to Turfān, through which led the least difficult line of access to the former.⁵⁰

Final phase
of Chinese
occupation.

The recovery of the 'Four Garrisons' in 692 was followed by a period of consolidation of Chinese power in Eastern Turkestan, which extended over more than half a century and must have brought increased prosperity to Turfān.⁵¹ Rapid decline set in with the crushing defeat inflicted in 751 by the Arabs in Tāshkend territory on Kao Hsien-chih, the leader of the famous expedition across the Pāmirs and Hindukush, who then had charge of the 'Four Garrisons'. But even then Turfān remained in Chinese hands for forty years longer. Otherwise the Protectorates of Kuchā and Pei-t'ing could scarcely have maintained themselves, after the complete severance of direct communication with the Empire caused by the Tibetan conquest of Kan-su and its western marches, including Tun-huang, in about A. D. 766.⁵² The very interesting records which M. Chavannes has collected from the T'ang Annals concerning this final phase of Chinese dominion in these outlying territories, and reproduced in Appendix A of *Ancient Khotan*, distinctly mention Hsi, i. e. Turfān, together with I[-wu] or Hāmi and Pei-t'ing, as the districts governed by Li Yüan-chung, to whom the Emperor in 781 granted the title of 'Grand Protector of Pei-t'ing'. He and Kuo Hsin, governor of the Four Garrisons, had managed in that year to send messengers to the imperial court by devious routes through the territories held by friendly Hui-ho 回紇, i. e. Uigur tribes.

Tibetan
attacks,
A. D. 789.

The enfeebled Empire had to content itself with bestowing great titles, nominal promotion and the like, upon those valiant Wardens of its last Central-Asian possessions, their officers and men, without affording the help against the increasing pressure of the Tibetans from the south which had, no doubt, been prayed for.⁵³ In 783-4 a proposal to hand over to the latter 'the territories of I 伊 (Hāmi), Hsi 西 and Pei-t'ing 北庭' was under serious consideration by the Emperor, but was finally negatived.⁵⁴ Towards the close of the year 789 fresh reports reached the court from Pei-t'ing, showing the desperate straits to which were reduced the Chinese who still held that territory and Turfān. The party of officials which had brought these reports, travelling by way of the Uigurs, was evidently that to which the Buddhist pilgrim Wu-k'ung had attached himself when regaining China after an absence of nearly forty years in the 'Western countries' and India.⁵⁵ The Tibetans were reported to be attacking Pei-t'ing with the help of Karluk and other Turk tribes, while an Uigur force was coming to relieve it.

⁴⁹ See Chavannes, *Turcs occid.*, pp. 114, 119, 122, 280; also for a summary of the data relating to this Tibetan invasion of the 'Four Garrisons', *Anc. Khotan*, i. p. 61.

⁵⁰ In this connexion it may be noted that when the Chinese commander P'ei Hsing-chien with a small force proceeded in 677 on an expedition against a Turk chief allied with the Tibetans he was met outside Hsi chou (Yār-khoto) by the former's men; see *Turcs occid.*, p. 74, note 3.

A little after 679 the Annals record the transfer of Wang Fang-i, bearing the title of Protector of An-hsi, to the prefecture of the T'ing district, the later Pei-t'ing; cf. *ibid.*, p. 76 note.

⁵¹ For a summary review of this period, and references to the data furnished by Chavannes, *Turcs occid.*, see *Anc. Khotan*, i. pp. 62 sq.

⁵² See *Anc. Khotan*, i. p. 63, and M. Chavannes's App. A, *ibid.*, i. p. 534.

⁵³ See M. Chavannes's extracts from the *Tzū chih tung chien*, *loc. cit.*, i. pp. 534 sq. The friendly relations which the Chinese at Pei-t'ing maintained with the Uigurs and which are shown also by the events of 789 referred to below, suggest that the Uigur occupation of Kagan-stūpa, i. e. Pei-t'ing, about the middle of the eighth century, to which a passage quoted by M. Chavannes, *Turcs occid.*, p. 305, alludes, may have been more in the nature of a settlement than of forcible conquest.

⁵⁴ See Chavannes, *Anc. Khotan*, i. p. 535.

⁵⁵ See Chavannes and S. Lévi, 'L'itinéraire d'Ou-k'ong', in *J. As.*, 1895, Sept.-Oct., pp. 365 sq.

Wu-k'ung, when first travelling in 751 to Chi-pin or