CONTENTS

iii–iv  Editor’s Preface
Benjamin Penny

1–17  Tang Taizong in Korea: The Siege of Ansi
Tineke D’Haeseleer

19–25  On the (Paper) Trail of Lord Macartney
Robert Swanson

27–50  Study in Edo: Shibata Shūzō (1820–59) and Student Life
in Late-Tokugawa Japan
Takeshi Moriyama

51–68  Businessman or Literatus? Hu Zhenghi and Dagong Bao, 1916–20
Qiliang He

69–84  Qigong Therapy in 1950s China
Utiraruto Otehode and Benjamin Penny

85–87  Celestial Empire: Life in China, 1644–1911
An Online Exhibition
Nathan Woolley
Editor  Benjamin Penny, The Australian National University

Editorial Assistant  Lindy Allen

Editorial Board  
Geremie R. Barmé (ANU)  
Katarzyna Cwiertka (Leiden)  
Roald Maliangkay (ANU)  
Ivo Smits (Leiden)  
Tessa Morris-Suzuki (ANU)

Design and production  Lindy Allen and Katie Hayne  
Print PDFs based on an original design by Maureen MacKenzie-Taylor

This is the fortieth issue of *East Asian History*, the third published in electronic form, August 2016. It continues the series previously entitled *Papers on Far Eastern History*.

Contributions to  www.eastasianhistory.org/contribute
Back issues  www.eastasianhistory.org/archive

To cite this journal, use page numbers from PDF versions

ISSN (electronic)  1839-9010

Copyright notice  Copyright for the intellectual content of each paper is retained by its author.
Reasonable effort has been made to identify the rightful copyright owners of images and audiovisual elements appearing in this publication. The editors welcome correspondence seeking to correct the record.

Contact  eastasianhistory@anu.edu.au

Banner calligraphy  Huai Su 懷素 (737–799), Tang calligrapher and Buddhist monk

Published by
The Australian National University
TANG TAIZONG IN KOREA: THE SIEGE OF ANSI

Tineke D’Haeseleer

Introduction

In the lengthy history of Sino-Korean relations, only two Chinese emperors ever set foot on Korean territory: Sui Yangdi (r. 604–17) in the campaign against Koguryŏ (Chin. Gaogouli 高句麗) in 611, and Tang Taizong 唐太宗 (r. 626–49) in a similar effort to subdue the kingdom in 645. No other emperor would, in person, travel to Koguryŏ or one of the successor states Koryŏ 高麗 (918–1392) or Chosŏn 朝鮮 (1392–1910). Yet East Asian historiographical tradition presents these two emperors in quite different ways. Sui Yangdi was cast as the stereotypical bad last ruler of a dynasty; his relentless efforts to conquer Koguryŏ were considered part of the cause of the dynasty’s downfall.1 Tang Taizong had a markedly different reception. He served across East Asia as a model for a great ruler in a multiethnic empire. His Zhenguan 贞觀 reign was synonymous with a long period of peace and stability across Tang China. Rulers and their chosen successors in many East Asian countries studied the Zhenguan zhengyao 貞觀政要, compiled by Wu Jing 吳兢 (670–749) in the early years of the eighth century. The book was translated into Khitan, Jurchen, Mongolian and Manchu, and was read in Korea and Japan.2 Emperor Chongzong 崇宗 (r. 1086–1139) of the Tangut Xia 夏 kingdom in northwestern China tried to recapture some of the glory of Tang Taizong’s reign when he proclaimed his own Zhenguan era (1101–03).3 Difan 帝範, Taizong’s advice to his son and heir apparent, was read on the Korean peninsula from the late Koryŏ period onwards, and the Japanese emperors-to-be were given lectures on the text.4 The study and translations of these texts confirmed Taizong’s place in the East Asian world as an exceptional ruler.

Yet Taizong’s personal involvement in the campaign against Koguryŏ invites the question if and how that action influenced the image of this emperor in Koryŏ and Chosŏn, and how this may differ from the general consensus across

1 Successor states in the sense that Koguryŏ was together with Paekche 百濟 (trad. 18 BC – AD 660) and Silla (trad. 57 BC – AD 935) part of the historical conscience expressed by the Koryŏ and Chosŏn elite. See R.E. Breuker, Establishing a Pluralist Society in Medieval Korea, 918-1170: History, Ideology and Identity in the Koryŏ Dynasty (Leiden: Brill, 2010), and John B. Duncan, ‘Historical Memories of Koguryŏ in Koryŏ and Chosŏn Korea,’ Journal of Inner and East Asian Studies 1 (2004): 118–36.


5 The earliest mention of the Difan on the Korean peninsula is in Yi Chŏm 李殷, ‘Chebŏn pal’帝範跋 in Ssangmaetang hyeopjang munjip 雙梅堂藏藏文集 25: 382b. (Unless specified
For the Xuanwu incident, see Wechsler, ‘T’ai-Tsung (r. 626–49) the Consolidator,’ pp.186; Sima Guang (comp.), 『資治通鑑』(hereafter ZTT) (Beijing: Zhonghu shuju, 1976) 192: 6008–11. For Tai-tzong’s problems in finding a suitable successor, see Wechsler, ‘T’ai-Tsung (r. 626–49) the Consolidator,’ pp.236–39.

The Image

The fascination with Tang Taizong is not limited to the pre-modern East Asian world. Biographies (zhuan 傳), historical appraisals and studies, as well as historical novels and fictionalised TV dramas about the second emperor of the Tang dynasty, are numerous in East Asia. The Zhenguan period likewise continues to attract the attention of scholars in the West. Scholarship has shown that the representation of Taizong in the historical record is highly idealised, in a process which started as early as the eighth century. The overall image of Tang Taizong in the Chinese sources is positive, though with an important caveat: the essence of the Zhenguan period’s good government (Zhenguan zhengyao 靖安時要) is found in the first half of his reign, much less so in the second half. The early years of Taizong’s reign were characterised by an atmosphere of openness. The emperor was open to admonitions from officials, and he was cautious. He exercised great care in the selection of officials, and strove to rectify the many problems that plagued the early Tang. This changed when the Tang economy became more stable in the 630s, when Taizong began to show another side of his personality. Casting caution and frugality aside, he ordered the building of new palaces, set out on large-scale hunting expeditions, and followed an active and interventionist policy in foreign relations. Added to this was the problem of finding a suitable successor, unpleasantly reminiscent of the way in which Taizong himself had come to the throne: by killing his brothers in a struggle for the position of emperor.

Howard Wechsler pointed out that the idealised portrayal of the Zhenguan period was influenced by two factors. First, Tang Taizong was a highly self-conscious ruler, preoccupied with his image, and his public persona was created by his desire to be appreciated by later generations as a model of a Confucian-inspired monarch. Second, because many of Taizong’s actions in the early Zhenguan period conformed to such a model, the scholar-officials who wrote the historical verdict of this reign were easily persuaded to follow Taizong’s lead, and idealise it. The Image of Zhenguan zhengyao is perhaps the earliest example of that tendency.

Taizong’s deviation from this ideal during the second half of his reign, however, means that the historiography of the Zhenguan period is fraught with contrasts. Historians have struggled with this friction between the idealised picture of the reign, and the emperor’s shortcomings equally clearly documented in the official historiographical record. The campaign against Koguryô was no exception, as an analysis of the Chinese and Korean sources will show: opposition to the campaign and in particular the emperor’s per-
sonal participation, was strong, yet the portrayal of Taizong’s actions is generally positive. But before turning to a close textual analysis of the historiography of Taizong’s actions in Koguryŏ, it may be helpful to give an overview of the events surrounding the 645 expedition.

**Invasion and Defeat in Koguryŏ**

In the first lunar month of 645, Tang Taizong led his armies from Luoyang in a punitive expedition against Koguryŏ, the kingdom in southern Manchuria and northern Korea. The campaign was triggered by events dating back to 642. In that year, Yŏn Kaesomun 政蓋蘇文 (d. 666), an official of Koguryŏ’s eastern circuit, had murdered the king and a host of high-ranking officials, put a nephew of the king on the throne and appointed himself as mangnichi 莫離枝. This office gave him control over the civil and military affairs of the state.

For centuries, Koguryŏ’s kings had received Chinese recognition of their status through a system of enfeoffment from the emperors, although this was largely a nominal relationship. Ko Könmu 姜建武 (r. 618–42) received his investiture from Tang Gaozu 唐高祖 (r. 618–26) and was thus a vassal of the Tang emperors. When the news of the coup reached Taizong in December 642, he considered it his duty to avenge his vassal’s death, punish the perpetrator and restore order in Koguryŏ. Although in theory all investitures entailed this responsibility, few emperors acted upon it. Taizong, too, first attempted a diplomatic solution. Only when it became clear in the early months of 644 that Yŏn Kaesomun would not co-operate, did the emperor state his intention to lead a punitive expedition in person. All but one of Taizong’s advisors vehemently opposed his personally leading the army, but he disregarded their counsel. Preparations for the expedition started in the autumn of 644. These included building ships for transporting provisions, and gathering intelligence on the enemy’s situation in Liaodong 迎東.

In the spring of the 645, the vanguard reached Koguryŏ’s territory. Initially the Tang army was successful: Kaemok-sŏng 廬木城 was taken easily and the naval force was victorious at Sabi-sŏng 沙卑城. Yodong-sŏng 遼東 proved to be a tougher nut to crack. Here, Tang Taizong, leading the main host, joined Li Shiji 李世勣 and his troops, and together they conquered the fortress. The next target, Ansi-sŏng 安市城 controlled the main supply route for any advance on the capital P’yŏngyang and the emperor and his most senior military advisor deemed Ansi’s conquest a sine qua non for success. Yŏn Kaesomun was also aware of the strategic importance of this location, and sent a substantial force of Koguryŏ and Malgal 驪羯 (Chin. Mohe) troops to intercept the Tang army as it approached the fortress. The Tang won a resounding victory in what became known as the battle of Chup’il Hill (Chup’ilsan 駐障山). During this battle, Xue Rengui 薛仁貴 first caught the attention of Tang Taizong. The emperor would in hindsight remark that the discovery of the military talent of Xue was one of the few positive points to the campaign.14

After this success, the campaign stalled. Only once did the besieged Koguryŏ forces attempt a sortie under the cover of darkness, but this was foiled. The Tang forces built over the course of two months an earthen rampart to try and scale the walls. During the attack phase, a Tang commander lost his nerve when the structure collapsed together with the wall, and

---


12 Sima Guang explains in the notes on divergent sources (kaoyi 考異) to ZZTJ that he follows the Shilu 實錄 instead of JTS 199a: 5322, which states it was the western circuit. (ZZTJ 196: 6181).


14 Xue Rengui’s exploits in Liaodong became fictionalised, see for instance the anonymous Qing-dynasty novel Rengui zhengdong 薛仁貴征東. He was also a well-known figure among Chosŏn readers of fiction and history and even surfaces in legends in locations south of P’yŏngyang. See Yi Ki-hyŏng 李丙鎬, ‘Sŏl In-kwi chŏnsŏl-ŭi pigyo 설인귀 전설의 비교 고찰, Hanguk minsokhak 韓國民俗學 44 (2006): 369–401.
Koguryó forces captured it, and successfully defended against Tang attempts to retake the rampart. Finally, after four months, Taizong lifted the siege on 15 November 645, because supplies were running low, and the bitter winter was approaching. The inhabitants of Ansi, perhaps fearing a ruse, did not dare to leave their fortress when the Tang troops formed ranks to retreat. From the safety on top of the walls, the Koguryó commander bowed respectfully to the emperor, and in return Tang Taizong congratulated him on his staunch defence: he rewarded the commander with one hundred bolts of silk in recognition of his loyal service to the king of Koguryó. On the return journey, the Tang army was caught in a severe blizzard, which killed numerous soldiers before they reached Yingzhou 蓁州 (mod. Chaoyang 朝陽, Liaoning), in the Tang’s northeastern frontier area.

The tangible results of the long military campaign were the conquest of ten Koguryó fortresses north of the Yalü River; three new prefectures were created in this area. Seventy thousand people were relocated to Tang territory (neidi 內地). Taizong also ransomed and released up to fourteen thousand prisoners who were destined to be given as slaves to the soldiers for reward. With the main objective of the campaign, that is the removal of Yŏn Kaesomun, not achieved, and the severe loss of life in the Tang army, the emperor considered himself defeated by the ‘petty barbarians’ (xiao yi 小夷). Taizong did not give up the ambition to bring Yŏn Kaesomun to justice, and until the emperor’s death in 649, officers would lead forays into Koguryó territory. In 648, he even ordered the construction of a large fleet for transporting supplies for a war that would ‘in one campaign annihilate [Koguryó]’ 一舉滅之. But one year later, Taizong died and in his political testament he ordered the crown prince to halt all preparations for the campaign.

**Chinese Historical Sources**

These events were known to Chinese literati from a number of sources. Foremost among these were the official Chinese histories, the *jiu Tangshu* 舊唐書, *Xin Tangshu* 新唐書, and the *Zizhi tongjian* 資治通鑑. These were also the main sources consulted by Kim Pusik 金富軾 (1075–1151) for his narration of the 645 campaign in the *Samguk sagi* 三國史記, the oldest extant Korean history. Kim and his team also used a small number of apocryphal stories from other Chinese sources. The *Samguk sagi* further contains snippets of information from Korean sources that covered this period, but which are no longer extant, for instance when providing extra meteorological information and omens. The full extent of materials available to Kim and Korean literati of later periods is not clear. The *Samguk sagi* does not always indicate which sources it uses, and where they are signalled, we can often only hazard a guess at the contents, as these original peninsular sources have been lost.

Epigraphic material, for instance, in the form of inscriptions on commemorative monuments marking sites of historical importance, or on walls of temples, and epitaphs may also have been available. The practice of making rubbings or copies of epigraphic texts existed, but there is no indication that such materials pertaining to the Koguryó campaigns circulated in Chinese literary collections in the same way as did, for instance, epitaphs (muzhiming 祭誌銘) composed by famous writers. Some anecdotes, perhaps originating in oral accounts about Taizong’s campaign against Koguryó, were preserved in collections such as the *Sui Tang jia hua* 隋唐嘉話 and *Tang Yulin* 唐語林. Many of these in turn found their way into the *Xin Tangshu* and *Zizhi tongjian*. 
Much later, in the late Ming (1368–1644), these and other stories formed the foundation of works of historical fiction, known as Romances (yanyi, 演義), but it is very difficult to ascertain the origin of the story cycles, which may have circulated orally or in other written versions, before we see the earliest extant traces in these Romances. Nevertheless, these works were very popular in Ming and Qing (1644–1911), and in Chosŏn.22

Because the Chinese histories were the foremost source of information for Koguryŏ history, it is useful to start with an analysis of the Chinese historiographical process. This will clarify the bias found in the Chinese materials, and offer a useful foundation for a comparison with Koryŏ and Chosŏn writings.

Historians have generally agreed that the 645 campaign ended in defeat, and Taizong himself admitted as much.23 Yet the narrative in the Jiu Tangshu, Xin Tangshu and the Zizhi tongjian give at first sight a rather positive evaluation of Taizong during these events. The texts are certainly not free from criticism, but the emperor is depicted as a concerned ruler, and a capable military commander during this expedition. This runs counter to expectations, because in the first half of the dynasty many officials vociferously opposed territorial expansion through military means.24 The writing of history was one of the ways open to them to voice their concerns. Although there had always been a close connection between politics and historiography, the two became institutionally more intertwined from the early Tang period. The writing of the standard histories (zhengshi, 正史) became more formalised during this period, with the establishment of the History Office (shiguan, 史館) in 625, when officials were appointed to keep records of daily activities at the court. These materials would then be used to produce Shilu 實錄 and Guoshi 國史.25 In their capacity as court officials, many of the historians at the History Office assisted the emperor in formulating policies and making decisions about issues that closely resembled those they covered as historians. Fang Xuanling 房玄齡 (579–648) and Chu Suiliang 褚遂良 (597–658), two of Taizong’s close advisors, took a strong stance against military adventurism and territorial expansionism in policy debates.26 They were also appointed by Taizong as editors of the Jin History 晉書. Michael Rogers argues that the prospect of a campaign against Koguryŏ had a significant effect on their editing of the Jin History, which they presented to the throne in 644. The biography of Fu Jian 裨堅 (r. 357–85) of the Former Qin 前秦 (351–94) was, argues Rogers, manipulated with the specific aim of providing a cautionary example for Tang Taizong.27 This suggests that the raw materials that served as the basis for the official history accounts of the Koguryŏ campaign, the Shilu, were similarly open to editorial intervention to formulate an anti-expansionist point of view point of view, but this is by no means certain. Zhangsun Wuji 長孫無忌 (d. 659) was the director for the Zhenguan shilu 貞觀實錄. He assisted Taizong closely during the campaign, and was generally supportive. Only once in the extant written record did he suggest that the personal presence of the emperor in Koguryŏ had a negative influence, because the emperor’s personal safety was paramount and required a more careful approach in offensive warfare.28 These records were part of the material that was tampered with by Xu Jingzong 許敬宗 (592–672), an official at the History Office during the early years of Gaozong’s reign.29 If, or how, Zhangsun Wuji put his editorial stamp on the records of these events remains unknown.

22 See p.13ff.
24 See for instance Li Daliang’s 李大亮 (586–644) petition on his appointment as Grand Commissioner for Appearance in the Northwestern Circuit (xibeidao anfu dashi 西北道安撫大使) in 630. He memorialised to the emperor that China (Zhongguo 中國) is like the trunk, and the four ‘barbarians’ (yi 四夷) are the branches and leaves. Investment in these outlying areas would be costly and without any benefit for China itself (ZZTJ 193: 6081–82). The economic argument was also emphasised by Wei Zheng 萬應 (580–643) in 640 when Taizong wished to put the newly conquered state of Gaochang 始薊 under the Tang’s regular territorial administration (ZZTJ 195: 6155–60). In 642, Chu Suiliang 褚遂良 (597–658) argued in the same manner for the abolition of Gaochang as a regular prefecture (JT 50: 2736). Exactly the same arguments were employed by Di Renjie 迪仁傑 in 699, when he suggested the abolition of the Andong Protectorate (Andong duhufu 安東都護府) in the former territory of Koguryo (Wang Pu 王溥, Tang huiyao 唐會要 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1991) 73: 1562–63).
26 See note 24 above for Chu Suiliang. Fang Xuanling’s last memorial to the emperor was a plea to halt the preparations for Taizong’s second campaign against Koguryo (JT 66: 2464–66); see also pp.23–24.
28 Denis Twitchett, The Writing of Official History under the Tang, p.126 suggests 654 instead of 650 as the date for the presentation of these records.
29 ZZTJ 198: 6228; SGSC 21: 196.
For Koryô and Chosŏn literati, Sima Guang’s *Zizhi tongjian* was also a significant source of information. Its narrative of the Koguryô invasion follows the *Xin Tangshu* closely, and both are more detailed than the *Jiu Tangshu*. Sima Guang’s historical outlook, in particular as seen in the *Zizhi tongjian*, is linked to his political views. As a conservative statesman, Sima Guang held the view that achievements were hard to gain and easy to lose, for an individual as well as for the state. The behaviour of the ruler in particular was key to understanding the rise and downfall of states. In the light of these general ideas that come to the fore in the *Zizhi tongjian* it is somewhat surprising that Sima Guang does not have a separate editorial comment on the 645 campaign: the venture waisted precious resources, achieved little of lasting endurance, and put the imperial enterprise at risk thanks to Taizong’s personal presence as leader of the expeditionary force. However, Sima Guang did not need to resort to such explicit editorial comments. Hoyt Cleveland Tillman and Mark Strange have revealed how Sima Guang was able to present his opinions and verdicts about these events through the selective presentation of facts and careful choice of wording, rather than through twisting descriptions.

The portrayal of Tang Taizong and his role in the 645 campaign is rather positive in the official historical record, in view of these observations on the *Jiu Tangshu*, *Xin Tangshu* and the *Zizhi tongjian*. The historians refrained from strong condemnations in editorial comments, and despite the officials’ opposition to the emperor’s plans they did not use the opportunities they had to present the narrative of the campaign in a negative manner. To the observant reader, the extant texts are peppered with little hints of respect for the emperor. These can be divided into four types: 1) the emperor’s desire to spare his subjects the hardships caused by warfare; 2) his desire to be treated as an equal of the soldiers, not as the emperor; 3) demonstrations of his keen insight into the strategic situation; and 4) expressions of concern for the well-being of the population of Koguryô.

In the first category there are specific references to the burden a military campaign would bring to his subjects. In 641 Taizong suggested that a combined attack over land and sea would allow an easy victory over Koguryô, the only polity neighbouring Tang that still flouted the emperor’s supremacy. However, for the time being Taizong preferred to allow Shandong to recover. When the news of the coup d’état by Yǒn Kaesomun reached the court in late 642, Taizong had ample justification for a military campaign to avenge his vassal, the late king of Koguryô Ko Kŏnmu. Yet he hesitated: it would be improper to undertake military action during the period of mourning for the king, and the emperor was still not prepared to burden the people of Shandong. The following year he referred once more to the difficulties a military expedition would impose on the common people. Thus he suggested the use of non-Han troops such as Khitan and Malgal. The underlying logic was that these were units of specialist cavalry, whose lifestyle would be less interrupted by warfare. No further plans for an attack were made at that time, but in the 645 invasion these troops formed part of the vanguard under the command of Li Shiji 李世勣.

The decree announcing the punitive campaign against Koguryô issued in the tenth month of 644 spans two of the aforementioned categories: in the name of frugality (儉節 jianjie) officials were urged not to observe the usual protocol for an imperial progress. While this lessened the burden of the local people where the imperial cortège passed, it also allowed Taizong to present
himself in the persona of soldier, rather than emperor. In this way, he may well have hoped to recapture something of the camaraderie among the soldiers which he had experienced in the early days of the Tang’s bid for power. The decree stated that the encampments should not be embellished and food should merely fill against hunger; building bridges was not necessary if rivers could be forded, and roads should not be repaired if they were still passable. Furthermore, the encampments should be far away from county or prefectural seats, so the students and elderly people were not required to come out to meet the emperor.  

 Supplies should be taken along, rather than relying on local provisions. These measures also emphasised the different approach compared to Sui Yangdi’s disastrous attempts to conquer Koguryŏ.

During the campaign, Taizong managed to maintain this *mien* of ‘comrade in arms’, according to the sources. After the siege of Ansi, the emperor refused to change the brown robe he had been wearing for the duration of the entire campaign. ‘The clothes of the soldiers are very ragged, how would it be permissible that I alone wear new clothes?’ Taizong also personally provided medical care for three of his officers wounded during the campaign, an act which combines a gesture of compassion with the companionship he sought among his fellow officers.

A third group of anecdotes concerns Taizong’s ability as a military commander. Taizong’s fellow commanders showed great respect for his superior strategic insight. For instance, when the Koguryŏ and Malgal relief force showed up at Ansi, Taizong predicted correctly the course of action his adversaries would take. Zhangsun Wuji encouraged him to devise the strategy for the battle, referring to his tried and tested capacities as a tactician and commander:

> When Your Majesty was not yet twenty, you personally led the ranks, and always came up with unconventional [strategies], and created [the conditions for] victory. In all cases you issued sage stratagems, all the commanders simply received the preconceived plans. In today’s matters, we beg Your Majesty for instruction!

The emperor needed little persuasion, and the Koguryŏ force was defeated comprehensively in the battle of Chup’il Hill, which played out completely according to Taizong’s plan.

The final and fourth category contains anecdotes illustrating his concern for the population of Koguryŏ. Taizong argued in early 644 that the punitive campaign against Koguryŏ was expected of him: ‘Kaesomun bullied his seniors and abuses his subordinates, the people crane their necks waiting for rescue’, 蓋蘇文陵上虐下，民延頸待救. During the campaign of 645, he refused to accept the services of the defeated auxiliary troops from Kasi-sŏng 加尸城 during the siege of Kaemok-sŏng, fearing that Yŏn Kaesomun would retaliate by killing their families. ‘I could not bear to obtain the strength of one person [at the price of] having their family exterminated’ 得一人之力而滅一家，吾不忍也. Instead, he sent them on their way with provisions. After the siege of the Paegam-sŏng 白巖城, all the male inhabitants and refugees of the fortress were to be given as rewards to the Tang soldiers who had distinguished themselves, but the emperor ransomed them by rewarding his soldiers with items from his personal treasury. Among those captured was — at least in the *Zizhi tongjian*’s narrative — also the vice-commander of the Yodong (Chin. Liaodong 遼東) fortress, who had taken refuge at Paegam for-
tress with the widow and children of the Yodong commander after the latter was killed. Taizong rewarded the vice-commander for his upright conduct and sent him back to P’yŏngyang, with a reward of five bolts of silk. When, shortly thereafter, Koguryŏ’s reinforcements were defeated in the battle of Ch’upil Hill near Ansi, the majority of the troops was sent back to P’yŏngyang, while the 3,500 commanding officers were to be taken back to Tang China and given military ranks. A captured Koguryŏ spy who said he had not eaten for several days was fed, before being sent back to inform Yŏn Kaesomun that ‘if he wishes to know information about the [Tang] army, he can just send somebody directly to Our location’.

Another example of Taizong’s love for grand gestures of generosity towards the Koguryŏ people came upon his return to Youzhou 幽州 (present-day Beijing). He freed the inhabitants of the newly created prefectures of Liao 辽, Gai 盖, and Yan 岩 (from the conquered fortresses of Yodong, Kaemok and Paegam respectively), who were destined to become slaves as rewards for the Tang officers, and as before Taizong provided the soldiers with rewards from the imperial treasury.

In short, despite the failed campaign, the Chinese sources do not present Taizong in a negative way. They ascribe to him the qualities of a good leader, a competent strategist and a compassionate emperor. Yet they could not deny there were problems with this image. Juxtaposed with these aforementioned anecdotes, the sources record instances of Taizong’s less glorious behaviour. Although he pardoned many enemy officers and soldiers after the battle of Chup’il Hill, he punished more than three thousand Malgal enemy warriors by having them buried alive. A Tang officer was executed after making a critical error in the siege of Ansi, and the Prince of Jiangxia was only spared the same fate because of substantial merits earlier in the campaign. It is difficult to form a straightforward, uniform judgement of Tang Taizong’s character.

The final paragraph of Taizong’s ‘Benji’ 本紀 in the Xin Tangshu contains the Appraisal (Zan 贊) of the historian. It is worth quoting extensively, because it suggests how Ouyang Xiu 欧陽修 as the chief editor of the Xin Tangshu tried to solve the contradictions in Taizong’s behaviour.

When the Tang possessed the empire, it was handed down for twenty generations, and three of the rulers are worth praising. But Xuanzong (r. 712–56) and Xianzong (r. 805–20) were unable to carry this through to the end of their reign. How magnificent were the achievements of Taizong! In the manner he cleared out the disorder of the Sui, he followed in the footsteps of Tang and [Zhou king] Wu; in bringing about the ideals of government, he approximated [the Zhou kings] Cheng and Kang. Since Antiquity merit and virtue have combined into greatness, but since the Han this had not occured. As for being led by what one cares about greatly, reinvigorating Buddhism, admiring what was grandiose, taking pleasure in achievement, and having the soldiers toil in distant lands, that is something which ordinary rulers with mediocre talents commonly do. But then the rules of [praise and blame in] the Spring and Autumn Annals commonly place high demands on the worthy. Because of this, everybody sighed in admiration at the ideal of a gentleman of later generations aspiring to becoming a perfected man.

唐有天下，傳世二十，其可稱者三君，玄宗、憲宗皆不克其終，盛哉，太宗之烈也！其除隋之亂，比逐湯、武；致治之美，庶幾成、康。自古功德兼隆，由漢以來未之有也。豈春秋之法，常責備於賢者，是以後世君子之欲成人之美者，莫不歎息於斯焉。
With the explanation that exceptional rulers are measured against more exacting standards, the commentary attempts to reconcile Taizong’s faults with the ideal of the ‘good government of the Zhenguan period’. The campaign against Koguryŏ was normal, perhaps even acceptable, behaviour for a mediocre ruler, and in this case a ground for criticism only because Taizong was in many other aspects considered belonging to a superior category. This implied that Taizong provided an acceptable model from the recent past, rather than remote Antiquity, for rulers who aspired to greatness.

**Historical Record of the Three Kingdoms**

The Chinese sources fell on the positive side of the judgement, and this did not escape the attention of the Koryŏ and Chosŏn scholars, but they did not slavishly follow that tone. The oldest extant source for Taizong in peninsular historiography is the *Samguk sagi*. As indicated above, Kim Pusik and his collaborators used Chinese sources extensively to describe the military campaign of 645. This did not prevent Kim from presenting a different image of Taizong, a sharper critical judgement. He included two editorial commentaries (*nonchan* 論贊) about Tang Taizong.\(^{54}\) Both of these borrow the language of the Appraisal (*Zan* 贊) found in the *Xin Tangshu*, but latch onto the laudatory element as a basis for criticism. The first one is inserted into the narrative at the end of the fourth year of King Pojang 宝藏 (645), that is, immediately after Taizong’s return from the Liaodong campaign.

唐太宗聖明，不世出之君，除亂比於湯武，致理幾於成康，至於用兵之際，出奇無窮，所向無敵，而東征之功，敗於安市，則其城主可謂豪傑非常者矣，而史失其姓名，與楊子所云齊魯大臣史失其名無異甚可惜也.\(^{56}\)

With one simple comparison between the two men, Kim elevates the anonymous commander of Ansi to a level as equally deserving of historical fame as Tang Taizong himself.

The second comment is inserted immediately after the death of Taizong.

**References**

53 XTS 2: 48–49.
54 SGSG 21: 197 (after Taizong’s return to Tang territory); 22: 200 (after the death of Taizong).
lands’. Is this not what is meant? Liu Gongquan’s story says: ‘In the battle at Chu-p’il Hill, Koguryŏ and the Malgal joined forces, [their ranks] extended over forty li. When Taizong saw this, he looked frightened’. It also said: ‘When the six [Tang] armies were put under pressure by Koguryŏ to the point of being unable to hold out, a scout reported to the Duke of Ying’s staff that the black standard was surrounded, and the emperor grew very troubled.’ This was the nature of his fears, although in the end he escaped, yet the Jiu Tangshu, Xin Tangshu and Sima Guang’s Zizhi tongjian make no mention of this. Were they not concealing this for their country?

初，太宗有事於遼東也，諫者非一。又自安市旋軍之後，自以不能成功，深悔之，歎曰：「若使魏徴在，不使我有此行也。」及其將復伐也，司空房玄齡中上表諫。〔...〕梁公將死之言諄諄若此，而帝不從。思欲丘墟東域而自快，死而後已。史論曰：「好大喜功，勤兵於遠」者，非此之謂乎？柳公權小説曰：「駐蹕之役，高句麗與靺鞨合軍，方四十里。太宗望之，有懼色。」又曰：「六軍為高句麗所乘，殆將不振，候者告英公之麾。黑旗被圍，帝大恐。」雖終於自脫，而危懼如彼，而新舊書及司馬公通鑑不言者，豈非為國諱之者乎？

This comment contains incisive criticism of Taizong and the historians who praised him. Fang Xuanling’s memorial, the lengthy quotation omitted in my translation, was a very sharply worded condemnation of Tang Taizong’s plans for a second campaign against Koguryŏ. Fang accused the emperor of injustice, because he sent his soldiers to a certain death in a distant country, whereas criminals condemned to death could count on three reviews before the execution would take place. Such an accusation bordered on lèse-majesté, and Fang could only write such harsh words because he was at death’s door anyway. Kim Pusik used this famous memorial to point out Taizong’s faults, and to bring the emperor down from the generous praise given in the Xin Tangshu. The combination of Kim’s critical tone about Taizong’s achievements, and his praise for the anonymous hero of Ansi, resonated with Koryŏ and Chosŏn literati, as an investigation of the peninsula’s literary output on the 645 campaign demonstrates.

Koryŏ and Chosŏn Literary Works

Regular embassies from Koryŏ and Chosŏn to the Yuan 元 (1260–1368), Ming and Qing courts brought many literati as diplomatic envoys close to the sites of the historical events of 645. The itinerary for the delegates was not very different from the one taken by Taizong, and they drew inspiration from their surroundings, using their historical imagination. It was customary for these men to produce a travel diary, and many of these texts have been preserved, generally known as Yŏnhaengnok 燕行錄. They consist of descriptions of the day’s events, musings on a variety of topics, and poems. They were written mainly in literary Chinese but occasionally in Korean, and were available in an edited format to later generations through their collected writings (jip 集). Poems were important in these travel writings. The compact style of si (Chin. shi 詩), for instance, lent itself very well to an impressionist composition, an emotional snapshot of the author’s response to a historical site he encountered. Such poems are often also packed with a multitude of historical references within the limited space offered in this very traditional genre, in a demonstration of erudition.

An early example that touches upon two of the recurring themes is Chŏnggwanŭm 貞觀吟 by Yi Saek (李穡, 1328–96). Yi travelled multiple times to the Yuan court in the mid-fourteenth century, and his route took him past
Yulin Pass (Yulin guan 榆林關, later known as Shanhai Pass (Shanhai guan 山海關), strategic for the defence of the Yanjing 燕京 region from the northeast. Yi Saek described it in another poem as a bleak and desolate (sojo 萧條) location. At the time, its main claim to fame was that Taizong had set up camp here, on the way back from Koguryŏ, and the heir apparent had come out to Yulin Pass to welcome him back. For Yi Saek the location triggered a reflection on the Zhenguan reign. The poem starts with a celebration of Taizong’s achievements, but Yi keeps a special place for Koguryŏ. The kingdom was the only polity contiguous with Taizong’s empire which did not readily accept the status of vassal, and ultimately became the place of Taizong’s only defeat as a military commander. In sharp contrast with the first half of the poem, the closing lines describe the despondency experienced at Yulin, by the poet and his imagined emperor Taizong:

He thought that [the conquest of the Koguryŏ] was a done deal; who could have know that the white feather would land in the dark flower?

The Duke of Zheng [Wei Zheng] was already dead, and the way to remonstrate was blocked; ironic that the [Duke’s] headstone, first torn down, was restored.

I turn my head and cry out three times for the Zhenguan years; to the end of the sky a sad wind sighs.

Wèi shì ruò qióng zhōng yī wù ěr, nà zhī huá huā luò bái yù.
Zhēng gōng yǐ sǐ yán lù tōng, kě xiào shēng bìng fù xíng lì.
Huí tóu sān jiào zhēng guān nián, tiān mò bēi fēng chuī fēng fēng.

This short passage touches on two important themes: the arrow that allegedly landed in the emperor’s eye, and the rehabilitation of Wei Zheng’s status, on Taizong’s sobering introspection in the immediate aftermath of the expedition against Koguryŏ in 645. The former story is spurious: there is no record of Taizong being wounded during the expedition, but this is the earliest mention of an anecdote that endured through the ages on the Korean peninsula.

In contrast, Wei Zheng’s role in Taizong’s reflections after the campaign is attested in historical records. Wei Zheng had died a few years before the campaign against Koguryŏ. His relationship with Taizong was far from easy, because Wei never hesitated to remonstrate against Taizong. This relationship was in later times idealised as the epitome of the loyal minister and the enlightened ruler who was open to admonition. In fact, Wei was not the closest of Taizong’s advisors — that honour went to Fang Xuanling — but this idealised image gave Wei Zheng a very prominent place in Tang history.

When Wei died, Taizong personally composed the text for the epitaph, a very high honour. But before long, allegations of Wei’s role in factionalism came to the surface. As a result, various imperial favours were withdrawn: the gravestone with the emperor’s composition was torn down, and plans for Wei Zheng’s son’s marriage to an imperial princess were cancelled. Only when Taizong returned from Koguryŏ, did he come to regret these decisions, as he realised Wei Zheng would correctly have advised the emperor against the expedition. Taizong made amends and ordered the headstone be restored, and provided Wei’s family with a stipend.

The image of the emperor coming to that realisation was a strong one for literati-officials, those from the Korean peninsula included. Wei Zheng’s idealised persona provided an attractive model of an upright minister who...
placed the dynasty’s and the people’s needs before his own or his ruler’s personal desires, and who had a close relationship with the emperor. Wei Zheng’s posthumous restoration of his status provided an example and perhaps some comfort to many officials who felt that while their well-intended advice fell on deaf ears, they might one day be vindicated.

The ‘Chŏnggwanŭm’ was added to the Tongmunsŏn 東文選, and may have inspired Sŏ Seyang 苏世讓 (1486–1562) to write a similar poem, with short introduction, when he travelled through Funing 撫寧 county just north of the Yulin Pass in 1533, during his journey to the Ming capital.

About seven or eight li west of Funing county there is a small hill overlooking a mountain stream. Its top is round and flat. There are very mysterious and ancient pine trees there. People say that it is the place where Tang Taizong stayed overnight when he campaigned in the east.

On the short hilltop the pines are old, with curled and bent branches; it is recalled that the Civil Emperor [=Taizong] stationed his coloured banner here.

In the end, he turned back, and praised the general of Ansi; how about not tearing down the headstone for the Duke of Zheng [=Wei Zheng]?

The flow of the stream has not yet washed away the regrets of those times; the mountains still harbour a myriad of ancient sorrows.

Alone I stand facing the wind, with many regrets; in the dust at dusk on the flat plain my horse moves slowly.67

The defeated emperor riding off into the sunset appeared again a few years later, in Ch’oe Yŏn’s崔演 (1503–49) poem ‘Chup’il san yugam’ 驻蹕山有感), written during his mission to China in 1548.68 In the preface he sets the historical background:

This mountain is about fifteen li southwest of Liaocheng (K. Yosŏng). When Tang Taizong attacked Ko[gu]ryŏ, he once stayed the night here and inscribed a stone to commemorate the merit, subsequently [the name of the hill] was changed to its current name. 本首山在遼城西南十五里. 唐太宗伐高麗, 嘗駐蹕勒石紀功. 因改今名.

The last two lines closely echo Sŏ’s poem, and contain once more the reference to Wei Zheng:

Exasperated that Duke Wei [Zheng]69 has been dead for a long time; in the slanting [rays of the setting] sun, he reins in his horse, and is lonely, overcome with emotion.

In the seventeenth century the tone of the literary works dealing with Taizong in Koguryŏ changed. The hitherto anonymous commander of Ansi suddenly acquired the name Yang Manch’un (Chin. Liang Wanchun 樊若春
or Yang Wanchun 楊萬春), and the focus shifted from Taizong's remorse and Wei Zheng’s reminder from beyond the grave to the heroic effort of the commander of Ansi. The name Yang Manch'un appeared first in the Ming-dynasty historical novel Tangshu zhizhuan tongsu yanyi 唐書志傳通俗演義 by Xiong Damu 熊大木, also known as Xiong Zhonggu 熊鍾谷 (1506–79). It is not entirely clear if Xiong invented the name of the commander, or if this was part of a story cycle about Tang Taizong which served as the base for the novel. In any case, this development marked a significant turning point in the way Chosŏn literary works looked back on the campaign of 645. The attention moved away from emperor Taizong and how his defeat at Ansi led to his personal re-evaluation of his reign, and was instead directed towards the commander of the fortress, Yang Manch’un.

The earliest extant reference in Chosŏn writings comes from Yun Kŭnsu 尹根壽 (1537–1616). He explained how he was introduced to this new piece of information through a Ming officer who came to Chosŏn in the wake of the first Japanese invasion of the Imjin war (1592–98). The officer referred Yun to the chapter 'Taizong dongzhengji' 太宗東征記, in the Tangshu zhizhuan tongsu yanyi poem 'Sŏngsang yanyi, juan 8, chapter 83 (in Guben xiaoshuo congkan Vol.4.2 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju), p.745). The story covers events from 617 to 645 AD, including the campaign against Koguryŏ and the retreat from Liaodong.

There were popular stories about Tang Taizong in late Ming China, as illustrated by the important role he plays in the early part of the Xiyou ji. The story of his descent into hell in chapters 10 and 11 is based on a much older story. The first documented version of this is found in the Dunhuang manuscripts and possibly dated to the ninth century (see translation by Arthur Waley in Chinese Literature: An Anthology of Translations, Vol.1, From Antiquity to the Tang Dynasty, ed. John Minford and Joseph S.M. Lau (Hong Kong/New York: The Chinese University Press/Columbia University Press, 2000), pp.1081–88). From the Xiyou ji Taizong's descent into hell eventually became adopted by the shaman tradition in the Korean peninsula. (Boudewijn Walraven, Songs of the Shaman: The Ritual Chants of the Korean Mudang, (London: Kegan Paul International, 1994), pp.103–104).

Later authors were less inclined to accept this claim. Kim Siyang 金時謨 (1581–1643), who travelled to the Ming court in 1610, observed that the source for the name is not given in this Tangshu zhizhuan tongsu yanyi, and he thought it unlikely that such important information would not have been recorded anywhere else, if it had been known. Other writers also raised doubts about the apocryphal anecdote concerning Taizong being hit in the eye, and even the location of the Ansi fortress itself was subject to speculation. But the repeated doubts over all these points suggest that such apocryphal stories stubbornly refused to disappear over the centuries.

In a short prefatory note to his akpu (Chin. yuefu 楽府) poem 'Sŏngsang pae' 城上拜, Sim Kwangse 沈光世 (1577–1624) likewise states that it is not clear if the name of the commander is really Yang Manch’un. Sim also refers to Yi Saek’s poem 'Chŏnggwan’mi', mentioned above, and casts doubt on the reference it contains to the anecdote of Taizong being hit in the eye by a stray arrow. Yet despite these reservations about the historical accuracy of the legend emerging around Ansi, neither Kim Siyang nor Sim Kwangse wished
The increased popularity of this topic occurred in the aftermath of the devastating Japanese invasions in the late sixteenth century, and the two Manchu invasions in 1627 and 1636. Partly this was due to the fact that the commander's name only came to the attention of the prestigious writers during the Imjin war; and once the hero was given a name and a more fully developed story in the Tangshu zhizhuan tongsu yanyi, the story spread even more easily. On the other hand, one may wonder if the calamitous events of those years also supported the desire for psychological need for a native exemplary military leader. The appearance of Yang Manch'un in late Ming historical fiction coincided fortuitously with that need. But no Chosŏn author has suggested such an explicit link. Literature did play a role in the Chosŏn recovery from that trauma, as Jahyun Kim Haboush shows, but the narratives focused on a direct confrontation and reworking of the recent events, not a reimagining of the imperial host broke off the siege, spoke to the imagination of many Chosŏn literati.

The popularity of the theme of the defence of Ansi is also seen in Kang Paegnyŏn’s 姜柄年 (1603–1722) writings. As he travelled past the alleged site in 1660 on the way to the Qing court, he wrote a ‘Song’ (imm吟), echoing the title of Yi Saek’s ‘Chŏnggwanŭm'83 but he also imagined what the imperial edict, issued by Taizong as he lifted the siege, must have looked like.84 No such edict is preserved, but it is indeed likely that a similar document was proclaimed when Taizong rewarded the commander of Ansi with one hundred rolls of silk for his steadfast defence of the fortress in difficult circumstances.85

Kim Ch’anghŭp 金昌禧 (1653–1722) composed a set of fifty poems dedicated to his younger brother who was setting out on a journey to the Qing court in 1712.86 In the seventh poem he picks up the theme of Yang Manch'un:

One thousand years, the bravery of Yang Manch’un! He hit the dragon’s whisker and [his arrow] landed in the eye.千秋大膽楊萬春，箭射虬髪落眸子。86

Ch’anghŭp himself did not travel to the Qing, but as the authors of the akpu on the title ‘Sŏngsang pae’, he was conversant with the literature produced in connection with these journeys and the main sights along the road. For instance, the set also contains poems about the ‘Chup’il t’aeja ha’ 駐蹕太子河, where Taizong defeated the relief force for Ansi, and Shanhai Pass 山海關, earlier known as the Yulín Pass. The many Yŏnhaengnyŏk had created a textual double of that world, which was now familiar even to those who had not travelled to the Qing court.

In the second half of the eighteenth century, Yi Tŏngmu 李德懋 (1741–93) wrote a critique of Kim Ch’anghŭp’s poem. Such continued conversation with inter-textual references suggests robust circulation of these literary collections across generations. Here Yi traces the various strands of the anecdote back via Chosŏn literati Yun Kŭnsu and Sŏ Kojŏng, and Koryŏ authors Yi Saek and Kim Puksik, all the way back to the earliest extant Chinese sources, such as the Xin Tangshu and Zhihi tongjian:

When Samyŏn 三澗 [Kim Ch’ang-hŭp] saw No Kajae 老稼齋 [Kim Ch’ang-ŏp 金昌禧], 1658–1721, younger brother of Ch’anghŭp off on his journey to Yanjing, and that came from the Tangshu zhizhuan tongsu yanyi. Dilettantes have turned this into his [actual] name, but it is not sufficiently credible. More details are given in [Yun Kŭnsu’s] Wŏljŏng manp’il or Wŏljŏng manmok, and Sŏ [Kojŏng]’s Saag jip. Mogūn’s [‘Yi Saek’] ‘Chŏnggwanŭm’ reads
He thought that the conquest of Koguryŏ was a done deal; who could have known that the white feather would land in the dark flower?

The dark flower refers to the eye, the white feather to the arrow. For generations it has been transmitted that when Tang Taizong attacked Ko[guryŏ], and he came to Ansi, he was hit by an arrow in the eye and turned back. When one investigates, neither the Xin Tangshu nor Zizhi tongjian have recorded it. The historians of the time undoubtedly considered it unmentionable for China so it is not strange it is not noted.

But Kim Pusik’s Samguk sagi likewise does not record it, so we don’t know where Mog[ŭn] and No [Kachae] obtained this information.

三淵送老稼齋入燕詩曰。千秋大膽楊萬春。箭射虬髪落眸子。案安市城主為楊萬春。出於唐書演義。好事者為之作姓名。不足取信。詳見月汀雜錄。徐四佳云。牧隱貞觀吟曰。謂是囊中一物耳。那知玄花落白羽。玄花言其目。白羽言其箭。世傳唐太宗伐高麗。至安市城。箭中其目而還。考唐書通鑑。皆不載。當時史官。必為中國諱。無恠其不書也。但金富軾三國史。亦不載。未知牧老何從得此。

Pak Chiwŏn (朴趾源, 1737–1805) also entered the conversation with Kim Chang’hŭp and Yi Saek’s work. In his well-known Yŏrha ilgi 熱河日記 he writes on the occasion of his visit to the alleged site of the Ansi fortress in 1780:

For generations it has been transmitted that the commander of the Ansi fortress was Yang Manch’un, and he shot the emperor in the eye. The emperor paraded the troops at the foot of the fortress, and bestowed one hundred bolts of silk on [the commander of Ansi] as a reward for the commander’s steadfast defence.

又世傳安市城主楊萬春。射帝中目。帝耀兵城下。賜絹百匹。以賞其為主堅守。

Pak suggests that Kim Ch’ang-hŭp and Yi Saek may have obtained the information from old peninsular legends or oral stories, and criticises Kim Pusik’s attitude to the sources:

Kim Pusik simply regretted that the histories had lost [the commander’s] name. Possibly when Pusik made the Samguk sagi, he only consulted Chinese histories and the documents copied and transcribed one side only, in order to make [a narrative of] the events. He went so far as to cite Liu Gongquan’s story, in order to give evidence for the encirclement at Chup’il, but neither the Jiu Tangshu, Xin Tangshu nor Sima [Guang’s] Zizhi tongjian show a record thereof, and he suspected it was because the Chinese concealed it. But if that is so, then when it comes to such things as old anecdotes from our own land, he did not dare to record one sentence briefly. Between [deciding on] transmitting what is credible and suspicious, it is likely he omitted it. I say that Taizong lost his eye at Ansi, although I cannot prove it, but that this town [Feng huang cheng 凤凰城] is likely Ansi, is, in my opinion wrong.

金富軾只惜其史失姓名。蓋富軾為三國史。只就中國史。書抄勝一番。以作事實。至引柳公權小說。以證駐驅之被圍。而唐書及司馬通鑑。皆不見錄。則疑其為中國諱之。然至若本土舊聞。不敢略載一句。傳信傳疑之間。蓋闕如也。余曰。唐太宗失目於安市。雖不可攷。蓋以此城為安市。愚以爲非也。

While Yi Tŏngmu, Pak Chiwŏn and others cast doubts on the veracity of this anecdote, even as late as the nineteenth century it had its supporters. Yi Kyukyŏng 李圭景 (1788–1856) wrote about the same line of Kim Ch’anghŭp’s poem:
This did not come from a standard history, but it really happened. The [Xín] Tangshu avoided mentioning it, as there was no trace of evidence. But then Mr Samwŏn [=Kim Ch’anghŭp] brought it into a poem, and it should indeed be considered as real; it is not a random story.

Conclusion

Over the course of more than a millennium, the siege of Ansi moved from history to legend. Koryŏ and Chosŏn historians and writers adopted and adapted the information that came to them from Chinese sources, and they remoulded the narrative of Taizong’s campaign in 645, and in particular the siege of Ansi, to give it significance in a new cultural context.

Kim Pusik’s Samguk sagi made ample use of Chinese sources. He worked within the same framework of classicist (yu, Chin. rú儒) historiography as the compilers of the Chinese materials, but he did not leave the master narrative of these Tang and Song historiographers unchallenged. While his description of events included many of the elements that helped to portray the emperor in a positive light in the Tang and Song sources, his judgement of Tang Tai-zong was far more critical in the editorial commentaries (nonchan論贊). Emphasising the sense of defeat for Taizong at Ansi then allowed later writers to present the 645 campaign in an introspective mode with the rehabilitation of Wei Zheng as a major theme. This move ultimately made the commander of Ansi the real hero.

The legend of Taizong being blinded in one eye by an arrow seems to be Korean in origin, but here too Chinese materials were added in. When the name Yang Manch’un as commander of Ansi was first introduced in Chosŏn in the late sixteenth century from a Chinese historical novel, the focus shifted sharply from the somber reflections of Taizong to a celebration of the commander of Ansi. Before long he was also identified as the archer who wounded Taizong. The story of Ansi now focused on a Koguryŏ hero who combined martial skills (mu武) as military leader with civil virtues (mun文); in particular the commander’s observation of the ritual protocol when the imperial army retreated was highlighted. If Taizong could be seen as a model of such a leader in East Asia in general, there was also an example on ‘our’ (a 我) side, from a Koryŏ and Chosŏn perspective. Although many Chosŏn writers pointed out the enormous time lag between the events of 645 and the first mention of the name Yang Manch’un in the late Ming, and hence the lack of reliability of this information, their repeated denunciations only serve to underline the durability and popularity of the legend of Yang Manch’un. In present-day historical fiction, and indeed on some internet forums with questionable historical research, the name Yang Manch’un is still bandied about, and the legend lives on.91

The steady stream of poems about Ansi furthermore indicates that not only Koryŏ, but also Chosŏn considered Koguryŏ as one of its charter polities.92 According to John Duncan, memories of Koguryŏ formed an important part of the Korean collective historical memory ‘for at least the past 1,000 years’.93 That this memory was shaped among other things by mistaken notions of the heroic exploits of the defender of the Ansi fortress does not detract from the strength of the feeling.

90 Yi Kyukyŏng, ‘Saye 射藝, in Oju yŏnmun changŏn sango 五洲衍文長箋散稿, in the ‘Insa p’yon: Kisullyu’ 人事篇: 技藝類 (no kwŏn or page number).
91 See, for instance, the thread ‘Yang Manch’un in History’ on the ‘Chicago Korean Drama Fan Club’ website, where history and fiction are freely mixed together. <http://deiner.proboards.com/thread/6407>.
92 For the concept of a charter polity in the Korean context, see Breuker, Establishing a Pluralist Society, p.17.
93 Duncan, ‘Historical Memories of Koguryŏ in Koryŏ and Chosŏn Korea,’ p.122.
Returning to the initial question of this article — if the presence of Tang Taizong on Koguryŏ territory has influenced the image of the emperor in Koryŏ and Chosŏn — it is clear the answer is affirmative. In Chinese sources, the emperor was presented as a great ruler and strategist, and this was well known on the peninsula. This allowed for a direct comparison with a home-grown hero, and emphasised even more the enormity of the achievements of ‘Yang Manch’un’. Koryŏ and Chosŏn were heavily indebted to Chinese culture, but the reshaping and reinterpretation of the siege of Ansi is one example of how in these circumstances a distinct identity could still develop.