Abstract

In the history of Tang dynasty (618-907AD), there were many brilliant and capable emperors, for example, Emperor Tang Taizong and Empress Wu Zetian. However, people tend to forget that there was an emperor who had ruled the empire for thirty-four years between Tang Taizong and Wu Zetian’s reign. That emperor was Tang Gaozong.

Tang Gaozong was regarded as a fatuous emperor who was held responsible for the usurpation of Wu Zetian. Immediately after the death of Emperor Taizong, Li Zhi (Emperor Gaozong) summoned Wu Zetian back to the Palace. After six years, he deposed his current empress and made Wu Zetian his new empress. Wu Zetian, being the new empress, began to expand her ambition and gradually eliminated her political enemies, namely the Guanlong Party.

Emperor Gaozong was often stricken with a strange disease that made him impossible to rule. Thus, he gave Empress Wu the authority to rule in his place, hence the court greeted them “The Two Saint Ones”. After Emperor Gaozong’s death, Empress Wu officially proclaimed herself “Emperor” and founded the Zhou Dynasty (690-705 AD).

Today, many scholars have a different perception on Emperor Gaozong, that is he is not as fatuous as others had thought. To the present days, there is still conflicting views on Tang Gaozong. This thesis attempts to discuss major policies implemented throughout his rule and his relationship with Empress Wu. Materials used in this thesis have been drawn from original historical records and some other secondary materials so as to provide a most thorough discussion of the above topic.