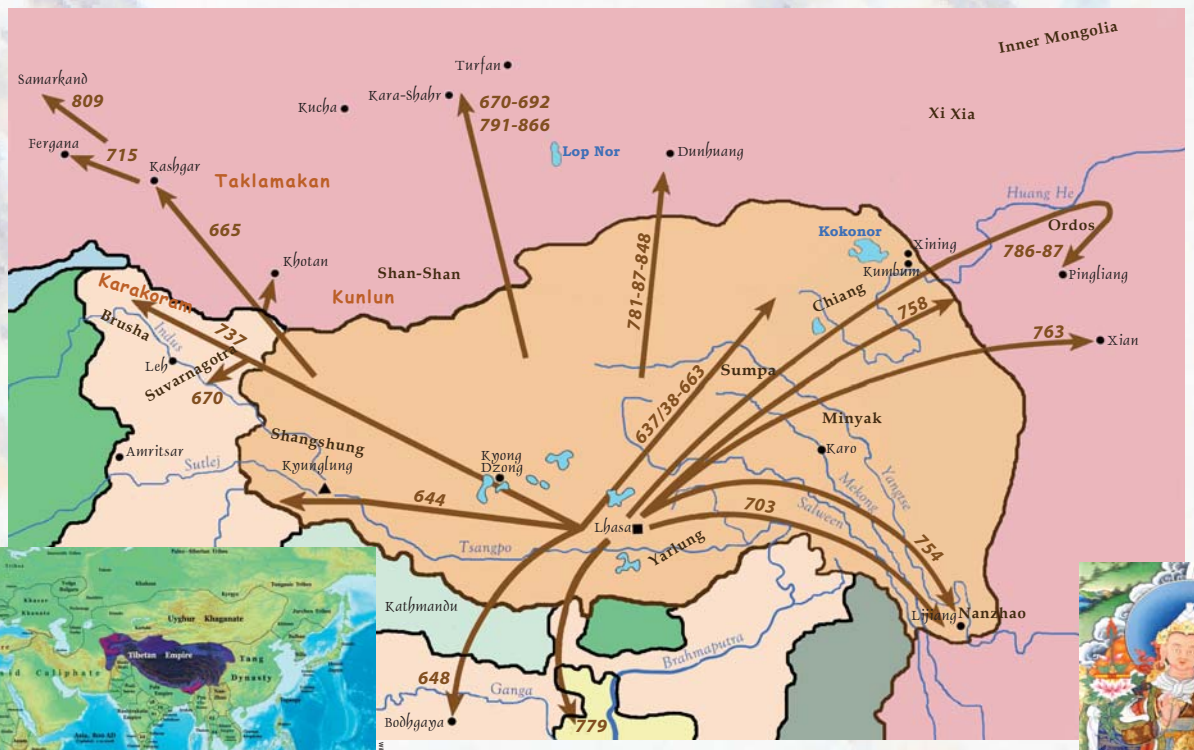
A Great Military Empire

The Three Religious Kings



The Tibetan Empire extended to the Chinese capital Chang'an (modern Xian) in the East, to Turfan in the North, to the Pamirs and Samarkhand in the West and the Gangetic plain in the South.

Maps speak for themselves

King Songtsen Gampo, the 33rd King (605-649)

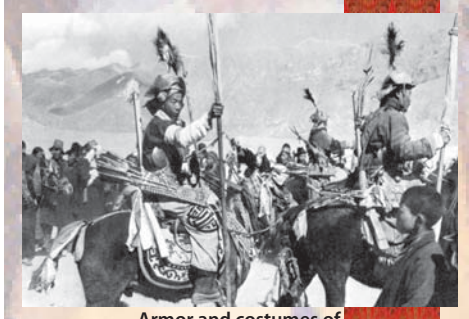
King Trisong Detsen, the 37th King (755-797)

King Ralpacan, the 41st King (806-838)

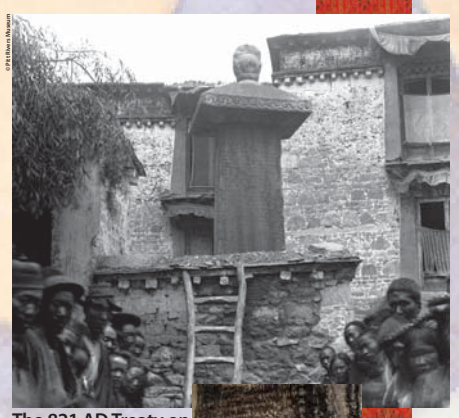
Songtsen Gampo built the greatest Empire of his time in Asia. During his reign, the capital was moved from Yarlung to Lhasa. A fort was built where the Potala Palace stands today. The King was the first to understand the necessity of a balanced policy between Tibet's neighbours: it is probably why he married several royal princesses.

Under subsequent kings, especially Trisong Detsen, the Second Religious King, the Tibetan Empire continued to expand. In 783 AD, a treaty was concluded which established the borders between Tibet and China.

In 821 AD, during the reign of Ralpachen, the Third Religious King, a peace agreement was signed between Tibet and China. The terms of the Treaty were engraved on three stone pillars: one demarcates the border between China and Tibet, the second is in the Jokhang Cathedral in Lhasa and the third in Chang'an in China.



Armor and costumes of the Religious Kings' period



The 821 AD Treaty on the Jokhang Pillar

The 821 AD Treaty reads: *"Tibet and China shall abide by the frontiers of which they are now in occupation. All to the east is the country of Great China; and all to the west is, without question, the country of Great Tibet... Between the two countries no smoke nor dust shall be seen. There shall be no sudden alarms and the very word 'enemy' shall not be spoken. …This solemn agreement has established a great epoch when Tibetans shall be happy in the land of Tibet, and Chinese in the land of China."*

The 783 AD Treaty between Tibet and China on a pillar at the foot of the Potala

Details of the Shol Potala Pillar