The Process by which the Gusi Khan Family lost the Royal Authority of Tibet: A reconsideration of the rebellion of Blo bzang bstan'dzin

by Yumiko Ishihama

The rebellion of Blo bzang bstan’dzin, which broke out in Qing-hai in 1723, is a historic event that caused the Gusi Khan family Qing-hai Qoshot to lose its hegemony over Tibet, and also its rule over Qing-hai. Two scholars in Japan, Dr. Hisashi Satô and Naoto Katô, have already investigated this affair. They, especially Mr. Katô, claim that the immediate cause of the rebellion was the Blo bsang bstan’dzin’s dissatisfaction with the Chinese emperor (雍正帝), who favored pro-Emperor Cay-an bstan ’dzin, but treated pro-Jun-gar Blo bzang bstan ’dzin coldly.

By examining the process of the outbreak of the rebellion, the author is able to clear up several facts. First, at that time relations between China and Qing-hai Qoshot were already tense, and the Emperor feared that Blo bzang bstan ’dzin and Cay-an bstan ’dzin would unite to rebel against China. For that reason, the Emperor treated Cay-an bstan ’dzin leniently to prevent such collaboration. Therefore we cannot find any evidence by which to define Cay-an bstan ’dzin as pro-Emperor. Secondly, though the Emperor knew well that there was no immediate sign of rebellion, he prepared for war with the intention of conquering the whole of Qing-hai. In conclusion, the author offers a proposal that the actual condition of the war between the Emperor and Qing hai Qoshot in 1723 was a planned Chinese invasion of Qing hai, and therefore we should not think that the cause of this affair lies in the mere personal feelings of Blo bzang bstan ’dzin.