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Article by **Clifford Edmund Bosworth**

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CENTRAL ASIA

iv. In the Islamic Period up to the Mongols

In early Islamic times Persians tended to identify all the lands to the northeast of Khorasan and lying beyond the Oxus with the region of Turan, which in the *Šāh-nāma* of Ferdowsī is regarded as the land allotted to Ferēdūn's son Tūr. The denizens of Tūrān were held to include the Turks, in the first four centuries of Islam essentially those nomadizing beyond the Jaxartes, and behind them the Chinese (see Kowalski; Minorsky, "Tūrān"). Tūrān thus became both an ethnic and a geographical term, but always containing ambiguities and contradictions, arising from the fact that all through Islamic times the lands immediately beyond the Oxus and along its lower reaches were the homes not of Turks but of Iranian peoples, such as the Sogdians and Khwarezmians. Equally imprecise was the Arabic designation Mā Warāʾ al-Nahr "the land beyond the river" (i.e., Amu Darya, the Oxus), which passed also into Persian literary usage and was used until post-Mongol times, e.g., by Ḥāfeẓ-e Abrū and by Bābor. At the outset, however, those nearby parts of Central Asia with which the Arabs were familiar were often subsumed into the vast and ill-defined province of Khorasan, embracing all lands to the east of

Ray, Jebāl, and Fārs.

On the eve of the first Arab incursions across the Oxus in the second half of the 1st/7th century, the ethnically, linguistically, and culturally Iranian lands of Ḵᵛārazm and Transoxania were still thriving entities linked with the Eurasian steppes, which ran from eastern Europe to the borders of China, by a nexus of commercial routes, benefiting from the religious and intellectual stimuli of both the Iranian and Indian worlds (see also buddhism; choresmia; sogdia). Arab raiders penetrated north of the Oxus in the caliphate of ʿOṯmān and in the governorship over Khorasan of ʿAbd-Allāh b. ʿĀmer b. Korayz (q.v.), but Yazīd b. Moʿāwīa's governor Salm b. Zīād (61-64/681-83) was the first Arab commander actually to winter across the Oxus. Disturbances in the heartland of the caliphate meant that it was not till the time of Qotayba b. Moslem Bāhelī (86-96/705-15; q.v.) that a firm hold was secured over Transoxania and the upper Oxus provinces, together with the first Arab attack on Ḵᵛārazm in 93/712 (Gibb, pp. 42-43; also choresmia). But only after 133/751 was Arab rule in Transoxania finally free from challenge. In that year, at the battle of Talas (Ṭarāz), the ʿAbbasid forces under Zīād b. Ṣāleḥ defeated the Chinese general Kao-hsien-chih, for the Ṭʿang emperors claimed suzerainty over Central Asia and had responded to appeals made to Peking by the threatened Sogdian princes (Ebn al-Aṯīr, IV, p. 449; Barthold, *Turkestan*, pp. 195-96). The Chinese threat was thus averted, as had been, shortly before this, the threat of the Western Turks of Türgeš, who as a steppe confederation had been liable to press on the frontiers of Transoxania at times of political weakness and instability there and who had been called in, like the Chinese, by local rulers (Barthold, *Turkestan*, pp. 186-87; Gibb, pp. 59-87; Grousset, pp. 165-72). Yet whereas the Chinese retreated permanently back behind the Ṭʿien-Shan Mountains, Turkish pressure was only momentarily dispelled and was later to be exerted by the individual tribes who succeeded to the heritage of the Western Turkish empire in the steppes; certain of these tribes such as the Qarluq (Ḵarloq), the probable progenitors of the Islamic Qarakhanids and the Oghuz, from whom the Saljuqs sprang, were later to have decisive and lasting effects on the historical and demographic evolution of Transoxania.

The ʿAbbasids integrated Transoxania in their empire as a province, at first appointing over it a series of ephemeral governors, who had to cope with several movements of social and religious protest, some Islamic in nature, such as those of the Kharijites, others distinctly heterodox, such as the uprising of Moqannaʿ and his "Wearers of white," the Mobayyeża or Sapīdjāmagān

(q.v.). The integration persisted, helped by the gradual rallying of the landowning or *dehqān* classes in the eastern Iranian lands to Islam and the Islamic ruling order: The members of the *abnāʾ al-dawla*, supporters of the ʿAbbasid revolution, came from Transoxania, and in the 3rd/9th century Transoxanian Iranian elements in the caliphal armies were perpetuated through local princes like the Afšīn Ḵayḏār of Osrūšana and contingents from specific areas like the "men of Farḡāna" and the men of Osrūšana" (Faraḡena and Osrūšanīya in the sources); these were undoubtedly free Iranians rather than Turkish slave guards (*ḡelmān*, *mamālīk*; see Ayalon, pp. 29-32).

The Taherid governors of Khorasan in the 3rd/9th century deputed their authority over Transoxania to an Iranian *dehqān* family from Ṭoḵārestān in the upper Oxus valley, the Samanids, who after the capture of the Taherid capital Nīšāpūr by the Saffarids in 261/875, were recognized by the ʿAbbasids as their official representatives in Transoxania and Khorasan (R. N. Frye, in *Camb. Hist. Iran* IV, pp. 137-38). The increasing enfeeblement of the caliphs in Sāmarrā and Baghdad meant that the Samanids, while always proclaiming their allegiance to the caliphate and to Sunni Islam, could behave as virtually independent rulers. The Arab historians and geographers praise the beneficence of Samanid rule during the later 3rd/9th and 4th/10th centuries: low taxation, helped by the fact that Samanid amirs could raise money from import and transit dues levied on traffic in the products of inner Asia, above all, on Turkish military slaves (see barda and bardadārī v. military slavery); cheap and plentiful provisions from the rich irrigated lands and oases of the Oxus, Zarafšān, and Jaxartes (Syr Darya) valleys; and the generally enlightened rule of the Samanids themselves, which involved respect for scholars and litterateurs and, at least in the years until the decay of the amirate, regularly paid salaries for officials and the troops (see Barthold, *Turkestan*, pp. 234-40). Socio-religious protest, while not disappearing completely (Ismaʿili propagandists dispatched by the Fatimids seem to have secured a foothold in Transoxania during the reign of Naṣr b. Aḥmad, 301-31/914-43; see ibid., pp. 242-44), was much diminished. The frontiers of Transoxania and Ḵᵛārazm were maintained by strong defense lines of *rebāṭ*s or frontier fortresses, from which punitive raids could be launched into the steppes when the nomads proved recalcitrant; alliances were made with some Turkish tribes on the frontiers whereby they received subsidies in exchange for acting as frontier guards; and, although little is known about this, a certain amount of evangelism in the pagan steppes may have been undertaken by individual Sufi shaikhs and similar enthusiasts for the faith, such as the

Shaikh from Nīšāpūr Abu'l-Ḥasan Moḥammad Kalemātī (d. some time before 350/961), who worked among the Qarluq and may have played a part in the conversion of the Qarakhanid prince Satuq Boḡra Khan (see ibid., pp. 254-56; and Grenard). Thus the northeastern bastions of Islamic faith and civilization, maintenance of which had always been a prime concern of governors and rulers in the East, held firm during these early centuries, and from the second half of the 4th/10th century onward Islamic religion began to influence, even if only superficially, the animistic and shamanistic beliefs of Turkish and other peoples of the steppes like the Oghuz and Qarluq and, further west, the Khazars and Bulghars. Although the complete Islamization of Central Asia was hardly achieved even by the Timurid period, Central Asian Islam began to evolve its own special nature and emphases, seen, e.g., in the Sufi order founded in Transoxania in the later 6th/12th century by the followers of the Turkish holy man Shaikh Aḥmad Yasavī (d. at Yasī, the later town in Turkestan, in the middle Jaxartes valley in 562/1166; see F. İz, "Aḥmad Yasawī," in *EI*^{2}, pp. 298-99).

However, the collapse of the Samanid amirate as a result of internal tensions and financial crisis at the end of the 4th/10th century meant a distinct weakening of the defenses against pressure from the outer steppes. The Qarakhanids or Ilek-khans, only recent converts to Islam, appeared in the Jaxartes valley, temporarily occupying the Samanid capital Bukhara as early as 382/992, and in the early decades of the next century took over Transoxania. The Samanid lands south of the Oxus fell to the Ghaznavids, a Turkish dynasty of military slave origin. Iranian rule in Transoxania came to an end with the fall of the Samanids and in the neighboring kingdom of Ḵʷārazm in 408/1017, when the Ghaznavids destroyed the Iranian line of

Maʾmunid Ḵʷārazmšāhs (see āl-e maʾmūn). In the middle decades of the 5th/11th century Turkish power in these regions was strengthened through the establishment of the Great Saljuq empire in Iran and the central Arab lands from Iraq to Syria (see Bosworth, in *Camb. Hist. Iran* V, chap. 1). For varying periods, under such rulers as Alp Arslān, Malekšāh, and Sanjar, the Great Saljuqs exercised suzerainty over the Qarakhanids in Transoxania, and in Ḵʷārazm a line of Turkish Ḵʷārazmšāhs came to power under Qoṭb-al-Dīn Moḥammad, son of Anūštigīn, a slave of the Saljuq Malek Shah.

These political events had profound consequences for Transoxania and Ḵʷārazm. The incoming of steppe nomads with their herds, first of Turkish tribesmen and then, in the 7th/13th century, of the Mongols, was bound to

have long-term economic and demographic effects. A certain degree of pastoralization may have begun under the Qarakhanids, as there is mention of the setting-up of royal hunting grounds (*gūroq*s) by Šams-al-Molk Naṣr b. Ebrāhīm Ṭamḡāč (Ṭamḡāj) Khan (460-72/1068-80; see Naršaḵī, p. 35, tr. Frye, p. 29, cf. p. 125). Since the Qarakhanids were a tribal confederation and never formed a centralized state they had several centers of power, from Khotan to Samarqand, but these were only semipermanent (see Pritsak, pp. 23, 37). A continuator of Naršaḵī (p. 39, tr. p. 33) states that taxes were everywhere lightened when the Qarakhanids replaced the Samanids, and it is possible that the indigenous Iranian landed classes, the *dehqān*s, enjoyed a temporary resurgence of power. Nevertheless, the long-term trends of the 5th/11th and 6th/12th centuries militated against the preservation of the Iranian character of Transoxania and Ḵᵛārazm. Turkish elements continued to be attracted into these lands from the steppes, with the ultimate effect of the disappearance of the Sogdian and Choresmian languages and the confining of Iranian speech to the mountainous refuge-areas of the upper Oxus, what is now the Tajikistan SSR and the Pamir region (cf. xiii, below).

On the other hand, the strength of Islamic culture and religion exerted a pull in the reverse direction. Once converted to Islam, dynasties like the Qarakhanids and Saljuqs came to share fully in the Islamic heritage, which had always been strong in Khorasan and Transoxania. Persian poets flourished at the courts of the Ilek-khans, and Neẓāmī ʿArūżī cites thirteen poets who glorified the Āl-e Ḵāqān, as he calls it, among whom ʿAmʿaq of Bukhara was the eulogist of Šams-al-Molk Naṣr and his successor Ḵeżr Khan b. Ebrāhīm (472-73/1080-81; *Čahār maqāla* (ed. Qazvīnī, text, pp. 44-45; cf. Browne, *Lit. Hist. of Persia* II, pp. 335-36); but it was also among the Qarakhanids that the first Islamic Turkish imaginative literature appears, with Yūsof Ḵāṣṣ Ḥājeb's *Qutadḡu bilig*, completed at the local court of Kashghar in 462/1069-70 (see Bombaci, pp. 83-96). In the sphere of toponymy, increased Turcisization in Central Asia is reflected in the appearance—at a point which cannot be precisely documented—of the term Turkestan for the Turkish lands of Central Asia comprising the former Transoxania and Ḵᵛārazm, while after the Mongol invasions that of Moḡolestān appears, more specifically for the steppes to the north of the Oxus-Jaxartes basins and Turkestan proper (Mīrzā Ḥaydar Doḡlāt, introd. pp. 51ff., tr. pp. 36-37; and Bosworth, "Mogholistān," in *EI*[2]).

The Mongol invasions of Transoxania were not a cataclysm, in that this

appearance of non-Turkish, non-Islamic peoples from remote Inner Asia in Transoxania had been prefigured by the arrival there, some eighty years before Čengīz Khan's time, of the Qara Khitay (Ḳeṭāy), probably also of Mongol but conceivably of Tungusic stock. In 536/1141 the Qarakhanid Maḥmūd Khan b. Arslan of Samarqand and his suzerain, the Saljuq Sultan Sanjar, were defeated by these incomers at one of the great battles of Central Asia, that of the Qaṭvān Steppe in Ošrūsana to the south of the middle Jaxartes (Rāvandī, pp. 171ff.; Ebn al-Aṯīr, XI, pp. 81-86; Barthold, *Turkestan*, pp. 326-27). (The news of this event filtered through dimly to the Christian West and gave an impetus to the legend of Prester John, the powerful anti-Islamic monarch who supposedly ruled in Inner Asia). Since the Qara Khitay stemmed from the people of northern China called in Chinese annals the Liao (Wittvogel and Fêng), they were partly sinicized, and the decentralized rule which they established in the eastern parts of Transoxania during the later decades of the 6th/12th century had a distinct Chinese imprint (e.g. in regard to the copper coinage of the Qara Khitay Gür Khans; ibid., pp. 661-62, 664, 672-73), bringing yet another element into what was becoming the ethnic, religious and cultural melting pot in Central Asia.

For specific details of the course of events of Central Asian history, insofar as it impinges on Iran and Iranian culture, see also individual place names and dynasties; cf. arab ii; bukhara.

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