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CHINESE TURKESTAN

iii. From the Advent of Islam to the Mongols

Chinese influence in the Tarim basin began to wane after the battle of Talas (Ṭarāz) in 134/751, when Tang troops under Gao Xian-zhi were defeated by Muslim armies led by Zīād b. Ṣāleḥ (Ebn al-Aṯīr, V, p. 449; Chavannes, 1903, pp. 143,152-53; Barthold, *Turkestan*[3], pp. 195-96; see ii, above; central asia iv. in the islamic period up to the mongols), though Islam did not gain a permanent foothold there until much later. On the eve of the conquest by the Muslim Īlek-ḵāns (Qarakhanids, 388-607/998-1212) Buddhism was the official religion of both Khotan (He-tian) on the Southern Silk Road and of the Uighurs who controlled the eastern Tarim basin; Manicheans and Nestorian Christians (see christianity iii. in central asia and chinese turkestan) were also active in the region.

The Turkic-speaking Īlek-ḵāns had two capitals, Kashgar/Ordukänd (Chin. Ka-shi) and Balāsāḡūn/Qūzordu or Qūzolus (Moqaddasī, p. 275; Kāšḡarī, I, p. 148; Abu'l-Fedā, *Taqwīm*, pp. 493, 500). In 396/1006 Abu'l-Ḥasan Naṣr b. ʿAlī, ruler of Kashgar and Bukhara (388-406/998-1015), and his brother Yūsof Qadr (Qadïr)

Khan (r. as great khan 417-24/1026-32), ruler of Khotan (He-tian) on the Southern Silk Road, invaded the territory of Maḥmūd of Ḡazna. Khotan must thus have already been conquered by that time (Barthold, *Turkestan*[3], p. 273; Samolin, pp. 81-82). As rulers over Iranian and Turkic populations, both sedentary and nomadic, the Īlek-ḵāns initiated the transition from a society characterized by linguistic, ethnic, and religious diversity to a more homogeneous community in which Islam, and eventually Turkic languages, came to predominate. The Iranian-speaking inhabitants of Osh (Ūš) in the southeastern comer of the Fergana (Farḡāna) valley, as well as of Kashgar, Yarkand (Suoche), Khotan, and other oasis cities on the Southern Silk Road, were thus subject to a gradual process of Turkization (Haneda), attested by the names of small settlements, fortresses, mountains, and mountain passes in Fergana and the western Tarim basin; in addition, many cities were known by both Iranian and Turkic names, for example, Ḵotan/Udun (Odon) and Kučā/Küsän (Kāšḡarī, II, pp. 114-15, 308; cf. Pelliot, I, pp. 411-18). In general the indigenous populations ruled by the Īlek-ḵāns either became bilingual or evolved dialects in which the pronunciation reflected the influence of both languages (Kāšḡarī, I, p. 83). Nevertheless, Khotan in particular remained a stronghold of Iranian traditions and culture. Although the inhabitants were regarded by their overlords as “settlers in the lands of the Turks,” they had “both a script and a language of their own” (Kāšḡarī, 1, p. 83). In addition, at this period Persian was becoming increasingly popular as a literary language at the courts of the Īlek-ḵāns. The indigenous commercial ruling classes of the former city-states in the Tarim basin, known in the 5th/11th century as Ṣīn (lit. “China”) or Barḵān (Lower) Ṣīn (Kāšḡarī, I, p. 341), were also able to retain some of their power, gradually forming a coalition with the military leaders of the steppe peoples. The Īlek-ḵāns’ government was based on this aristocracy, whose members were responsible for administering their own appanages (Barthold, 1956, I, p. 94). Despite the fact that the rulers were themselves Muslims, they seem to have exhibited a certain degree of tolerance toward the inhabitants of their domains. For example, according to Gardīzī (ed. Ḥabībī, p. 270), two churches were still functioning in Khotan in about 442/1050 (cf. Dauvillier, p. 287).

Throughout this period the cities on the Northern Silk Road east of Kucha (Ku-che) had remained under the control of the Uighurs at Qočo (Gao-chang) in the Turfan basin. Their domain was a center of Manichean and Buddhist culture, even incorporating some Christian elements (Gabain, p. 20). In the 5th/11th century the Īlek-ḵāns considered Kucha itself a city on the frontier of the

Uighurs (Kāšḡarī, I, p. 308). The religious differences between the Uighurs and their Muslim neighbors farther west overshadowed their linguistic affinities, and Ṭāher Marvazī included discussion of the Uighurs in his history of China, rather than of the Turks (pp. 18-20).

In about 529/1135 the Qarā Ḵeṭāy (Liao), a Far Eastern people of indeterminate ethnic origin, advanced north of the Tien Shans as far west as Balāsāḡūn, where they established their capital. The Īlek-ḵāns remained in control of the southern and western Tarim basin until about 536/1141, when they were defeated in battle by the Qarā Ḵeṭāy (Wittfogel and Feng, pp. 621-23; Bosworth, p. 581). The Qarā Ḵeṭāy did not continue the system of administration through appanages, but they did rely on a decentralized system of vassal rulers, including the Uighurs on the Northern Silk Road (Jovayni, ed. Qazvīnī, I, p. 32; tr. Boyle, I, pp. 44-45; cf. Barthold, *Turkestan*[3], pp. 361-62), from whom they collected tribute (cf. Bosworth, p. 582). Under their rule Manicheism and Buddhism, which had never completely disappeared from the western Tarim basin, experienced a revival, and the number of Christians in the region increased as well. The Nestorian patriarch Elias III (1176-90) founded a metropolitan see in Kashgar (Dauvillier, p. 287; Barthold, 1901, pp. 57ff.), and Marco Polo's report that there were Christians there in the 7th/13th century is corroborated by contemporary Syriac documents (Pelliot, I, pp. 208-09). Garbled reports of these developments reached Europe and fueled the legends of Prester John, a supposed Christian ruler in Asia who opposed the Muslims (Beckingham).

As Mongol power rose in the northeast, both the Buddhist Uighurs and the urban Muslims of the western Tarim basin turned against the Qarā Ḵeṭāy and welcomed the invasions of the Nayman Mongol Küčlüg (Kūčlok) beginning in 607/1211 (Jovaynī, ed. Qazvīnī, I, pp. 32, 48-49; tr. Boyle. I, pp. 44-45; cf. Barthold, *Turkestan*[3], pp. 361-63, 368-69). After consolidating his power, however, Küčlüg adopted a policy of persecuting Muslims (Wittfogel and Feng, pp. 651-54) and forcing them to convert to Christianity or Buddhism (Jovaynī, ed. Qazvīnī, I, p. 49; tr. Boyle, I, pp. 65-66; Barthold, *Turkestan*[3], pp. 356-57, 368). After the Mongol Čengīz Khan conquered the Dzungar and Tarim basins in 615/1218 (q.v.; Jovaynī, ed. Qazvīnī, 1, pp. 49-51; tr. Boyle, I, pp. 66-68) Islam was tolerated once again. From that time onward its influence was uncontested in the western Tarim basin and in fact continued to spread eastward (see iv, below).

It was not until the end of the 8th/14th century, however, that Islam became

firmly established on the Northern Silk Road, when the Uighurs at Qočo were conquered by the Muslim ruler of Mongolia (Moḡūlestān) Ḵeżr Ḵojā (Ḵᵛāja; r. ca. 1389-99). The population was still primarily Buddhist when an embassy from the Timurid ruler Šāhroḵ (807-50/1405-47) visited Turfan in 823/1420 (Ḥaydar Doḡlāt, p. 52).

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