



CHINESE TURKESTAN IV. IN THE MONGOL PERIOD

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On the eve of the Mongol conquests the eastern oases along the northern perimeter of the Takla Makan desert and the towns in the Dzungarian (< Mong. Zunghar) steppes north of the Tien Shans (see i, above) were inhabited primarily by the Uighur Turks, concentrated in the Turfan basin and around Bešbaliq (Bīš Bālīg) north of the Tien Shans between present-day Qi-ta and Urumchi (Spuler). The eastern oases south of the Takla Makan were controlled by the Tangut (Tangūt, Tanokgūt), a mixed group of Tibetan and Turkish ancestry who had founded the Xi-xia dynasty in northwestern China. The western portion of the Tarim basin was inhabited by a mixture of Turkic and Iranian peoples, many of whom were Muslims (see iii, above).

Once Čengīz Khan had consolidated his power and been proclaimed great khan over the Mongols in 1206, he turned his attention to these areas. He had subdued the Tangut by 1209, though he had dispatched two probes earlier to determine the enemy's strength (Boyle, *EI*² II, p. 42). In the same year the Uighur ruler (*idūq-qut/īdīqūt*), Barchuq (Bārjūq) Art-tegin (ca. 1206-ca. 1230) sent an embassy to the Mongols, and two years later he personally submitted to Čengīz Khan. In 1218 he joined with the Mongol armies under Jebe to



overthrow Küčlüg (Kūčlok; see iii, above), who had usurped the throne of the Qarā Keṭāy in the west. Between 616/1219 and 622/1225 he and his troops campaigned with Čengīz Khan against Sultan Moḥammad K̄vārazmšāh in Transoxania and Fergana (Farḡāna; Jovaynī, ed. Qazvīnī, I, pp. 32-35; tr. Boyle, pp. 44-47), and he also assisted the Mongols against the rebellious Tangut in 1226. As a reward Barchuq was given one of Čengīz Khan's daughters in marriage (Jovaynī, ed. Qazvīnī, I, pp. 33-34; tr. Boyle, pp. 47-48; Rašīd-al-Dīn, *Jāme' al-tawārīk*, Baku, pp. 338-41).

Although Čengīz Khan died in the summer of 1227, his troops shortly afterward won an overwhelming victory over the Tangut, which resulted in their elimination as a distinct people. The Uighurs were thus the principal surviving group in the eastern part of the Tarim basin (Rašīd-al-Dīn, *Jāme' al-tawārīk*, Baku, pp. 324-26). Čengīz Khan had divided his empire among his four sons. The second of them, Čaḡadai (Čaḡatāy; 624-39/1227-41), was granted all the territory that lay between the land of the Uighurs in the east and Bukhara and Samarkand in the west (see [chaghatayid dynasty](#)). The third son, Ögödei Qa'an (Üktāy Qa'an; r. 627-39/1229-41), received an area in the Tarbagatay mountains and adjacent steppes and in northern Afghanistan. He also succeeded his father as great khan and in that capacity appointed the merchant Maḥmūd Yalavāč K̄vārazmī as supreme minister (*šāḥeb al-mo'āzzam*) over all the settled territory of Central and Inner Asia some time before 636/1239; subsequently Yalavāč was transferred to China, and his son Mas'ūd Beg was appointed governor of the Uighur country, the entire Tarim basin, and Transoxania (Jovaynī, ed. Qazvīnī, I, pp. 84, 86; tr. Boyle, I, pp. 107-08, 110-11; Rašīd-al-Dīn, ed. Blochet, pp. 85-86; Barthold, *Turkestan*³, p. 396 n. 3).

The Uighurs, as the first people of advanced culture to have submitted voluntarily to the Mongols, also played an important role in the Mongol administration. Their literary skills were particularly in demand, and Uighur script, which was derived from Sogdian script (see viii, below), was adopted for the writing of Mongolian. Uighurs often served as interpreters, translators, and *dārūḡas* (resident commissioners; Rachewiltz, pp. 282-92) in Mongol-occupied territories in China and Central Asia. After much intrigue a man named Kōrgüz (Kürgüz) was even appointed governor of Khorasan in 633/1236; he served until his death in about 640/1242 (Jovaynī, ed. Qazvīnī, II, pp. 228-42; tr. Boyle, II, pp. 489-525; cf. Barthold, *Turkestan*³, pp. 474-75).

In the late 640s/1240s competition between the descendants of Ögödei and of



Čengīz Khan's son Tolui (Tūlī) for control of the throne split the empire and brought conflict to Central Asia, China, and Persia. For example, the Uighur *idūq-qut*, Barchuq's son Salindi (Sālendī), supported the house of Ögödei and was executed by Tolui's son Möngke (Mengü, Mankū; 649-58/1251-60) in 1253 (Jovaynī, ed. Qazvīnī, I, pp. 34-38; tr. Boyle, I, pp. 47-52). After Möngke's death Salindi's successor, his brother Ögüñč (Ūgeñč), refrained from taking sides in the ensuing struggle (1260-64) between Qubilai (Qūbīlāy) Khan (658-93/1260-94), the eventual victor and founder of the Yuan dynasty of China (1260-1368), and his brother Ariğ Böke (Arīq Būkā); a third brother, Hülegü (Hülāgū), Il-khanid of Persia (654-63/ 1255-65), supported Qubilai.

Qaidu (Qāydū), a great-nephew of Ögödei who controlled territory in what is now southern Kazakhstan, had supported Ariğ Böke. He became a champion for conservative Mongols who sought to preserve the traditional customs and practices of their nomadic past and resented the growing identification between Qubilai Khan and his sedentary Chinese subjects, on one hand, and the Il-khanids and their Persian subjects, on the other. In 668/1270 he supported Mas'ūd Beg and the Chaghatayid khan Baraq (Barāq; r. 664-70/1266-71) in their attack on Persia, but Baraq was soundly defeated by the [Il-khanid Abaqa](#) (663-80/1265-82) at the battle of Herat on 1 Du'l-ḥejja/22 July. The conflict between Qaidu and the Yuan rulers was not resolved so quickly. In 670-71/1271 Qubilai dispatched one of his sons, Nomuqan (Nūmūgān), to crush him, but squabbles in the army and the elusiveness of the enemy frustrated his efforts (Tu Qi, 76 p. 8b; *Yuan shi*, p. 265; Pelliot, II, p. 795). The most crushing blow was Qaidu's capture of Nomuqan himself in 675/1276; he remained a captive for almost a decade (*Yuan-shi*, pp. 144, 3082; Rašīd-al-Dīn, tr. Boyle, p. 266). In 678-79/1280 Qubilai dispatched a second expedition, but Qaidu also seized its commander, Qi Gong-zhi, in 683-84/1285 (*Yuan-shi*, p. 6937). Qubilai continued to encounter enormous difficulties in imposing his authority over the Tarim and Dzungar basins. He was never able to achieve economic and military self-sufficiency for the oases, yet the supply lines necessary to maintain the Yuan armies and assist friendly local inhabitants were long and fragile; furthermore, constant harassment by the elusive nomads intimidated his soldiers. His failure to gain control of the region also prevented him from reasserting his authority over his Ilkhanid relations in Persia.

In 688/1289 Mas'ūd Beg died and was buried at [Bukhara](#) (iii. after the mongol invasion). His three sons succeeded him in turn, the last ruling from Kashgar.



Qubilai's successors wavered between aggressive attempts to control the Tarim and Dzungar basins and passive acquiescence to domination by the Chaghatayids and Qaidu. Between 697/1298 and 703/1303 his grandson Temür (Tīmūr; 693-706/1294-1307) conducted a series of campaigns, during which Qaidu was killed and the Chaghatayid khan, Baraq's son Du'a (Do'ā; ca. 691-706/1291-1306), was wounded. But by 705/1305 the Chaghatayid rulers had reasserted control over the entire Tarim basin and had expelled Qaidu's son Čäpar (Čäpār) from the area north of the Tien Shans. The Yuan rulers accepted the status quo until 717/1317, when another of their armies temporarily expelled the Chaghatayid khan Esen Buqa (Būqā; 709-17/1309-18). This campaign was the last by the Yuan in Turkestan, however. The court in Beijing decided to focus on defense of the homeland in Mongolia and could thus not spare the necessary troops to occupy the region. One inevitable result was a decline in diplomatic and commercial contacts with Persia. By the 720s/1320s the Yuan had abandoned Turkestan to the Chaghatayids. The Chaghatayid khan Tarmašīrīn (726-34/1326-34) became a Muslim (cf. Barthold, *Turkestan*³, p. 54), but the eastern branch of his house continued to resist the spread of Islam.

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