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ILAK-KHANIDS
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ILAK-KHANIDS

ILAK-KHANIDS (or Qara-khanids), the first Muslim Turkic dynasty that ruled in Central Asia from the Tarim basin to the Oxus river, from the mid-late 10th century until the beginning of the 13th. The name Ilak-khanids or Ilek Khans, like the more common designation nowadays, Qara-khanids, derived from the titulature of the dynasty, which appears on its coins; Ilak (or Ilig) means prince, king, ruler, the highest title after the *ḵāqān* or khan (Doerfer, *Elemente* II, pp. 210-13), while Qara means black, but also grand and prestigious (Pritsak, 1955, pp. 239-63; Doerfer, *Elemente* III, pp. 426-32). Contemporary literary sources usually refer to the dynasty as the Ḵāqāniya(the Ḵāqān [house]), al-Moluk al-Ḵāniya al-Atrāk (The Khanal kings of the Turks), or Āl-e Afrāsiāb (the house of Afrāsiāb, the king of Turān in the *Šāh-nāma*).

Historical information on the Qara-khanids is extremely sketchy due to the lack of internal sources. Though several contemporary works dedicated to Qara-khanid history once existed (e.g., the 11th-century *Tāriḵ-e Kāšḡar* by Almaʿi or the 12th century *Aḵbār-e Torkestān* of Majd-al-Din ʿAdnān al-Sorḵakati, the uncle of Moḥammad ʿAwfi), none of them survived except for a few paragraphs cited in later sources. Information should therefore be gathered from a variety of sources dealing with neighboring dynasties (mainly Ghaznavids, Saljuqs, Ḵʷārazmšāhs, or the Song and Liao dynasties in China) or from general histories (notably Ebn al-Aṯir's *al-Kāmel fi'l-taʾriḵ*). In terms of material culture, the main source for the dynasty's history is its plentiful coins, studied mainly by Boris Dimitrievich Kochnev. These are supplemented by various documents, monuments, and archeological surveys. Indeed, most of

the recent literature on the Qara-khanids is focused on their archaeology rather than on their history. Archeological and especially numismatic finds, however, greatly revised the pioneering attempts of Vasiliĭ Barthold and Omeljan Pritsak to reconstruct the history of the dynasty. This article will start with a political history followed by a review of certain economic and social aspects of Qara-khanid rule and by a short discussion of their multi-layered culture.

Political history. The origin of the Qara-khanids is a highly debated issue, to which no definite solution seems to exist. They began as a confederation, whose main components belong to the Qarluq, Čegel, and Yaḡmā tribes (the later two perhaps segments in the Qarluq federation), yet scholars widely differ regarding the identity of this union's leaders. Pritsak suggested that the Qara-khanids emerged out of the Qarluqs, a view recently supported and modified by Kochnev (Pritsak, 1951, pp. 270-300; Kochnev, 1996, pp. 353-57) on the basis of numismatics, which is by far the most popular view in Western literature. Vasiliĭ Barthold (*Four Studies* I, p. 93) and Vladimir Minorsky (*Ḥodud al-ʿālam*, tr., p. 278) suggested a Yaḡmā origin; several Chinese and Japanese scholars, based on Chinese sources, favored an Uighur origin for the Qara-khanids (e.g., Wei Liangtao, 2000, p. 61; Haneda, p. 7), while O. Karaev and Liu Yingsheng independently support a Čegel origin (Karaev, pp. 74-80; Liu, p. 121). Whoever really was the leading clan or ethnic group of the Qara-khanid union, their leaders obviously saw themselves related to the imperial tradition of the Turkic empire, as proven by the term Ḵāqāniya that they used to denote themselves.

The early history of the Qara-khanids remained a subject of conjecture. Pritsak identified them with the nomads against whom the Samanids fought in 840 in Asfijāb and in 893 in Talas (Ṭarāz), but this is far from being certain, and in any case we know nothing about the further history of this group. The first relevant information after that is the story of Satoq (Saboq/Šaboq in Ebn al-Aṯir, Beirut, XI, p. 82) Boḡrā Khan ʿAbd-al-Karim (d. ca. 955) becoming a Muslim, the first Qara-khanid to embrace Islam. Samanid conversion efforts as well as the military, cultural, and commercial prestige they enjoyed in the steppe probably played a role in Satoq's conversion, which was mediated by a jurist (*faqih*) from Bukhara, a scion of the Samanid family (Qarši, pp. 130-32; Barthold, *Four Studies* I, p. 93). Satoq, the son or nephew of the Turkic Ḵāqān, embraced Islam in Artuj (present-day Artiš), a village near Kāšḡar (in Xinjiang/Sinkiang, China, where the mosque he allegedly built is still a site of

pilgrimage today). After he had publicly converted, Satoq moved against his father or uncle and, with the help of the *ḡāzi*s of Farḡāna, conquered Kāšḡar (Qarši, pp. 130-32; Barthold, *Turkestan*3, pp. 254-55). His conversion must have contributed to the mass conversion among the Turks (the famous 200,000 tents), which followed shortly after his death, in 960 (Ebn al-Aṯir, Beirut, VIII, p. 396; Meskawayh, II, p. 181). After their islamization, the Qara-khanids moved in two directions, first southeast towards Buddhist Ḵotan, where they fought from 961 for years without decisive results, finally subjugating the oasis only in the early 11th century (Bailey, pp. 125-29), and westward, towards the Muslim lands of the Samanids. In 992 Ḥasan (or Hārun) Boḡrā Khan, Satoq's grandson, temporarily occupied the Samanid capital Bukhara, but he withdrew soon afterwards, falling ill due to the climate and water (ʿOtbi, tr., pp. 95 ff.). The Samanids summoned their hitherto vassals, the Ghaznavids, for help, but the latter had their own interests. When the new Qara-khanid ruler, Arslan Ilig Naṣr b. ʿAli, again moved against Bukhara, he cooperated with the Ghaznavids, and in 999 the Ghaznavids and the Qara-khanids divided the Samanid dominions between them, the Ghaznavids getting Khorasan and the Qara-khanids Transoxania (Ebn al-Aṯir, Beirut, IX, pp. 148-49; Bayhaqi, p. 199; Bosworth, *Ghaznavids*, p. 34). Being orthodox Hanafite Sunnite Muslims, the Qara-khanids met with little opposition in their new environment, and they certainly stressed their loyalty to the Abbasid caliph in Baghdad as a major component in their legitimacy. Qara-khanid borders were stabilized in the first decade of the 11th century after the collapse of the last Samanid attempt to resume power (1005), the Qara-khanids' failure to take over Khorasan (1006, 1008), and the final subjugation of Ḵotan (1006). From then on they ruled from the Oxus to the Tarim basin, including Transoxania, Šāš, Farḡāna, Asfijāb, Talas/Ṭarāz, Semirechyè, Kāšḡar, and Ḵotan, later adding also the region of Kuča, northeast of Ḵotan (Karaev, pp. 104, 112; for maps, see Bregel, 2003, pp. 26-34).

The Qara-khanids retained the dual structure similar to that of the Turk Khaqanate. In the most articulated form of the system, the eastern ḵāqān ruled from his two capitals, Kāšḡar and Balāsāḡun (in the Ču valley near modern Burana in north Kyrgyzstan, near the site of the capital of the Western Turks), which became the Qara-khanid supreme capital. He bore the title Arslan (lion; the totem of the Čegel) Qara Ḵāqān and was theoretically superior to his associate, the western ḵāqān, entitled Boḡrā (male camel; the totem of the Yaḡmā) Qara Ḵāqān, who after 999 ruled from Samarqand. Like other Inner Asian states, the empire was considered the common patrimony of the ruling

clan, and its members were entitled to rule certain parts of it as appanages. Below the ḵāqān, therefore, existed a complicated system of ranks and titles connected with seniority, including the *ilak-ilig* below the ḵāqān and *tegin* (prince) below him; each can be entitled either Boḡrā or Arslan. When members of the royal clan moved up the seniority ladder, they changed their titles and sometimes their appanages as well. This "musical chairs" system makes the following of the careers of the Qara-khanid khans and princes a rather difficult task (Golden, 1990, p. 357; Soucek, p. 84).

The different members of the clan were often at odds with each other, and in the early decades of the 11th century two distinct branches, known as the Hasanids and the ʿAlids (after ʿAli b. Musā, and Ḥasan b. Solaymān, two of Satoq's grandsons who conquered Transoxania) began to emerge. Their feuds were cleverly manipulated by the Ghaznavids, who in the 1020s-1030s fought several times with the Qara-khanids, allying with different princes. Apart from the Qara-khanid-Ghaznavid wars, another factor that disturbed the stability of the Qara-khanid state was a line of Turkic migrations westward throughout the first half of the 11th century. These migrations mainly derived from the activities of the Khitan Liao dynasty (907-1125) in Mongolia and from the consolidation and expansion of the Tangut Xi Xia dynasty, which in 1031 conquered the Gansu Uighurs. The eastern ḵāqān hardly managed to endure the voluminous attack of the "Turks of China" in the second decade of the 11th century, and later migrations further weakened his power (Ebn al-Aṯir, Beirut, IX, pp. 297-98, 520; Bar Hebraeus, I, pp. 186, 205; Ḥaydari, pp. 233, 234; ʿOtbi, II, p. 220; Ṭāher Marvazi, pp. 18, 29, 95-100, 104; Tuotuo, 1974, chap. 15, pp. 169-80, chap. 94, p. 1381; Biran, forthcoming, chap. 1). The result of these events was that around 1040 the Qara-khanid state was divided into two independent khanates, the eastern, ruled by the Hasanids, and the western, ruled by the ʿAlids. The often-contested border of the two khanates was around the Sir Daryā, and Farḡāna often changed hands. The Eastern Khanate managed to stabilize and enjoyed certain prosperity in the later half of the 11th century, especially under Ḥasan b. Solaymān (1074-1103), when it also expanded its territory eastward to the region of Kuča.

The independent Western Khanate was consolidated under the rule of Ṭamḡāj Khan Ebrāhim b. Naṣr (r. 1040-69), widely considered a just and devout ruler in the Muslim sources (Ebn al-Aṯir, Beirut, IX, pp. 300-302; ʿAwfi, *Jawāmeʿ al-ḥekāyāt*, foll. 84-87; Barthold, *Turkestan*3, pp. 311-15). Yet, already under his reign, the khanate had to cope with two enduring problems. The first was the

rising power of the Saljuqs, who in 1040 took Khorasan from the Ghaznavids and in 1055 established themselves in Baghdad. The second was the growing strife between the Qara-khanids and the ulemain their realm, which often resulted in executions of leading scholars, even under pious khans like Ebrāhim. The Saljuqs made several incursions into the Qara-khanid lands in the 1060s and 1070s, and in 1089 the Saljuq Sultan Malek-šāh marched into Transoxania, apparently at the request of the local ulema. He deposed the reigning khan and made the Western Khanate a Saljuq vassal state. Following a Saljuq campaign into Farḡāna, Talas, and Semirechyè, the Eastern Khanate submitted as well (Ebn al-Aṯir, Beirut, X, pp. 171-75; Barthold, *Four Studies* I, p. 97; Golden, 1990, p. 367). In the first decades of the 12th century, when the Saljuqs fell prey to family rivalries, the western khans attempted several times to resume their independence, but their efforts were checked by the Saljuq scion Sanjar, first the governor in Khorasan and from 1117 the supreme Saljuq sultan. Soon afterwards the Qara-khanids had to cope with another threat, that of the Qara Khitay.

The Qara Khitay, of a Manchurian provenance, arrived in Central Asia as fugitives after their Liao dynasty, which had ruled over Manchuria, Mongolia, and parts of north China (907-1125) was vanquished by another wave of Manchurian people, the Jurchens. Around 1128 the Qara-khanid khan of Kāšḡar was able to defeat the Qara Khitay, but a few years afterwards, in 1134, the khan of Balāsāḡun, threatened by the nomadic Qarluq and Qangli, summoned the assistance of the Gür Khan of the Qara Khitay. The last mentioned had established himself in the city of Emil, which the Khitans had founded in 1131. The Qara Khitay won over the Qarluqs and Qangli, but they also took over Balāsāḡun, which became their capital. They degraded the eastern khan to the rank of Ileg Torkmen and relocated him to Kāšḡar, which henceforth became the only capital of the Eastern Khanate. In 1137 the Qara Khitay defeated the Western Qara-khanids in Ḵojand, on the banks of the Syr Daryā, but did not pursue them further into Transoxania. The Western Khan, Maḥmud II, nephew of the Saljuq Sultan Sanjar, asked for the latter's help. In 1141 both Sanjar and the Western Qara-khanids were badly defeated by the Qara Khitay in the famous battle of Qaṭwān, in the steppe near Samarqand. Maḥmud fled to Khorasan, where he eventually succeeded Sanjar as the Saljuk sultan after the latter's death in 1157, while the Qara Khitay enthroned another Qara-khanid prince, Ebrāhim, as the new head of the Western Khanate (Ebn al-Aṯir, Beirut, XI, pp. 181-86; Biran, forthcoming, chaps. 1-2).

The period of Qara Khitay vassalage was characterized by the continuing disintegration of the Qara-khanid state, presumably with the encouragement of the conquerors; from 1137 a separate line of princes ruled in Farḡāna from Ozgand, establishing a third Qara-khanid Khanate. In the Eastern Khanate we find different khans for Kāš-ḡar and Ḵotan, and in the Western Khanate there were numerous appanages, as well as a special position for the *ṣadr*s (religious leaders) of Bukhara, who, although subject to the Western Qara-khanids, also closely collaborated with the infidel but tolerant Qara Khitay (Kochaev, 1985, pp. 104-13; Pritsak, 1952, pp. 81-96). Under the Qara Khitay the Western Khanate had to cope with invasions and unrest caused by the Qarluq and Oḡuz nomads (the Qara Khitay had tried to relocate some of the former to Kāšḡar; see ḠOZZ), as well as with the threat of the ambitious Ḵʷārazmšāhs, another reluctant vassal of the Qara Khitay. The collapse of the Qara Khitay empire under the combined pressure of the Ḵʷārazmšāhs and the Mongols in the early 13th century also brought about the end of the Qara-khanids. The Eastern Khanate was the first to be extinguished. In 1204 Kāšḡar and Ḵotan rebelled against the Qara Khitay, who quelled the rebels but detained the son of the Eastern Qara-khanid khan as a hostage in Balāsāḡun. When the rebellious khan of Kāš-ḡar, Yusof b. Moḥammad, died in 1205, no one replaced him on the Qara-khanid throne. In 1211, when Küčlüg (Kučlok), a Nāiman (Nāymān) prince who had found refuge from Čengiz Khan in the Qara Khitay court and married the Gür Khan's daughter, deposed his father-in-law and took over the Qara Khitay throne, he released the captive Qara-khanid prince and sent him back to rule Kāšḡar. Before entering the city, however, the prince was murdered by its notables in 1211. The furious Küčlüg reconquered Kāšḡar, only to be driven away from it in a few years by the Mongols, but the Eastern Khanate was never re-established (Jovayni, ed. Qazvini, I, pp. 47-54, 62; tr. Boyle, pp. 61 ff.; Qarši, 133; Biran, forthcoming, chap. 3).

In the west, the last Qara-khanid ruler, Sultan ʿOṯmān, was obliged to surrender to the Ḵʷārazmšāh ʿAlāʾ-al-Din Moḥammad already in 1209-10. He was detained in Chorasmia and saw the Ḵʷārazmšāh taking over Transoxania from the Qara Khitay and annihilating the Khanate of Farḡāna in 1212-13. In the same year the Western Khanate also came to an end. ʿOṯmān hoped to benefit from the rivalry between the Ḵʷārazmšāh and the Qara Khitay; but, after he had joined the Qara Khitay side, he was executed by the Ḵʷārazmšāh in 1212-13 (Jovayni, ed. Qazvini, II, pp. 122-26; tr. Boyle, pp. 392-96; Biran, forthcoming, chap. 3).

The early 13th century marks the end of the Qara-khanid dynasty, but their name did not vanish from history. The conversion of Satoq Boḡrā Khan became a matter of legend, which coalesced in the 16th century to the *Taḏkera-ye Boḡrā Ḵān*, a part of which was included in most of the *ḡazawāt-nāma*s (books of holy wars) compiled in Eastern Turkestan in the 18th-20th centuries. The Black Mountain (Qaratāḡlïq) *ḵʷāja*s, a dynasty of Sufi shaikhs that ruled in parts of the Tarim basin in the 17th-18th centuries, ascribed their origins to Satoq (Grenard, pp. 5-79; Deweese, pp. 89-92; Togan, 1992, p. 141). Today Satoq, and the Qara-khanids in general, are very popular among the Muslim Uighurs in Xinjiang/Sinkiang, though their main heroes are not the (rather ephemeral) khans but the great Turkish writers who were active under the dynasty, namely Maḥmud Kāšḡari and Yusof Ḵāṣṣ Ḥā-jeb (see below). The Qara-khanids also enjoy a certain revival in the independent Central Asian republics, especially in Kyrgyzstan.

Economy and society. The Qara-khanid period was a time of economic growth and relative prosperity in Central Asia, despite the decentralization of Qara-khanid rule. The literary sources retain certain manifestations of the ḵāqān's wealth, who, for example, donated four trays loaded with gold to a poet who pleased him (Neẓāmi ʿArużi, text, pp. 74-75, tr. p. 53), but the main evidence comes from archaeology. The 11th-12th centuries were a period of growing urbanization, craftsmanship, and trade in Central Asia, especially in Semirechyè and south Kazakhstan (the valleys of the Talas, Ili/Ilā, andČu rivers), where new cities emerged and older one expanded, especially on the frontiers with the nomadic world. The cities included special quarters for craftsmen (mainly potters and glassmakers) and traders, many of them newly built outside the city walls, and new settlements arose around caravansaries. Several cities contained manifestations of wealth (e.g., palaces, wealthy mansions), and bathhouses became a popular feature not only in Transoxania but also further eastwards. Medium-sized towns like Asfījāb and Otrār housed 40,000 and 26,000 inhabitants respectively, and the relative importance of the older town was altered in certain sub-regions, mainly due to their status as the centers of certain Qara-khanid appanages; in Far-ḡāna, for example, Ozgand succeeded Aḵsikaṯ as the most important city. Agriculture and mining seems to have flourished as well, judging by the increase in irrigation canals and by the quantity of mines unearthed, though the evidence here is less decisive (Karaev, pp. 106, 224-44; Davidovitch, 1998, pp. 140-42; Baypakov, 2001, pp. 147-75).

While the 10th-12th centuries are usually considered a time of decline for the silk road, cross-cultural trade and contacts certainly continued under the Qara-khanids and in a quite significant scope. The Qara-khanids maintained commercial and diplomatic relations with the contemporary Sinitic states, especially with the Northern Song dynasty (960-1127), to which a first commercial mission was sent in 1008, soon after the conquest of Ḵotan, and with the Khitan Liao dynasty (907-1125), with whom the Qara-khanids even concluded matrimonial relations in the early 11th century. Ḵotan also took an important part in the trade with the Tangut Xi Xia dynasty (982-1227); and, while in the late 11th century there was certain tension between the Qara-khanids and the Xi Xia, the commercial relations seemed to have considerably improved in the 12th century under Qara Khitay dominion. Less significant connection existed also with the Jurchen Jin dynasty (1115-1234), which ruled in north China and Manchuria; and Bukharan, Ḵojandi, and Turkestani traders also had commercial contacts with Čengiz Khan and his forefathers in Mongolia (Biran, 2001, pp. 77-89; idem, forthcoming, chap. 5). The attested wealth of many traders in 12th- and early 13th-century Transoxania seemed to have been derived mainly from this long-range trade. Major goods that traveled along the silk road were Chinese satin and silk clothes, porcelain, Bukharan cloth, glass vessels, Central Asian wine, Khotanese jade, golden vessels, maces, and belts, as well as slaves (Gardizi, pp. 187-88; Tuotuo, 1975, chap. 50, p. 1114, chap. 121, p. 2637, chap. 134, p. 2870; Yuan Haowen, chap. 1, p. 2a; Sokolovskaya and Rougeulle, pp. 87-98; Ma Wenkuan, pp. 736-43; Biran, forthcoming, chap. 5).

Another important kind of trade was the north-south trade with the nomads. Zoomorphic designs on metal plaques and horn-shaped ornaments prevalent in the regions of Talas and theČu valley suggest a flourishing trade with the nomads, who provided the sedentary people with horses, pack animals, various furs, food (koumis, butter, yogurt, and cheese), wool, carpets, and felts (Yusof Ḵāṣṣ Ḥājeb, p. 184; Senigova, pp. 213-14; Bayrakov, 2001, p. 159).

The relations between nomads and sedentary people were a major theme in Qara-khanid social history. The Qara-khanids retained certain nomadic characteristic, as attested by the famous story (ʿAwfi, in Barthold, *Turkestan*, Texts, p. 85; idem, *Turkestan*3, p. 315; Karaev, p. 204) of the khan who ordered his troops to camp outside of Bukhara in their tents and the allocation of special royal hunting grounds, yet their period was generally one of intense sedentarization that resulted in the urban and agricultural growth described

above. The Qara-khanids tried to maintain symbiotic relations, based on trade, with the "full" nomads in their realm (Yusof Ḵāṣṣ Ḥājeb, p. 184). They also used them in their armies, though at least the Western Khanate maintained a certain elite force of slaves (*mamluk*; ʿEmād-al-Din Kāteb, pp. 241-42). Yet at least in the 12th century the growing number of the nomads (Qarluq, Qangli, and Oḡuz) and their military prowess threatened the Qara-khanid eastern and western states, and played a role in the subjugation of the Qara-khanids to the Qara Khitay. Sedentarization of the nomads or their channeling into the flourishing slave trade helped the Qara-khanids and Qara Khitay achieve a balance between nomads and settled population in Central Asia, a balance that was soon to be shifted considerably with the rise of Čengiz Khan (Biran, forthcoming, chap. 5).

Culture. The Qara-khanids certainly assimilated into the Perso-Arab Muslim culture of their realm, but they also retained many aspects of their Turkish identity. Their age was famous for producing the first Turkish Islamic literature. The dynasty also had a special connection to China.

Several Qara-khanid rulers are famous for their literary activity. The two last western ḵāqāns, Ebrāhim b. Ḥo-sayn (1178-1203) and ʿOṯmān (1202-12), wrote poetry in Persian; and Ebrāhim also copied the Qurʾān (*moṣḥaf*) in his own hand (ʿAwfi, *Lobāb*, ed. Browne, pp. 42, 44-46, ed. Nafisi, pp. 43, 45-47). The khan Naṣr b. Ebrāhim (1067-80) was a scholar (*ʿālem*), who copied manuscripts and dictated Hadith to his students (Mouminov, p. 134). The Qara-khanid court continued the Samanid tradition of patronizing scholars, writers, and poets. It sponsored historical and literary works, in both the eastern and western khanates. Nežāmi ʿArużi (text, pp. 44-45, 73, tr. p. 53) cites thirteen resident poets who praised the Qara-khanids; and scholars such as Ẓahiri Samarqandi, author of *Sendbād-nāma*, and Majd-al-Din Moḥammad b. ʿAndān, author of *Tāriḵ-e moluk-e Torkestān*, dedicated their books to them, while *Ketāb ḵāleṣāt al-ḥaqāʾeq* and *Tāriḵ-e Kāšḡar* applauded the khans. The Qara-khanids also established *madrasa*s and dedicated endowments for their upkeep (Khadr and Cahen, pp. 305-34; Jovayni, ed. Qazvini, I, pp. 49, 53, tr. Boyle, pp. 65-66, 70-71; for a selection of poems in praise of the Qara-khanids see Nafisi, pp. 1270 ff.). Under the Qara-khanids, Transoxania and Farḡāna became a stronghold of Hanafite law and theology, as proven by the ample legal and theological literature emanating from the region, most notable among them the works of Moḥammad b. Aḥmad Saraḵsi (d. ca. 1090), Borhān-al-Din ʿAli Marḡināni (d. 1197), and Faḵr-al-Din Qāżi Khan Farḡāni (d. 1196; Mouminov, pp. 131-40), and

even faraway Ḵotan allegedly had more than three thousands *emām*s in the early 13th century (Jovayni, ed. Qazvini, I, p. 53; tr. Boyle, p. 71). The life of Aḥmad Yasawi, the founder of the famous Yasawiya order (d. ca. 1166) also falls within the scope of the Qara-khanid period, but it is hard to locate evidence for his activity in the contemporary sources. Sufi activity is certainly attested, though it seemed to have been marginal compared to the activity of the jurists (*faqih*s), and several people were defined as both Sufis or ascetics (*zohhād*) and religious scholars (Jovayni, ed. Qazvini, I, p. 58; tr. Boyle, p. 76; Samʿāni, I, p. 217; Dodkhudoeva, pp. 127-29, 142, 172). The religious literary traditions of the Qara-khanid in Transoxania was closely connected to that of Khorasan and, with it, created a regional and relatively self-contained intellectual identity, which transcended Qara-khanid political borders (Ahmed, pp. 40-43).

The Qara-khanids expressed their loyalty to Islam also in their monumental buildings. The surviving minarets in Bukhara, Ozgand, and Balāsāḡun, as well as the remains of the palaces and mausoleums of Rebāt-e Malek and Ozgand, are among the famous examples of their creations, which attest to the amount of effort and skill invested in these monuments. At least the imposing minarets must have played a role in enhancing Islamic prestige in a region not yet fully Islamized (Khmel'nitskiĭ, I, pp. 128-51; Nemceva, pp. 227-42; Nemceva and Saparov, pp. 243-48).

Side by side with their adherence to Islam, the Qara-khanids retained a strong sense of Turkish identity, much stronger than that of their contemporary Turkish Muslim dynasties, the Saljuqs and the Ghaznavids. This was due to their higher position in the pre-Islamic Turkic hierarchy (i.e., their connection to the imperial Turks) and to their rule in the fringes of the Turco-Islamic world, where they held contacts with non-Muslim Turks (e.g., the Uighurs). The stronghold of the Turkish tradition was indeed in Kāšḡar, not in Transoxania, which mainly adhered to the Perso-Arab tradition. The main expression of the Turkish identity was the retaining of the Turkish language and script. Turkic Uighur script was retained up to the late 11th century at least in the Eastern Khanate and sometimes appeared on coins side by side with the Arabic script (Erdal, pp. 260-301; Gronke, pp. 454-507). The Iranian-speaking population in Awš (southeast of Farḡāna), Balāsāḡun, and the Tarim basin went through a process of Turkicization, attested by the names of small settlements and fortresses in these regions, and many cities were known by both Iranian and Turkic names (e.g., Ḵotan and Udun; Kāšḡari, I, pp. 114-15;

Togan “Chinese Turkestan,” pp. 471-72). Yet the Qara-khanids are mostly renowned for the beginning of Islamic Turkish literature, which appeared in their realm from the late 11th century. The two most famous works are the *Kutaḏgu bilig* (Wisdom of royal glory) of Yusof Ḵāṣṣ Ḥājeb (a *maṯnawi* comp. 1069-70 in Kāšḡar) and Maḥmud Kāšḡari’s *Di-vān loḡāt al-Tork* (Compendium of the Turkic dialects), compiled in Baghdad in 1074 by a scion of the Eastern Qara-khanid dynasty, who had traveled widely in the Turkish realms. The *Kutaḏgu bilig* is a mirror for princes, written in verse and consisting mainly of dialogues set within a frame story, which synthesizes Inner Asian traditions of rulership with Islamic religious values. *Divān loḡāt al-Tork* applied the methods of Arabic linguistics to the material of Turkish languages and is a mine of information not only for philology but also for historical, geographical, and folkloric information, which preserves many tribal, folk, and court traditions of the Qara-khanids (Dankoff, pp. 73-80). Several less famous Turkic works were also produced under the Qara-khanids, notably the *ʿAtabāt al-ḥaqāʾeq* of Aḥmad b. Maḥmud that was compiled either in the same period or in the late 12th century; the *Divān-e ḥekmat*, attributed to the Sufi shaikh Aḥmad Yasawi, is almost certainly a later forgery. In general, there was no continuation of the Turco-Islamic literature up to the revival of the Chaghatay language under the Timurids.

The Qara-khanids also retained a special connection to China: the title Ṭamḡāj (or Tabḡāč) Khan (Turkic: the Khan of China) was a highly prestigious Qara-khanid title, translated as “of great and inveterate rule” (Kāšḡari, I, p. 341). The Arabic form of this title, *malek al-mašreq wa’l-Ṣin* (the king of the East and China) also stresses the connection with China. The wide use of the title among Qara-khanid rulers is apparent at least from the early 11th century, and after the dissolution of the Qara-khanid realm into eastern and western khanates, Ṭamḡāj Khan was used by most of the rulers of the Western Khanate and by several important heads of the Eastern Khanate (Kochnev, 1993, pp. 22-23; Jiang Qixiang, p. 107). The connection to China was not maintained only due to the close commercial, diplomatic, and sometimes even matrimonial- relations of the Qara-khanids with their eastern neighbors (mainly the states of the Liao, Song and Xi Xia), but also because in the10th-12th centuries China, though vaguely known, was closely connected with notions of grandeur and prestige in Islamic Central Asia. Most of the Muslim regions subject to the Qara-khanids (e.g., Kāšḡar, Transoxania) considered themselves to have been parts of China, if not at the time then in the past, and, thus, the title Ṭamḡāj Khan carried certain legitimating value (Biran, 2001, pp. 77-88; idem, forthcoming, chap. 4).

The Qara-khanid period helped to put an end to the “Iranian Intermezzo” in the rulership of the eastern Muslim world and began the process of Turkic political domination. It saw the beginning of the Turkicization of the Iranian population in Transoxania, Semirechyè, and the Tarim basin. It was a multi-cultural age that saw a major expansion of Islam eastwards and the beginning of Muslim Turkic literature.

(For a complete list of the Ilak-khanid rulers with dates, see Kochnev, 1993; Kochnev, 2001, pp. 64-66).

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